

SARSFIELD
COMMUNITY SPACE

The Community Space at Sarsfield Recreation Reserve has been designed working with local Sarsfield residents, including children, to develop a community gathering space and play space for the entire township and its visitors. The original inspiration and desire for the space came in the aftermath of the 2019-2020 Black Summer Bushfires, which had a significant impact on the township, burning 50% of the local land area, including the loss of 80 residential buildings and damage to over 100 further buildings.

The Recreation Reserve has remained a central meeting point throughout and since the fires, becoming a strong symbol of what is called Sarsfield's "power of community". Following the fires, the community came together here for regular Friday Night Feeds at the Recreation Reserve Hall, with this gradually becoming central to the life of the small rural locality. As use of the space increased the need for a play space for local children was identified, with the original request being for an "awesome" play space, with a location identified in the Sarsfield Recreation Reserve Master Plan.

Originally the play space was intended to sit next to a as yet undesigned picnic area, which would connect the play space to the oval and the proposed new Hall. However, while working with Sarsfield's adults and children, it became obvious that these spaces should be integrated. In talking to Sarsfield residents and looking at the available area, it was clear that a special feature of these community gatherings was the way people from different generations all came together to socialise and share a meal. This has become the central core of the design of the new Community Space.

The original shelter and BBQ, home of so many Friday Night Feeds, are to be retained, along with the surrounding trees and beautiful bushland areas. This provides good shade to the play areas and retains an important social space in the new design. The provision of adult exercise equipment and a drinking fountain (supported by East Gippsland Shire Council and East Gippsland Water) have also been integrated into the design.

On entering the space from either the new car park or Hall people will be directed towards a central community gathering space. This includes a fire pit,

two-way seating (allowing people to face the oval or the gathering space) and raised garden beds with herbs / bush foods for use in future Friday night feeds.

To the south-east of the gathering space a new toddler area will be developed, between the gathering space and hall. This space includes a swing, springer and low climbing / sitting rocks and has good visibility from adjacent new picnic tables and the hall deck. Play spaces will be separated from the car park and road by fences that, while not fully sealed, prevent children from suddenly dashing into the path of passing cars.

On the oval side of the gathering space a series of low, play climbing nets will move down the hill towards the new walking track around the oval. These will be over artificial turf soft fall, allowing them to meet play space standards, while also being low maintenance. These will be low, clambering nets that provide an interactive play space for younger children, lounging space for older children and can be looked over by adults watching cricket from further up the embankment. Depending on practical requirements, a double hill slide may also be provided in this area.

Centrally located between the gathering space, the shelter and toilet will be a higher, more interactive climbing net and a "rock maze". This includes local boulders that can be jumped on, run through or climbed - including some higher rock-climbing stacks. Lower sitting boulders will be provided throughout the space to tie it together. Depending on availability, some rocks may be replaced with local artifacts such as old cattle troughs or other implements - bringing a local element to the play spaces.

