



Guide and Template Kit



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# Introduction

## Welcome to Embrace a Space.

Embrace a Space is an easy to follow, step-by-step guide for community members to come together and care for their favourite spaces.

There are more than 170 parks, reserves and gardens throughout Mandurah. Healthy open spaces, trees and lakes offer amazing environmental benefits and bring beauty and nature into our communities.

Embrace a Space aims to encourage neighbourhood connection and support mental wellbeing by fostering positive relationships between people and nature.

By connecting with other community members and being part of an Embrace a Space group, you'll join a growing number of people successfully caring for much-loved community places.

## Who is this guide for?

This guide is for anyone wanting to support their community to care for and revitalise their community spaces. This includes individuals, a self-organised community group, incorporated body or community service provider.

Embrace a Space groups that form within the City of Mandurah are eligible for support from the City to achieve the items on their activity plan.

## How does Embrace a Space work?

This guide outlines a community engagement and action process that supports groups in establishing, developing and implementing their activity plan.

The three-stage process outlined in this guide will assist community members in coming together to revitalise their local spaces and connect their community.

## How to use this guide

Each stage includes a brief explanation, as well as tips and action plans. Helpful templates and resources are included at the end of each section and are ready for you to write in.

## Getting started

Use the link below, or head to the City of Mandurah website to register an Embrace a Space group at your local space. By registering a group, we can assist you with connecting with like-minded people in your area and provide you with some additional support documents.

## [Register Here](#)



### Handy Hint

Our Handy Hints include helpful ideas about where to get further information or additional support.



## Benefits of Embrace a Space

- 🌿 Connect with other residents and regular users of your space
- 🌿 Greater investment in natural spaces leads to healthier and safer parks and reserves.
- 🌿 Community members have a chance to learn more about their local area.

# Preparing to engage with community

Hosting an Embrace a Space community meeting is an important way of connecting with like-minded people. The suggestions and comments discussed at your meeting will be used to define a vision for your space and any activities you want to take place there.

## How to prepare

Preparing for your meeting is key to ensuring that attendees can effectively communicate what they want to see in the chosen space and which activities they'd like to be involved with.

Start by preparing a map and tour of the space to identify possible activities, then consider creating a meeting run sheet by outlining possible discussion points.

## Prepare a map and tour of the space

Using an aerial photo of your space begin planning a tour that best identifies all the 'most-loved' aspects of your space. Make sure you have at least one map ready for the meeting so you can record suggested activities and mark out areas of interest on it.

Ensure that you nominate a meeting point for anyone wishing to participate in the community meeting. It's important that the meeting point is clearly visible and makes sense to the community.

## Possible Activities

Use the natural environment to prompt discussion around different activities that may take place in your chosen space to get feedback from attendees and spark conversation.

## Creating a Run Sheet and Discussion Points

When identifying discussion points, what you're really doing is selecting questions that will assist with developing the Embrace a Space Activity Plan for your space. When you're creating your discussion points, you may wish to consider:

- ✎ What has initiated your interest in Embrace a Space and your chosen reserve?
- ✎ How might your activities in this space build on existing connections in your community?
- ✎ Are you looking to build awareness or take action based on a specific topic or issue (environmental, social, etc.) in this space?

Record any specific discussion points in the [Community Meeting Run Sheet](#) on p.7.



### Having trouble with the aerial map?

Give Environmental Services a call and request an aerial of your chosen space.

**Environmental Services** | 08 9550 3941

### Who will you engage?






Identify who uses your chosen space, and who should be invited to the community meeting.

Involve residents that live near the space and consider setting a time and date that allows for parents with children at sport and fulltime workers to attend.

Engaging youth in caring for our natural spaces provides them with the opportunity to learn more about their environment and contribute to their community. These are all skills they can take into their adult lives. In turn, connecting with the environment increases resilience, benefits mental health (including depression and anxiety) and supports proper immune function.

### Promoting your meeting

Make sure that the relevant neighbours and park users know that your community meeting is taking place by using some simple engagement tools. You may consider:

-  Signs in your space
-  Contacting your local home owners association
-  Creating a flyer and letterbox drop
-  Word of mouth
-  Social media

### Creating a flyer

Use our [Community Meeting Flyer Template](#) on p.8 to develop a flyer to display in your local area and distribute to residents neighbouring your chosen space.

