

WEBINAR: Woovookarung Dementia Friendly Forest and Sensory Trail

Thursday 25 June, 2026



Dementia
Learning &
Research
Community

Responses to audience questions from webinar presenters

“ It sounds like each of you learned a lot or had assumptions challenged. What is the main thing you feel you learned about dementia, and do you do anything differently now that you know this?

“ The experience of working on this project with people with limited experience with dementia, and a government organisation not previously engaged in creating a project with a disability focus, provided us all with an opportunity to learn from each other, assume nothing, and share our expertise as needed. The highlight of participating in the Dementia Trail for me was in the genuine and ongoing commitment of Parks Staff, in particular Siobhan & Alex to co-design with people impacted by dementia. We gained enormously from this experience because of our different backgrounds. The project gave participants impacted by dementia a wonderful positive and meaningful experience. They all loved being a part of it.

Anne Tudor (Bigger Hearts Dementia Alliance Ballarat)

“ I did not know much about dementia, the disease itself, however I knew the statistics for those affected by it were on the increase. I did not know about early onset dementia, and the journey that people affected may experience. I had not much thought about those whom care for them, and how a carer's life changes as they seek to provide the best care they can, how confusing and confronting it is for all. I learned about the community services that are present but require a person to activate these and how complex emotions are as people try to navigate themselves in this debilitating disease. There was much to learn and continues to be so.

Siobhan Rogan (formerly Parks Victoria)

“ In urban and land-use planning it's rare we are able to focus on making something 'friendly' for just one cohort (e.g. child-friendly, dementia-friendly). Are there key features of the park that are universally friendly and improve accessibility/inclusion for all? Or are they all dementia-specific?

“ If something is dementia friendly it's accessible, welcoming and available to all.

Anne Tudor (Bigger Hearts Dementia Alliance Ballarat)

“ The dementia friendly trail is available for everyone to use. It is part of the main park trail network, to promote inclusion and demonstrating that those living with dementia can share natural experience alongside everyone else. That is the key feature of the trail. The trail features which bring forward different experience opportunities (and therefore, choice) are carefully considered through co-design to ensure they can be used by someone with dementia as they experience

dementia through all stages (from being mobile and independent to needed full assistance with equipment and supervision).

While key sites in the park will have accessibility as a focus for inclusion, not all the park trails and minor sites will be able to do so. It is hoped through the health activation plan that other specific features can be included through co-design such as adaptative mountain bike experiences, vision impaired trails, child friendly areas and riding for disabled. These do need to be driven by community and/or park managers to seek funding however all plans have been written from the community consultation with these proposed directions within.

Siobhan Rogan (formerly Parks Victoria)

“ Does the trail and forest need additional funding (beyond what Parks Vic provide) to keep it going? If so, how has this funding been secured?

“ There are inevitably ongoing and maintenance costs. For instance the tree branches continue to grow & those with animals as part of the Digital Story Book experience, will need trimming from time to time so they can be seen.

Anne Tudor (Bigger Hearts Dementia Alliance Ballarat)

“ The operating cost for the trail has been so far mostly in-kind. It basically has a quarterly maintenance day for 2 staff members, so all in-kind labour. This involves blowing of the trail, emptying culverts, tree guard maintenance, wiping of signs, spraying of weeds, etc.

Weekly the site gets checked for graffiti/litter/rubbish but the site is overall well respected and not much impacted. Tree risk maintenance is the only annual add on cost that is on average \$3K /year and part of PV's normal operating budget.

Cost of making any vandalised items good, would vary but so far that has been minor. Because the trail was constructed well and initial investment was high, it has not needed any wear and tear maintenance over the last 5 years. The main cost foreseen overtime a resurface of the topping in the next 5 years which will be around \$15K, but this may be pushed out to a longer period depending weather events. We would fund this from our normal operating budget, so no additional funding is required.

So in summary, no funding outside of PV is required to maintain the trail experience.

Alexander Schipperen (Parks Victoria)