



Australian Government



mainroads
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BUILDING OUR FUTURE

Swan River Crossings Community Design Consultation Outcomes Report

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Introduction

Main Roads, as part of the Fremantle Bridges Alliance (the Alliance), delivered a comprehensive program of public consultation on the design elements for one of Fremantle’s most significant transport infrastructure projects. This consultation followed the alignment options consultation earlier in 2021 and built upon previous consultation by Main Roads in 2020.

The Swan River Crossings Project will replace the Fremantle Traffic Bridge (Queen Victoria Street), increase passenger and freight rail capacity, improve safety for road and river users and provide modern and safe standard cycling and pedestrian facilities.

This phase of consultation consisted of four community design forums and an online design survey, each requiring participants to register. The forums aimed to gather input and ideas on the bridge design, the north bank amenity, the south bank amenity, heritage interpretation, and walking and cycling connectivity across the Swan River.

A Design Inspiration Document was developed to prompt conversation and ideas from community and stakeholders regarding the aesthetic outcomes of the project. This document includes site stories, collated from research and earlier consultation with the Whadjuk Elders’ Advisory Group. The document can be viewed [here](#).

This Outcomes Report provides a summary of community feedback received, which has been shared with the project design team of architects, urban landscape architects and design engineers. This feedback will influence the design aesthetics for the project.

Design consultation

Three in person community design forums and an online community design forum webinar were held in August and September 2021. More than 100 people participated across all four forums.

The format of the forums was a presentation followed by an interactive workshop, with breakout tables for each consultation topic (i.e., bridge design, North bank, South bank, heritage interpretation and connectivity). Attendees moved freely between topic tables where they could interact with members of the Alliance, who answered questions and encouraged ideas and input.

An online design survey provided an alternative approach for community and stakeholders to have their say. The survey sought feedback and ideas on the aesthetic outcomes for the project as well as the importance of the possible retention of a remnant structure of the Fremantle Traffic Bridge, how that may be used, and how they felt about farewelling the old bridge. The survey included detailed information about Aboriginal and European heritage of the crossing, previous consultation, and information about the condition of the old Fremantle Traffic Bridge. 291 survey responses were received.

The design forums and the online survey were promoted through various channels including Main Roads social media, electronic direct mail to project subscribers and a media release by the Minister for Transport. Key stakeholders including the City of Fremantle, Town of East Fremantle, Fremantle Chamber of Commerce and Fremantle Ports provided support by promoting through their online communication tools and social media.

Online design survey

The online design survey was open for four weeks from 26 August 2021 until 23 September 2021. The survey introduced Aboriginal and European Heritage, site stories and key design themes from previous consultations. Community and stakeholders were able to have their say on design, whether they attended a forum or not.

Of the 291 surveys completed, half of the responses came from City of Fremantle and Town of East Fremantle residents, and half from other local government areas. More than 40% of respondents were visitors to the Fremantle area and one quarter identified as a business owner or a worker in Fremantle. Respondents were able to choose more than one category for this demographic.

This survey attracted fewer local respondents and more visitors to the Fremantle area when compared to the alignment options survey conducted for the project earlier in 2021, where two thirds of responses were from City of Fremantle and Town of East Fremantle residents.

A snapshot of survey demographic data is provided below in Figure 1.