### Signs in your space

A large sign will be provided to promote your community meeting. This sign will note the date and time of your community meeting and should be placed at a suitable meeting point.

We suggest placing the sign out two weeks before your meeting, to maximise exposure to community members.

### Contacting your local home owners association

Getting in touch with your local home owners association is a great way to connect with people already committed to connecting your community.

### Word of Mouth and Social Media

Encourage people you meet while in your space to invite their friends and neighbours to come along to your community meeting. If your area has a dedicated Facebook page or group, it is a good idea to post your community meeting on there to encourage people to attend.

### What are the key messages?

Once you've determined who you're going to invite to your community meeting, it's time to identify the key messages you'll use when talking about caring for your chosen space.

Key messages are phrases you can use when discussing the aim for taking action in your chosen space. In the action table, we've suggested a few general messages to get you started. We recommend you add some of your own ideas based what you think is important about your chosen space.

# Community Meeting Run Sheet

Ensure attendees complete the Activity Sign-in Sheet

- 1. Welcome/Introduction** **5 mins**  
Help people feel welcome and ensure that everyone has a chance to introduce themselves.
  
- 2. Introduce Embrace a Space** **5 mins**  
Discuss Embrace a Space in general terms and warm people up to the types of questions that will be explored.
  
- 3. Introduce ground rules and the flow of the meeting** **5 mins**  
Make sure you outline some guiding rules at the start. Our [Hosting a Conversation Guide](#) on p.12 can assist you here.  
Let your group know that you will be taking notes to accurately reflect the group's conversation.
  
- 4. Site tour** **15 mins**  
As you walk around the different sections within your space, start a conversation about different topics or activities that may take place in those areas. Your areas and some activity ideas should be noted on your **aerial map**.
  
- 5. Key messages**  
Identifying your key messages may help you direct the conversation if it runs off track. What do you feel is the most important part of caring for this space? Common key messages are:  
*Preserving the natural environment is everyone's responsibility*  
*Working together means we can care for our environment and our community into the future*  

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- 6. Setting up the conversation: Values** **10 mins**  
Start by asking the group what they like most about your chosen space and what they value about this space and their lifestyles in this community.
  
- 7. Strengthening the conversation: Actions and Activities** **10 mins**  
What activities could your group undertake in your chosen reserve that align with your values?
  
- 8. Supporting the conversation: Resources** **10 mins**  
Consider what resources you may need for each activity. What skills do your group members have? What resources may you need to request from the City?
  
- 9. Conclusion** **5 mins**
  - Summarise key points from the meeting to ensure you have captured the most important points.
  - Ensure any suggestions and potential activities are marked on your map.
  - Ask attendees if they'd like to be contacted about the Embrace a Space group's activities.
  - Ensure you have everyone's contact details.



Join us for a community meeting to discuss how neighbours and park users can care for and protect



Help us design fun ways to bring the community together, care for the natural environment and make this space flourish.

### **Community Meeting Details**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting spot: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information about this Embrace a Space group, please contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

