

Quiet Lakes Community Consultation

Summary report of household survey 2009



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Introduction

This is a summary of the report on a community survey at the Quiet Lakes at Patterson Lakes. The summary has been prepared to help ongoing discussions between Melbourne Water and the community in planning and delivering services related to managing the lakes.

The survey was conducted by Evaluation Solutions Pty Ltd and took place between 27 November and 17 December 2009. Evaluation Solutions Pty Ltd submitted its report to Melbourne Water in January 2010 for consideration. This summary has been prepared by Melbourne Water and has been reviewed by Evaluation Solutions Pty Ltd.

Melbourne Water commissioned and paid for the survey, and consulted the Patterson Lakes Advisory Committee on the topics to be included in the survey. The survey was designed by Evaluation Solutions Pty Ltd in consultation with Melbourne Water.

In 2009, in discussion with the community, Melbourne Water identified the need to know more about Quiet Lakes residents' and non-resident owners' opinions of Melbourne Water's management of the lakes, their expectations about water quality in the lakes, and precept ratepayers' preparedness to pay for any improvements to meet those expectations. The survey was designed to capture and report on this opinion. Melbourne Water undertook to provide a summary of the survey's findings to the Quiet Lakes community.

The findings from the survey will be used by Melbourne Water to re-examine management of the lakes and communications, and this will take place in consultation with the Patterson Lake Advisory Committee, ratepayers, residents and other stakeholders.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey.

Tim Seipolt
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Melbourne Water and Patterson Lakes

Melbourne Water is the regional river health and drainage manager for the Port Philip & Westernport Region. As part of that responsibility, Melbourne Water is responsible for managing the waterways at Patterson Lakes, including the Quiet Lakes and the Tidal Canals.

Owners of property at Patterson Lakes, including the Quiet Lakes, pay a precept rate in addition to the normal waterways and drainage rate payable to Melbourne Water through water bills. Precept rates contribute to the cost of maintaining the waterways. Melbourne Water manages the Patterson Lakes precept area in consultation with the Patterson Lakes Advisory Committee and other stakeholders.

What People Said – Brief Summary of Main Survey Findings

Melbourne Water's Services at the Quiet lakes – what people know about Melbourne Water's services at the lakes and how satisfied they are

- Most people were aware that Melbourne Water provides services to manage the Quiet Lakes.
- People were moderately satisfied with most of Melbourne Water's maintenance services at the lakes.
- However, people indicated low satisfaction with Melbourne Water's management of water quality in the lakes.
- Management of water quality in the lakes was the most commonly suggested improvement.

Communication about the Quiet Lakes – how people want to find out what's happening and have their say

- Most people knew about Patterson Lakes Advisory Committee, and more than half knew who their reps were and were satisfied with newsletters from the committee.
- People suggested more open and consistent communication from Melbourne Water about management of the lakes.
- People were moderately satisfied with opportunities to provide feedback to Melbourne Water.

Activities at the Quiet Lakes – what is important to people about the lakes, and how they use the lakes and surrounds

- People placed a high value on views of the lakes, the ambience the lakes provide, having bird life around, the beaches, and being able to walk, jog or run, walk dogs and use a canoe or swim.

Water Quality – what quality people expect, and how much they are prepared to pay to achieve it

- Most people said it was important to them to have increased access to safe, swimmable water in the lakes.
- Half of the ratepayers who participated in the survey said they would not be prepared to pay extra rates to cover the cost of a project aimed at increasing access to safe, swimmable water in the lakes.
- Most of the ratepayers who said they were prepared to pay extra indicated the lowest suggested amount: 'up to \$250'.
- Some ratepayers who were prepared to pay and some who were not indicated that they would be more likely to pay if they were assured there was a guaranteed solution.

Summary of Findings - Who Participated in the Survey and How

There are around 345 households surrounding the three lakes at the Quiet Lakes: Lake Legana, Lake Illawong and Lake Carramar. The majority are owner-occupied; 51 were identified as belonging to non-resident owners. All households and all non-resident owners were invited to participate in the survey.