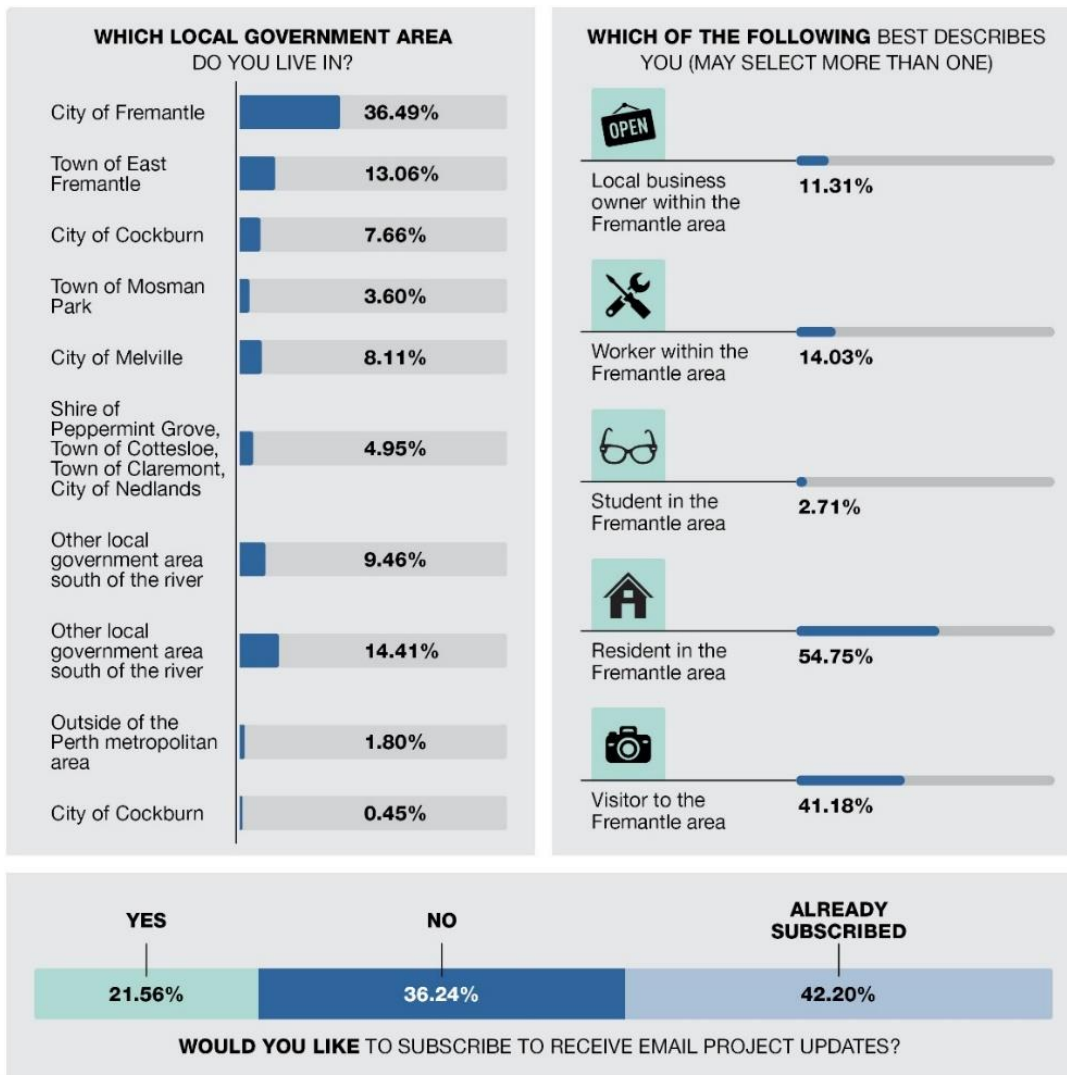


FIGURE 1: A SNAPSHOT OF SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Design themes

Previous consultation by Main Roads in 2020 led to the development of key design themes. These were based on research, collation of site stories with Whadjuk Nyoongar people and consultation with key stakeholders and community. The three key themes, and the values and concepts they represent, are presented in Figure 2 below.

