

Olympic Leisure Centre

Community engagement findings for the period 15 September – 12 October 2025

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

On Monday 23 June 2025, Council endorsed a direction for [Olympic Leisure Centre](#) (OLC) which saw the closure of the centre's ageing aquatic facilities at the end of October 2025. At this meeting Council also endorsed the allocation of \$1.8M for a new library service and expanded health and fitness areas.

With OLC's role in health, wellbeing, and social connection continuing community engagement began promptly to gather feedback and ideas from members and broader community about:

- current use
- impacts of aquatics closure
- ideas for future programming and services
- barriers to participation
- library service needs

1.2 Engagement Activities

To obtain community feedback, the following structured consultation activities were undertaken:

- online community survey available on Shaping Banyule
- a hard copy survey available at in-person sessions and upon request
- two community activation days at Olympic Village Green.

These activities were promoted to over 7,300 residents through a postcard letter drop, which included a QR code pointing directly to the Shaping Banyule project page.

The Shaping Banyule page provided an online survey, details of the activation activities and all the background information to the project.

The survey was available online from 15 September 2025 to 12 October 2025. The community could also request a hard copy survey to complete.

Two community activation days sessions were held for the community to speak with Council staff and provide feedback and ideas for programming at the centre. The activations were:

- Older Adults Activity Day - 24 September 2025
- Community/Family Day - 3 October 2025.

These events were supported by OVAN, Exodus, Banyule Youth Services and Banyule Leisure and generated excellent attendance.

1.3 What we heard – summary

- Strong support for OLC continuing as a hub for health, wellbeing, and social connection, with many participants valuing the addition of a new library service.
- The community views the library as more than a book lending service. They see it as a safe, inclusive "third space", especially for young people and families, providing a wide range of programs and services.

- High community interest in expanded learning, literacy and community programs, especially those that are inclusive for all ages and backgrounds.
- Regular attendance at OLC is common, with many respondents keen to maintain or increase their visits when new facilities and programs are introduced.
- Popular suggestions for future programs include more fitness classes, social groups, cultural events, and activities for children and families.
- Some barriers to participation were identified, such as limited program variety, accessibility concerns, and lack of awareness about what's currently available.
- The pool closure is a concern for many, with requests for alternative aquatic or fitness options during the redevelopment period.
- Strong interest in using the new library, with requests for flexible opening hours to suit working families and students.
- Community members expressed a desire for more opportunities to provide ongoing feedback as the redevelopment progresses.
- Activation days and pop-up sessions were well attended, indicating high community engagement and willingness to be involved in shaping the future of OLC and re-engaging with OLC.

1.3 Survey Participation and Feedback

The Shaping Banyule survey received **100 responses**. Responses were from members of OLC, residents who attend casually, and residents who are interested in OLC.

The survey asked local residents and OLC patrons what type of activities they would like to see in the new OLC health, fitness and library facilities, including:

- how and why residents use OLC now and in the future
- how often do they use the facility
- the type of programs and activities they want to see at the OLC
- if there is anything preventing them from participating at OLC
- how the pool closure affects their use of OLC
- how likely they are to use the library and what programs and activities they would like to see at the library
- the opening hours would they like to see at the library.

1.4 Summary of Feedback

- 50% of respondents live in Heidelberg West.
- 60% of respondents attend the centre as members or casually.
- The community strongly wish to retain the pool, however given the decision made by Council in June 2025, suggestions regarding pool operations were not accommodated in the survey.
- Respondents reported that they rely on the OLC for their regular wellbeing routine and that the OLC supported their fitness, wellbeing and social connection.
- Respondents reported that they want a range of programs included at OLC including mind body wellness classes, group fitness, strength and conditioning programs, active ageing programs, injury recovery, and ensuring sessions are inclusive and adaptive to attendee needs.
- The responses highlighted a desire for programs that are diverse, social, culturally safe and suitable for all ages and abilities.