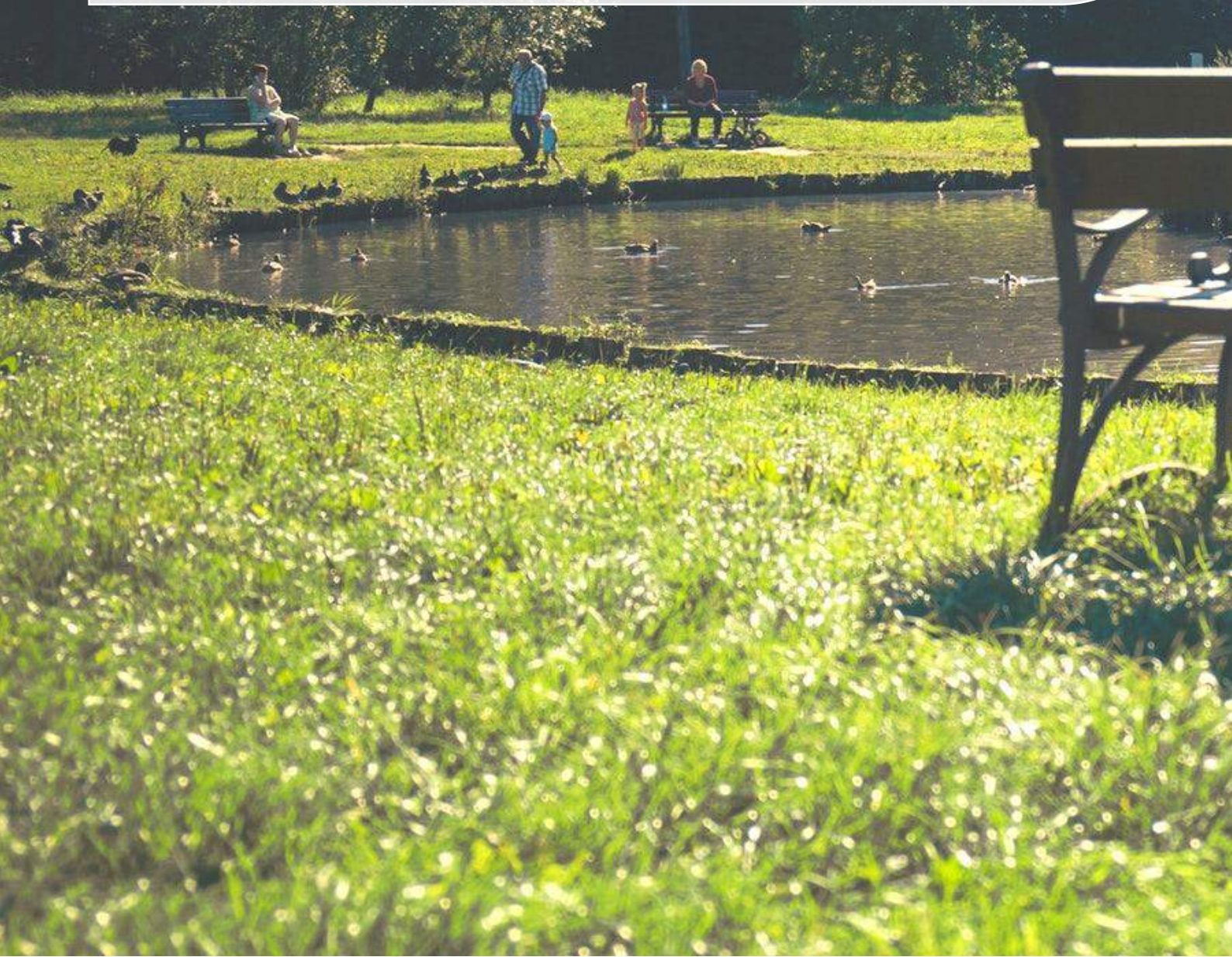
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# Potential Embrace a Space Activities

Your community meeting is a great opportunity to discuss the different activities that may suit your chosen space.

We've included some useful ideas to generate conversation at your community meeting.

Your chosen space includes	Potential activities may include
Waterbodies (river, urban lake)	Water monitoring, koi control, revegetation
Garden beds	Hand weeding events, plantings
Park trees	Bird watching, habitat boxes
Infrastructure	Maintenance, cleaning, community events
Open spaces	Market stalls, sporting activities



# Have a Community Conversation

We understand that every community is different and so each Embrace a Space conversation may run a little differently. We recommend a three-step approach to building a conversation that identifies your community's values, aims and actions for your chosen space.

## Step 1: Identify community values

People are more likely to engage in a conversation about caring for their spaces when there is a clear link with things that they value, are interested in and care about.

This means it is best not to start your community conversation with a presentation about Embrace a Space, or any other information that you think might increase awareness or change attitudes.

Instead, ask people to try and describe the values shared by the community, and what makes the community tick. Getting people to think about shared community values is a great way to start the conversation and get people on the same page.

The important thing is to let people tell you what is most important to them. Create a space where people can talk about what they love, their experiences and view of the community, and the space.

This provides the foundation for creating an action plan to care for your community space.

## Step 2: Link the values with the space

Once there is a good understanding of the community values, you can begin brainstorming key focus areas that support these values.

Encourage attendees to think through each section of your chosen space, and which activities could take place in your space, in line with the community values. For example, if the community values this space because they can be at one with nature, then preserving native plants and encouraging habitat for wildlife may become the group's aims.