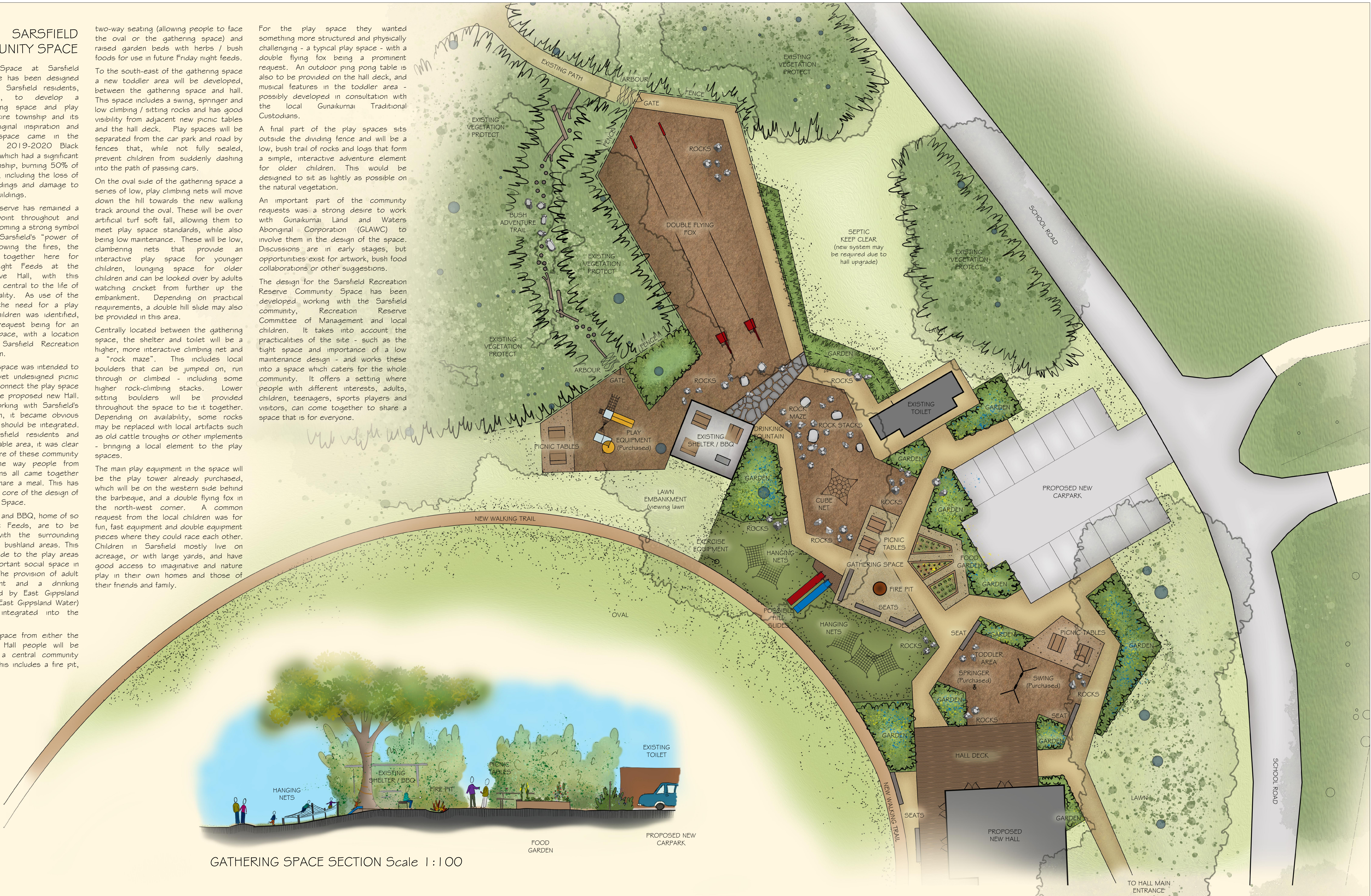
The main play equipment in the space will be the play tower already purchased, which will be on the western side behind the barbeque, and a double flying fox in the north-west corner. A common request from the local children was for fun, fast equipment and double equipment pieces where they could race each other. Children in Sarsfield mostly live on acreage, or with large yards, and have good access to imaginative and nature play in their own homes and those of their friends and family.

For the play space they wanted something more structured and physically challenging - a typical play space - with a double flying fox being a prominent request. An outdoor ping pong table is also to be provided on the hall deck, and musical features in the toddler area - possibly developed in consultation with the local Gunakurnai Traditional Custodians.

A final part of the play spaces sits outside the dividing fence and will be a low, bush trail of rocks and logs that form a simple, interactive adventure element for older children. This would be designed to sit as lightly as possible on the natural vegetation.

An important part of the community requests was a strong desire to work with Gunakurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLAWC) to involve them in the design of the space. Discussions are in early stages, but opportunities exist for artwork, bush food collaborations or other suggestions.

The design for the Sarsfield Recreation Reserve Community Space has been developed working with the Sarsfield community, Recreation Reserve Committee of Management and local children. It takes into account the practicalities of the site - such as the tight space and importance of a low maintenance design - and works these into a space which caters for the whole community. It offers a setting where people with different interests, adults, children, teenagers, sports players and visitors, can come together to share a space that is for everyone.



GATHERING SPACE SECTION Scale 1:100

SARSFIELD RECREATION RESERVE
COMMUNITY SPACE CONCEPT PLAN

Scale 1:200 @ A1 / 1:400 @ A3