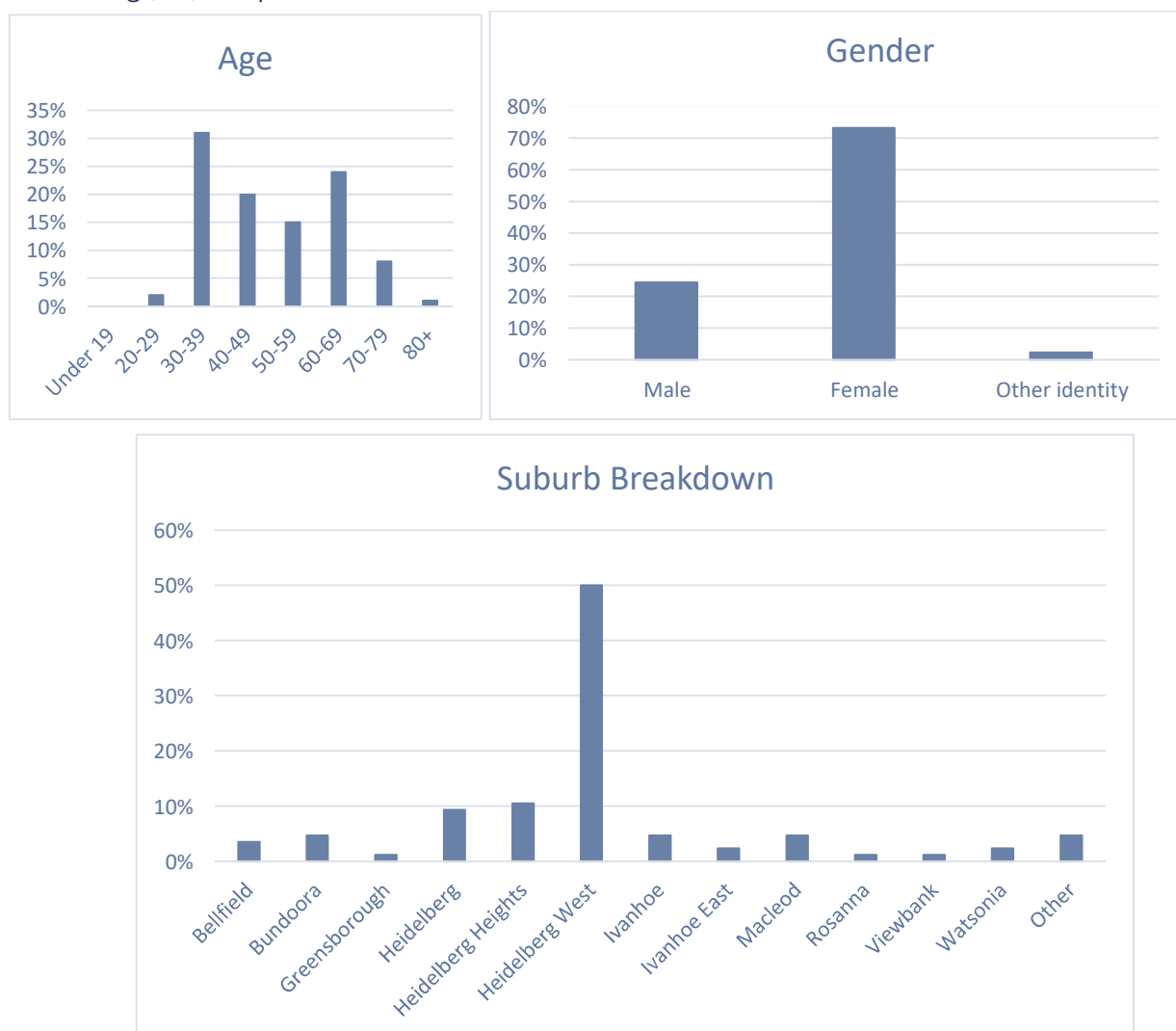
- The community provided feedback on library hours, with the most popular suggestions requesting that library hours include weekend hours, afterschool hours, evenings and operating greater than the proposed 30-hour allocation.

The community clearly views the library as more than a book-lending service. They see it as a safe, inclusive “third space”, especially for young people and families providing a wide range of programs and services.

2. Who we heard from

The Shaping Banyule online survey received 100 responses, including 14 intercept surveys. The graphs below show the following participant demographics:

- we received responses from people aged 25 through to 84
 - people who identified as female accounted for 73% of responses
- there was a higher response rate from people in Heidelberg West (50%), Heidelberg Heights (10%) and Heidelberg (9%). People based in Bundoora, Ivanhoe and Macleod accounted for 4% each.



3. Findings

3.1 Membership and frequency of usage

Approximately 29% of respondents indicated that they are OLC members. 30% said that they attend casually and 31% indicated that they do not currently use the centre.

Of those that do use the centre, 71% attend at least once a week.

How do you currently use Olympic Leisure Centre?