This conversation would result in a list of focus areas and potential aims that the Embrace a Space group may wish to focus their activities on.

## Step 3: Discuss key actions for the space

At this stage, people should have a clear understanding of what they value most and the connection between their values and the aims for your chosen space. Discussing the different activities and actions the group may take to achieve their aims is the final step in hosting a community conversation.



### Haven't hosted a conversation before?

Head to the [Hosting a Conversation Guide](#) on p.12 for some clever tips on engaging with your group. If you need a little more direction, contact Environmental Services to discuss hosting a conversation that sets your group up for success!

Use the [Workshopping your Space Template](#) on p.13 to record the values, aims and activities for your community meeting. Ensure that each of the activities aligns with an aim, so you know that your volunteer efforts are on track to benefit your community.

Take this opportunity to ask attendees which activities they'd like to be involved in, and make a note of this interest.

Finally, consider what resources or support you may need to carry out your activities and realise your community aims. Make a note of these requests so you can discuss them further when you meet with Environmental Services.

## Important Points

### Sharing the outcome

Ensure you collect the contact email addresses or other contact information of people that are interested in being involved in the transformation of your space. The contact person will be responsible for providing meeting notes and regular updates to group members, and communicating any group updates with the Environmental Services team.

### Taking the right amount of time

It may take more than one meeting for your group to work through each of the necessary stages and develop an Activity Plan that supports the community's vision.



# Hosting a Community Conversation

Here's our top five tips to hosting a community conversation that goes places

## 1. Adopt a positive, inspiring and fun approach

A positive outlook to caring for your space will ensure that attendees don't become overwhelmed or feel like their actions won't have an impact. Community members of all ages will be more engaged if the approach is positive and solutions focussed.

## 2. Keep it local

If people understand that participating in this group will provide a tangible benefit to their local area, they will be more motivated to take action.

## 3. Avoid jargon

It can be easy to turn people off with complicated language. Keep the conversation simple and easy to understand. Listen to your community and find out what motivates them, so you know what your vision should address.

## 4. Set parameters

Set some 'ground rules' so that all attendees feel comfortable participating and sharing their ideas. These may include:

- Having a 'kitchen table' conversation where everyone participates and no one dominates.
- Believing there are no right answers. Encourage attendees to draw on their own experiences, views and beliefs. There is no need to be an expert to participate.
- Keeping an open mind and listening carefully.
- Ensuring the conversation stays on track with minimal rambling or going off track.
- Supporting the belief that it is okay to disagree, but not to be disagreeable.
- Having fun!

## 5. Troubleshooting Guide

IF	THEN
<b>A few people dominate the conversation</b>	Engage each person from the start. Make sure everyone says something early on. Ask, "Are there any new voices on this issue?" or "Does anyone else want to jump in here?" Be direct and say, "We seem to be hearing from the same people. Let's give others a chance to talk."
<b>The group gets off track or a person rambles on and on</b>	Ask, "How does what you're talking about relate to our vision?" or "What does that lead you to think about (the question at hand)?" If you can't get a person to focus, interrupt him/ her when they take a breath and move to another person or question.
<b>Someone seems to have a personal grudge about an issue and keeps talking about it</b>	Remind the person where the group is trying to focus and ask him/her to respond to the question at hand. Acknowledge the person and move on. Say, "I can understand where you are coming from, but we need to move on." If the person continues to be disruptive, interrupt them. Say, "We hear you, but we're not talking about that right now."
<b>People argue</b>	Don't let it bother you too much — it's okay as long as it is not mean-spirited. Find out what's behind the argument; ask why people disagree to get to the bottom of it. Break the tension with a joke or something funny. If necessary, stop to review the ground rules or take a break.

# Workshopping your space

The goal of our Embrace a Space group is to

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Our vision of this space is

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To see this vision come to life, our group would like to

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In order to complete these activities, we would need support in the form of

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The native species of plants and wildlife in our space include

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Future improvements for our space may look like

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## The benefits of spending time in nature

Engaging children and youth to care for community spaces is important to ensuring our natural environment has lifelong caretakers. Young people are able to **learn** about their environment, **contribute** to their community and take that learning into their adult lives.