Country - Environmental and spiritual value (spiritual, cultural and resource significance of Country to Whadjuk Nyoongar)

Connections - Historical value (this place has been a crossing point for north and south for thousands of years)

Community - People and place (the river and surrounding areas provide a place for meeting, recreation and sustenance)

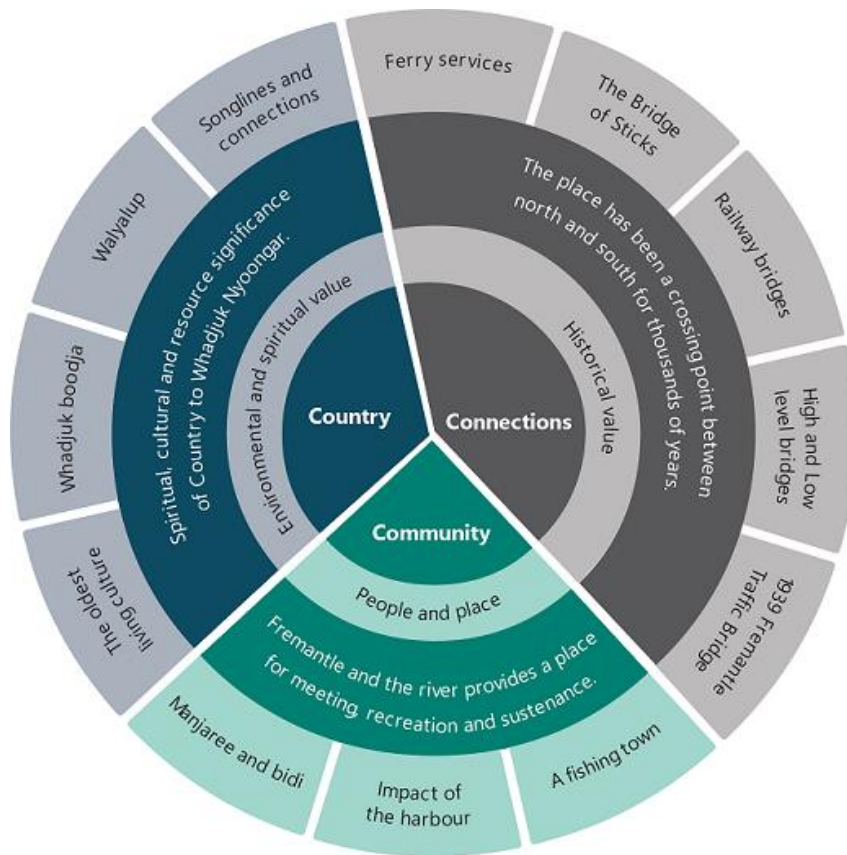


FIGURE 2: KEY THEMES, AND THE VALUES AND CONCEPTS THEY REPRESENT

Consultation outcomes

Overall design themes

Survey respondents were asked to rank the key design themes in order of importance for inclusion in the design of the new bridges and the surrounding project areas. Almost 50% ranked *community* as the most important. *Country* and *connections* were ranked relatively equally overall. Fremantle residents ranked *country* higher than non-Fremantle residents.

The survey results for this question are shown in Figure 3 below, with 1 indicating the most important theme to include in the project and 3 indicating least important.