Answer choices	Percent	Count
I am a member who uses gym, aquatics or attends a class	29.07%	25
I attend as a casual to use gym, aquatics or a class	30.23%	26
I come with a group or club (for example, basketball, Himilo activities)	3.49%	3
I bring my children to use the facility	5.81%	5
I do not currently use the centre	31.40%	27

Approximately how often do you use Olympic Leisure Centre?

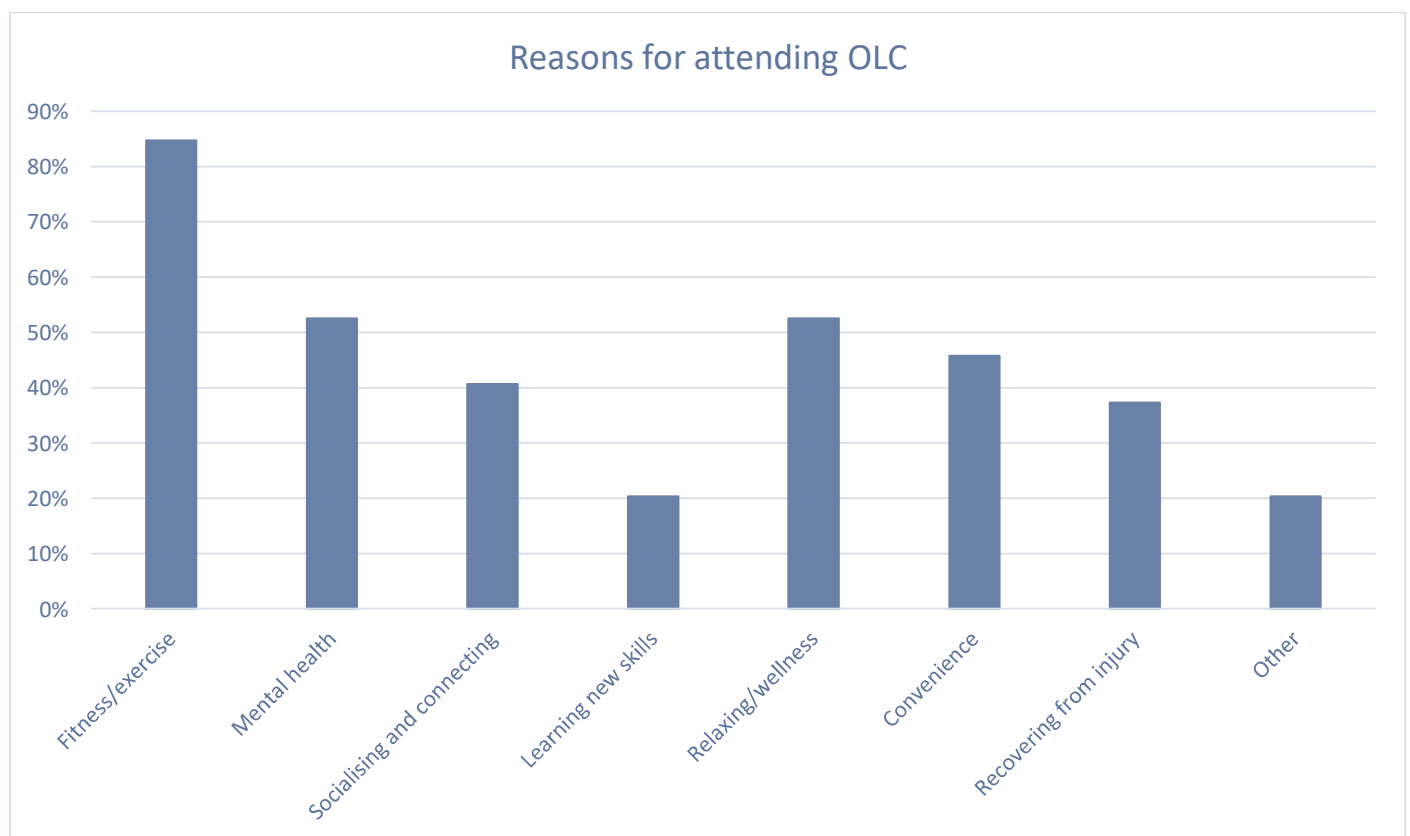
Answer choices	Percent	Count
Daily	6.78%	4
A few times a week	37.29%	22
About once a week	27.12%	16
A few times a month	11.86%	7
About once a month	10.17%	6
A few times a year	6.78%	4
I have not visited in over a year	0%	0

3.2 Reasons why people use OLC

Fitness, wellbeing and social connection matter most to respondents. The strongest reasons people gave for visiting the centre were:

- fitness and exercise, with over 85% of respondents selecting this as one of the reasons they attend come to OLC
- mental health, with around 50% of respondents selecting this as one of their reasons
- relaxation and wellness, with around 50% of respondents selecting this as one of their reasons
- social connection and community belonging, around 40%
- recovering from injury, around 37%.