The researchers were required by Melbourne Water to ensure all households and all non-resident owners were provided with an opportunity to participate in the survey. This was achieved by visiting homes on various days at various times, by leaving contact details and an invitation to call at homes where people were not in, by making repeat visits and by posting self-completion surveys to non-resident owners.

47% of households (163) participated. 39% of households (133) did not respond to invitations to participate. 14% of households (49) declined to participate.

Of the completed surveys, about 80% were interviews at people's homes. About 20% were completed over the phone in response to the 'You Were Not in When We Called' slips that researchers left in letterboxes. Seven self-administered surveys were received by mail from non-resident owners.

Of the interviews conducted face-to-face or over the phone, almost all of the participating households were owner-occupied. Ten were rented premises occupied by tenants.

Survey Findings by Topic

Melbourne Water Services at the Quiet Lakes

This part of the survey asked people for their opinions on what Melbourne Water does at the Quiet Lakes.

Almost all participants surveyed (96%) were aware that Melbourne Water provides services related to the Quiet Lakes, especially services related to managing the water and the beaches beside the lakes.

Participants were moderately satisfied with the way Melbourne Water looks after lighting (rated 3.7), signs and noticeboards (3.5), beaches and grass (3.4), on a scale from 1 (Low) to 5 (High).

Participants indicated low satisfaction with the way Melbourne Water manages water quality in the lakes (average 1.9). Melbourne Water's management of water quality in the lakes was the most prominent concern mentioned in participants' comments.

When asked for their two highest priorities for improvement, water quality was also the most frequently mentioned service participants indicated that they wanted to see improved. The second most desired improvement was better beach maintenance, including more frequent raking and debris collection, weeding and sand replenishment. More timely lighting maintenance was also mentioned.

Communication about Melbourne Water Services at the Quiet Lakes

This section was about how people want to find out what's happening and have their say.

Almost all people surveyed knew about the Patterson Lakes Advisory Committee and over half told the researchers they knew their representatives on the committee, although this knowledge varied from lake to lake.

The majority of participants (89%) reported receiving PLAC quarterly newsletters. Participants indicated moderate satisfaction with the information received through these bulletins (average 3.5). Less than half of participants reported receiving information through noticeboards and community bulletins. Newsletter was by far the most popular method of receiving information among participants (80%).

Participants indicated that they were moderately satisfied with the options for providing feedback to Melbourne Water (average 3.0). Some specific suggestions from participants about ways to improve communications involved more in-person communication (face-to-face, public meetings), providing a direct contact phone number, and making information easier to access on the Melbourne Water website

Activities at the Quiet Lakes

This part of the survey asked people for their opinions on how they interact with the Quiet Lakes and what is important to them.

Residents living on all three lakes who responded to the survey gave consistently high ratings about the importance of enjoying lake views/ambiance (average 4.8) using the beach/sand area (average 4.4), and walking/jogging/running or walking the dog (average 4.4), on a scale from 1 (Low) to 5 (High).

Water Quality in the Quiet Lakes

This part of the survey asked participants about:

- their expectations of water quality in the lakes
- whether they would be more likely to use the lakes if there was increased access to safe, swimmable water, and
- (for ratepayers) whether and how much they would be prepared to pay for a project to provide increased access to safe, swimmable water in the lakes.

Over 80% of participants indicated that increased access to safe, swimmable water was very important to them. This was consistent across all three lakes.

Over 4 in 5 households indicated that they would be more likely to swim, wade or paddle in the lakes if there was increased access to safe, swimmable water. About 1 in 3 households indicated that they would be more likely to do fishing.

Responses varied from lake to lake.

Approximately half (51.3%) of the residents surveyed indicated that they were not prepared to pay more rates towards a project to provide increased access to safe, swimmable water in the lakes. About 1 in 7 (14.5%) said they did not know whether or how much they would be prepared to pay.

About one third of all residents surveyed selected an amount they were prepared to pay from a range of figures provided. The amount they indicated varied from \$250 to \$1500 or more each year, with about three quarters of those who were prepared to pay selecting 'up to \$250'. None of the non-resident owners surveyed said they would be prepared to pay for a project to improve water quality.

Some ratepayers who were prepared to pay, and some who were not prepared to pay, indicated that they would pay only if they were assured there was a guaranteed solution.