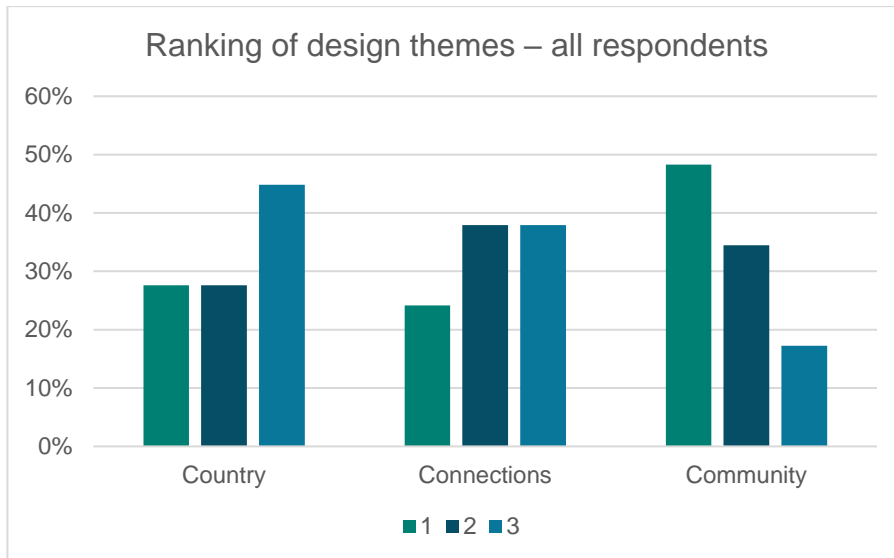


FIGURE 3: KEY DESIGN THEMES IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

Bridge design

The survey sought to quantify feedback on bridge design by asking respondents to rank a list of elements in order of their importance to be included in the 'look and feel' of the new bridge. Respondents were asked to rank their top three elements. Figure 4 below shows the percentage of respondents who ranked an element in their top three. Feature lighting stood out as an important element for 83% of respondents.

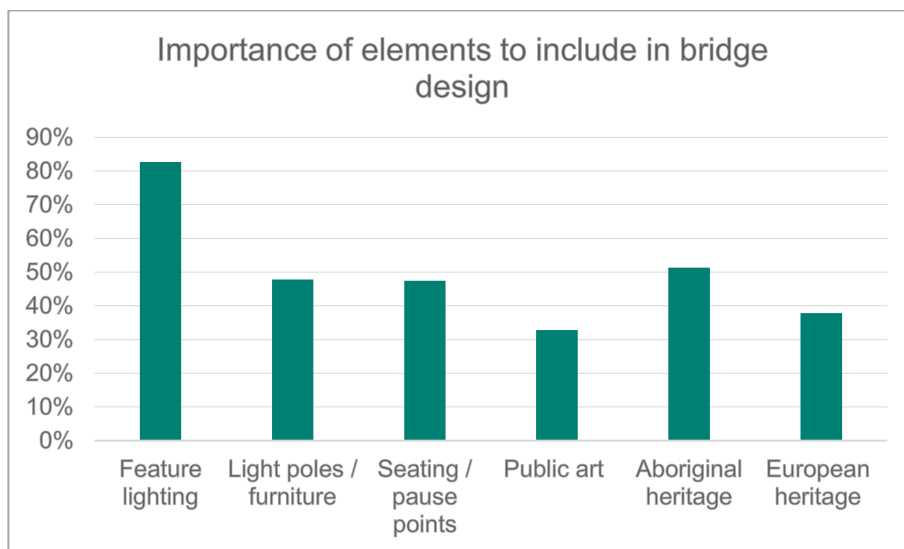


FIGURE 4: TOP ELEMENTS IN ORDER OF THEIR IMPORTANCE

“Architecturally interesting (like Matagarup)”

“Please include a walkway and platform underneath to allow fishing access like the old bridge”

“LED lighting aimed at water”

“Seating and pause points to taking in the views and panorama of the working port and busy river traffic.”

“Use of bridge fairings / windbreaks to depict Aboriginal art”

Walking and cycling paths

Feedback collected through the survey and at the forums highlighted walking and cycling paths as a key priority. Some comments indicated walking and cycling paths were more important than other forms of transport, including vehicles. People wanted paths to provide more access and better connections to the river, to the centre of Fremantle and other destinations, while avoiding too many interactions with traffic. They also wanted opportunities to stop, rest and take in the views of the river and surrounding areas.

“Curved walking path no steps think old people walk, wheelchair access”

“A path under the bridge to link up so pedestrians do not have to walk across busy roads as they do at present”

South bank

Ideas for improving the south bank were received at forums and via the survey and included landscaping and activation of the foreshore, creating better links to nearby places, such as the Naval Stores and Cantonment Hill, and acknowledging the history through storytelling. Many commented on including access to the river for recreational fishing.

“Better connection to Naval store and playground/oval.”