Residents see OLC not only as a gym, but also as a place to feel better, connect with others and maintain daily wellbeing.

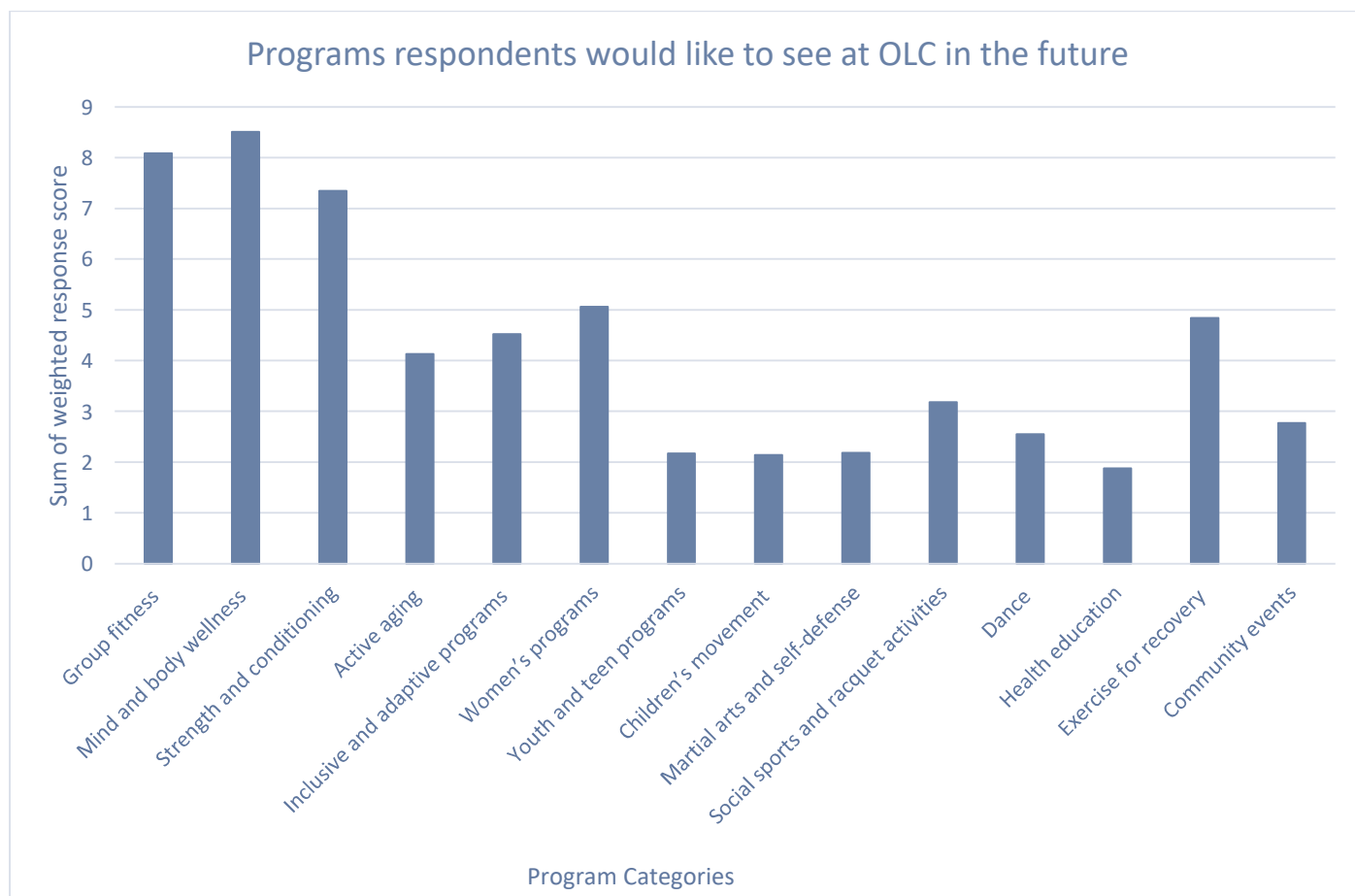


3.3 Future programs and services

When asked about future programming, the response rate was extremely high (90%), with clear preferences emerging for

- mind-body programs (e.g., yoga, Pilates, breathing and stretching)
- group fitness classes
- strength and conditioning, including supported technique sessions
- strong support for classes for active ageing, injury recovery, adaptive/inclusive needs, and women's programming
- interest in social sports, dance, martial arts, parent-and-child activities and youth programming.