In turn, connecting with the environment increases **resilience**, benefits **mental health** (including depression and anxiety) and supports proper **immune function**.

### The environment is good for our health

Did you know, patients who had a view of nature from their hospital room had shorter recovery times after surgery?

# Plan your next steps

## Connecting with the City

By this stage, you have held your community meeting and developed an activity plan for your space. You are now ready to discuss your Embrace a Space Activity Plan with Environmental Services.

### Schedule a meeting





Get in touch with the Environmental Services team to schedule a meeting. You will need to ensure that any interested group members are invited to attend.

### Bring your prepared Activity Plan

At this meeting you will discuss your groups Embrace a Space values vision, aims and goals and proposed activities. Share how the group came up with these and what support you'll need to implement your Activity Plan. Environmental Services will chat about the support available to your group and provide some guidance around the activities that can be supported in your chosen space.

### What does support look like?

Support from the City can take the form of:

-  Provision of catering supplies for community events
-  Assistance with marketing templates and support promoting events
-  Support with providing native plants for planting
-  Advice with coordinating group activities

## Keeping in touch





Your contact person will remain the link between your Embrace a Space group and the City of Mandurah.

Your group will have the opportunity to promote their Activity Plan on a large sign installed in your space. The Activity Plan sign is a useful tool for updating your group and the local community about upcoming events.

There may be ways of communicating with your group and community that work better than a sign. It's important to do what works best for your space.

## Launching your group

Congratulations! By now you would have:

-  Explored your community values
-  Established a vision for your space
-  Designed activities to keep your group engaged in achieving the vision
-  Determined what support and resources are available to you from the group and the City.

Hosting a launch event is a special way to acknowledge all the effort you and your group have put into your chosen space and community.

You may choose to put on a BBQ, run a community tour of your chosen space or have meet-and-greet for the wider community to meet the Embrace a Space group. The options are endless and the City is able to support you with a launch event for your group.

## Regular activities

Every Embrace a Space group is unique and it can take time, commitment and effort to build an active group. Having regular activities or events is a great way to maintain interest, increase skill and capacity and ensure your space is activated and cared for.

There are a number of ways to ensure your group continues running smoothly. Some of the most important ones are included below.

### Activities

- 🌿 Carry out activities with the group as suggested in your Activity Plan.
- 🌿 Ensure that the Activity Sign-In Sheet is completed and returned to the City for each activity. This is essential to meet insurance requirements.
- 🌿 Review and evaluate activities. Make notes of what worked well and what could have been better. An attitude of constant improvement will ensure group members stay motivated.
- 🌿 Ensure that the necessary equipment and supervision for an Embrace a Space activity is organised with as much notice as possible.

### Mentoring

- 🌿 Make community volunteers feel recognised, appreciated and supported
- 🌿 Use peoples strengths and abilities in your activities.
- 🌿 Ensure you allow flexibility for people to try something new.

### Safety

- 🌿 Maintain a register of volunteers who hold a First Aid Certificate.
- 🌿 Ensure the safety induction is delivered at the start of each activity. Embedding safe work practices in your group is incredibly important.
- 🌿 Report the loss or damage of supplied Embrace a Space equipment (including trowels and gloves) to the City.
- 🌿 Report any mechanical or general park maintenance through the City's online [Contact Us form](#) or through Snap, Send, Solve.

### Recruitment

- 🌿 Encourage neighbours and users of the space to join the Embrace a Space group. Ensure the local community feel welcome to join in the group's activities.
- 🌿 Promote activities to current and prospective group members.
- 🌿 Adopt a positive, inspiring and fun approach to your group

### Become part of the bigger picture

Come along to a Mandurah Environmental Volunteer Alliance (MEVA) meeting. MEVA aims to connect environmental volunteers and interested community members to discuss upcoming events, ideas and requests for assistance.

These informal sessions run on the last Thursday of each month.

Sign up to our mailing list to learn more about upcoming MEVA meetings and other environmental events.





Embrace a Space is supported by the City of Mandurah and delivered by the community. For more information about the program and how to get involved, please contact: City of Mandurah Environmental Services team

P: (08) 9550 3941

E: [environmental.services@mandurah.wa.gov.au](mailto:environmental.services@mandurah.wa.gov.au)