“I would like to see recognition of rowing at the bridge location. The southern abutment of the bridge is where the Fremantle Rowing Club boatsheds stood for over 70 Years. This could be via public art or rowing inspired features of the bridge itself.”

North bank

The north bank is another important area where improvements to the foreshore area could be made. Survey participants and forum attendees wanted better connections to the river, improvements to landscaping and a jetty or fishing platform.

“Keep it natural - extend from the existing North Freo foreshore”

“A short jetty from bridge timber to fish from”

European heritage interpretation

The existing Fremantle Traffic Bridge is on the WA State Heritage Register along with the Ferry Capstan Base located on the south bank. Feedback received at forums and through the survey about heritage included discussion on ways to celebrate earlier bridges and learn more about early European history.

“The timber is a key aspect of the old bridge and tells a great story (even with the woodworm), it would be great to see some timber repurposed as seating, used to line a wall or feature pylon or even have it milled and used to line a ceiling area where it crosses the roads/paths below new structure”

“Have a public art display/ interpretive signage nearby that tells the history of the site from before indigenous use through to current time.”

Aboriginal heritage interpretation

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal / Whadjuk Nyoongar design and heritage came through as a strong theme in the design forums and in survey responses. The survey results showed the feedback was stronger from Fremantle/ East Fremantle residents compared to residents outside these areas.

“Interpretive signage in prominent places along pedestrian/cyclist pathways telling the Whadjuk perspective.”

“Whadjuk Nyoongar art or language could be incorporated into the concrete on public facing parts. Design could be used to highlight important Aboriginal places e.g. Te Rewa Rewa bridge in New Plymouth, NZ frames a view of the mountain (an important place for local Maori)”

Retaining remnant structure

The new bridge location provides an option to retain up to a 19m portion of the old bridge over water. If retained, the remnant portion would be left in a safe condition, however, further funding would be required for activation solutions and ongoing maintenance.

Feedback on retaining a remnant structure was mixed at the forums and through the survey.

Some forum comments supported preservation and ideas that a remnant portion could provide a community space for pedestrians and public seating. Other feedback suggested it should be removed completely and expressed concern about the future cost of maintenance and potential visual impact on the new bridge.

Survey responses regarding retention were mixed: 44.5% said it was not important to retain a remnant portion, 34.5% thought it was important and 21% were ambivalent about whether it was important or not.

Reasons for retaining the remnant included preservation of heritage and using the space as a fishing platform. Reasons for removing the whole bridge included the cost to maintain it and the visual impact. These reasons were similar to those provided at the forums.

“Retaining a portion of the bridge would be OK as long as it doesn’t compromise the features and functions of the new bridge.”

"Yes, my family has played and fished and enjoyed the shoreline of the old bridge for generations. This could become a great fishing jetty or additional boat jetty."

Celebration of the bridge

The survey asked respondents if the existing Fremantle Traffic Bridge should be celebrated before it is removed or replaced, and for ideas on how it could be celebrated. Just over 50% of respondents agreed there should be a celebration, while 46% thought it was not necessary.

There was strong correlation between those who wanted to retain a remnant portion of the bridge and those who wanted to celebrate the existing bridge - 70% of people who favoured retaining a remnant portion also supported a celebration.

Some ideas for a celebration included collecting local memories and historical snapshots, hosting a weekend festival, and incorporating Aboriginal ceremony.

"It's important to mark the occasion as it connects to people's feeling and memories of the place. Removing the bridge is removing part of our shared history. It needs to be acknowledged before we also acknowledge that it is time to move on and replace the bridge with something that will withstand and endure for the next 100 years."

"Close it down for a weekend and host a seafood/arts festival on it! Celebrating local businesses, seafood, culture, music, etc! Would be a once in a lifetime event."

Next Steps

The outcomes of the consultation have been shared with our multi-disciplinary design team and are influencing the development of concept designs. Main Roads and the Alliance is developing design for the Development Assessment Panel (DAP) and expects to release concept visuals in the coming months.