This highlights a desire for programs that are diverse, social, culturally safe and suitable for all ages and abilities. The graph below shows specific activities and interests survey respondents selected and ranked.



3.4 Barriers to participating at OLC

We also asked people to tell us if there is anything stopping them from participating at OLC. Of the 86 people that answered this question, 50 responded 'yes'.

When asked to describe the thing/s that stop them participating, the following key themes were identified (in order of most mentioned to least mentioned):

1. the closure of aquatics
2. limited and inconvenient opening hours
3. personal schedules and family responsibilities
4. programs and classes don't meet needs or are too few
5. cost and affordability
6. safety and amenity concerns
7. facility condition and lack of maintenance
8. lack of transport / distance to travel and location not suitable
9. low awareness and promotion.

3.5 Impact of the pool and spa closure

When respondents were asked how the closure of the OLC pool and spa would affect them, the majority (40%) said they were not yet sure. There was only three (3) people which indicated that they would stop using OLC or Ivanhoe and a further six (6) indicating that they will terminate their membership.

Answer choices	Percent	Count
I don't currently use the OLC	3.03%	1
The closure won't affect me. I'll keep using OLC for gym and fitness	6.06%	2
I'll use the pool and spa at Ivanhoe but do gym/fitness at OLC	18.18%	6
I'll stop using OLC and instead use Ivanhoe for both aquatics and gym/fitness	6.06%	2
I'm not sure yet	39.39%	13
I will stop using OLC or Ivanhoe	9.09%	3
I will terminate my membership at OLC or Ivanhoe	18.18%	6

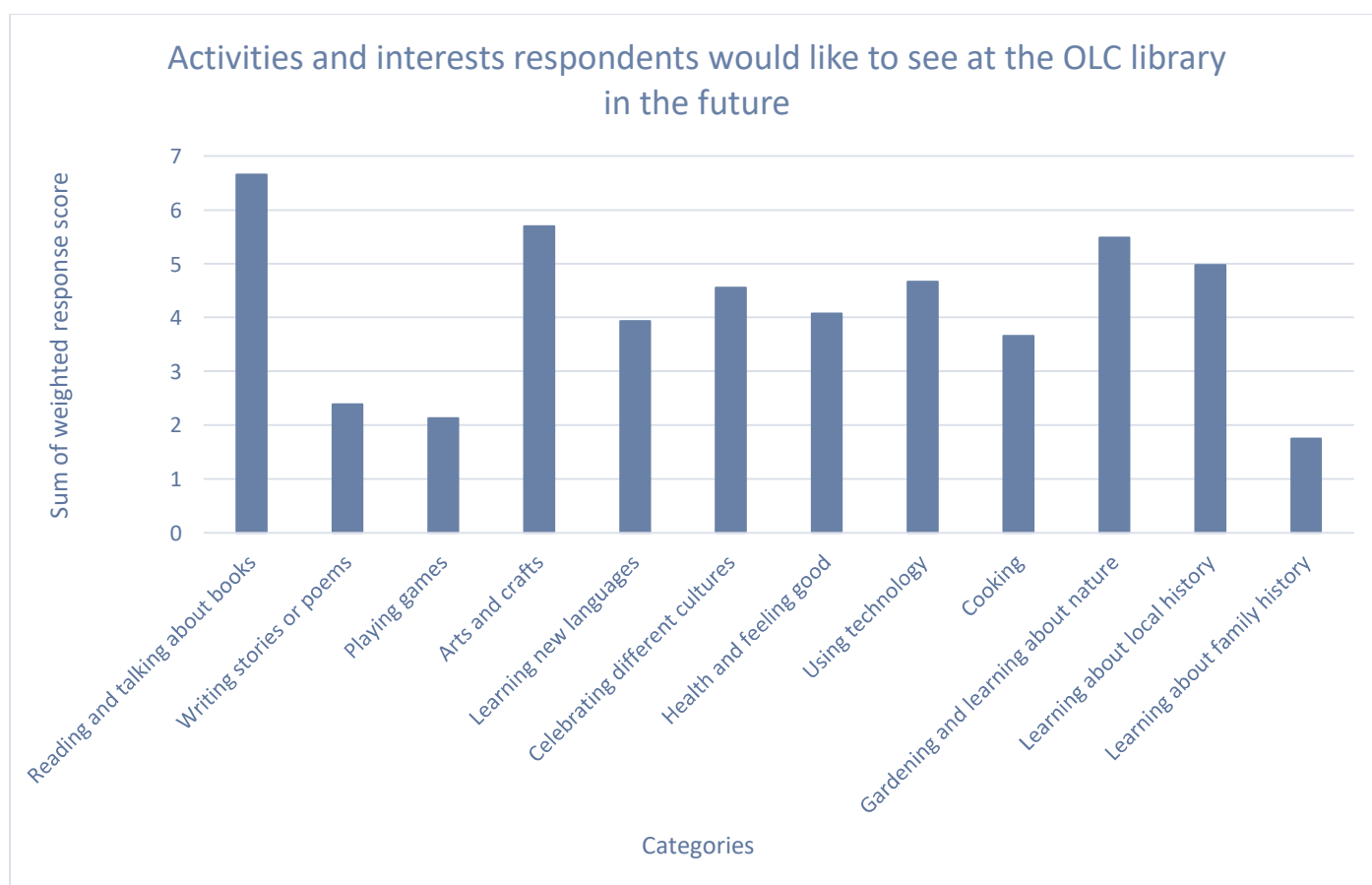
3.6 Library programming and days/hours of operation

Survey responses show that the community has strong expectations for the library to function as a “third space” and is seeking longer opening hours than the proposed 30 hours, with weekend access identified as a particular priority.

There is clear demand for study spaces, after-school programs, and access to computers and technology. The top five interest and themes identified through survey comments by the community are outlined below

- Collections and borrowing (books, DVDs, digital collections/eBooks)
- Children/teens and families (Storytime, homework club, youth programs)
- Spaces and access (quiet study rooms, meeting rooms, Wi-Fi, PCs/printing)
- Learning and skills (language classes, digital literacy, maker/STEAM)
- Community and events (talks, clubs, cultural programs)

The graph below shows specific activities and interests survey respondents selected and ranked.



We also heard the following about library days / hours of operation.

Days of operation

- Open on weekends, 10 responses (18.5%)
- Open 7 days / every day: 8 responses (14.8%)
- Callouts for Saturday and Sunday: 2 responses each

Times of day

- After-school coverage: 5 responses
- Evenings / late nights: 4 responses
- Mornings: 1 response
- "Match other libraries" (Ivanhoe/Rosanna/"like other libraries")
- "30 hours is too few" (want more total hours than proposed)

Summary of preferred days and hours

- **Days:** strong desire for weekend opening and several requests for 7-day service (or "every day"), indicating demand for access beyond weekdays only.
- **Hours:** start the day at 8am or 9am; keep the library open after school and into the evening (most commonly to 6pm or 7pm, with some calls for later). Where respondents named exact ranges, 9am–5pm was the most typical baseline, with several asking for longer (e.g., 10am–7pm, 8am–6pm, 8am–8pm).
- **Consistency** with other branches: a subset explicitly asked to match Ivanhoe/Rosanna (or "other libraries") for predictability and equity.
- **Total hours:** some respondents objected to a 30-hour weekly cap, implying a preference for more than 30 hours/week.

3.7 Activation Day Feedback

At the community activity days, community were invited to discuss with staff their ideas and feedback and to take part in an interactive activity.

Postcards with a QR code linked to the Shaping Banyule project page and survey were also handed out to community members who were unable to stop and take part on the day.

Activity days provided a chance to gather feedback and ideas for the library, gym, and program areas. Community members marked preferred activities and features with dots; 792 dots were posted. The top three themes from each category are listed below.



What activities would you like to see at OLC?

- Mindbody wellness classes 12% (yoga, stretching, Meditation).
- Group fitness 11% (exercise classes, boxing aerobics).
- Social sports and racquet activities 9% (ping pong, pickle ball, badminton, soccer).

What features of the OLC gym are important?

- Friendly and welcoming environment 20%.
- Flexible open hours 14%.
- Variety of strength and cardio machines 12%.

What programs, activities and services would you like to see at the library?

- Arts and crafts 14%.
- Gardening and learning about nature 13%.
- Playing games 12%.

What are your key reasons for visiting OLC?

- Fitness and exercise 22%.
- Mental health 15%.
- Socialising and connecting with community 15%.
- Relaxing / wellness 15%.