

GEELONG PLAY STRATEGY: PART 1

Executive Summary, The Value of Play, Vision and Planning Principles, Existing Play Spaces in the City, Community Consultation, Analysis, Recommendations



**GEELONG: A GREAT PLACE TO PLAY
2012 - 2021**

WWW.GEELONGAUSTRALIA.COM.AU

CITY OF GREATER
GEELONG

Disclaimer:

The information contained in this report is intended for the specific use of the within named party to which it is addressed ("the communityvibe client") only. All recommendations by communityvibe are based on information provided by or on behalf of the communityvibe client and communityvibe has relied on such information being correct at the time this report is prepared.

communityvibe shall take no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to the communityvibe client or to any third party whether direct or consequential as a result of or in any way arising from any unauthorised use of this report or any recommendations contained within.

Version:

December 2011 V4

Date:

December 2011

Prepared By:

Wendy Holland and Shaun Quayle

communityvibe

5 Allison St

BENDIGO VIC 3550

Ph: 0438 433 555

E: wendy@communityvibe.com.au

www.communityvibe.com.au

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1	5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong	27
1.0 Introduction	6	5.1 Number of Play Spaces and Play Space Hierarchy	27
1.1 Aim of the Strategy	6	5.1.1 Local / Neighbourhood Play Spaces	27
1.2 Structure of the Strategy	7	5.1.2 District	28
1.3 Methodology	8	5.1.3 Sub-Regional Play Spaces	29
1.4 Scope of the Study	8	5.1.4 Regional Play Spaces	29
2.0 Our Community	11	5.1.5 Statewide / National Play Spaces	30
3.0 The Value of Play	16	5.1.6 Centre-Based Play Spaces	31
3.1 Definition of Play	16	5.1.7 Other Play Spaces	32
3.2 Types of Play	16	5.2 Distribution of Play Spaces	33
3.3 Definition of Play Space	16	5.3 Assessment of the Quality of Public Play Space Opportunities	35
3.4 Benefits of Play	17	5.4 Assessment of the Quality of Supervised Centre-based Play Spaces	37
3.5 The Value of Play to a Community	18	5.5 Gaps in Provision of Play Opportunities	41
3.6 Creating Play Value	20	6.0 Community Consultation	44
3.7 Barriers to Play	21	7.0 Analysis of Gaps and Opportunities	47
4.0 Vision and Planning Principles	24	7.1 Gaps	47
4.1 Vision	24	7.2 Opportunities	49
4.2 Planning Principles	24	8.0 Recommendations and Priorities	52
		9.0 Definitions	60

Executive Summary

The City of Greater Geelong recognises that play not only contributes to a child's health, wellbeing, education and physical, social and cognitive development, but is also an invaluable tool in the development of strong community connections. Play helps children to learn about the world in which they live, learn how to get along with others, engage with nature, challenge themselves, learn new skills and to simply enjoy themselves.

While we commonly attribute play to the world of children, in fact, everyone can benefit from play. Parents, grandparents and carers can benefit from play through their interactions with their children or children in their care during play. They can develop strong bonds and relationships. They can also pass on skills and knowledge to children by teaching them about properties of materials, how to master certain activities and about the natural world. Parents and carers can also gain enjoyment from watching children play and may develop social connections with other parents, grandparents and carers who may be present at the same site.

Play does not only occur in designated playgrounds or play spaces. Instead, play can occur in parks, at recreation reserves, at supervised early childhood centres, in the street, in a shopping centre, at the beach, in the bush, in a school ground, in a backyard or anywhere a person chooses to

play. It is therefore important to consider all areas of public space as potential play sites and design them in such a way as to encourage independent, spontaneous play and in whatever forms it may occur.



The importance of play is recognised at the international level by Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This key document recognises play as a right for all children. The City of Greater Geelong also recognises the important role play offers in relation to the development of children and their families and in the development of prosperous and cohesive communities. It has therefore commissioned this Play Strategy to identify a strategic framework to guide play space design, development, management and maintenance throughout the municipality over the next ten years.



An extensive community consultation and literature review were undertaken as part of the Play Strategy to identify relevant policy directions and strategies and to understand the needs of both adults and children in the community in terms of future play opportunities. Throughout the study period, 441 people were consulted via key stakeholder interviews; reference group workshops; young people's mobile workshop; children's surveys and interviews; parents and carers surveys and interviews; written submissions; and children's art exhibitions. Many of the drawings produced by primary school children through the art exhibition are included throughout the Strategy.

From this consultation, a vision and planning principles were developed. The vision adopted by the Play Strategy is:

Geelong: A Great Place to Play

The planning principles to accompany the vision state that play spaces in the City of Greater Geelong will:

- Encourage a diversity of experiences.
- Be inclusive and accessible.
- Be inviting and welcoming.
- Be unique in design.
- Be connected to communities and transport links.
- Be challenging, yet safe.
- Be sustainable.
- Promote community interactions.
- Be well designed and planned.
- Respect and protect heritage, natural, biodiversity and cultural features.
- Incorporate the natural environment.
- Be well maintained.
- Extend children's learning, skills and early development.

There are currently 276 public play spaces managed by the City of Greater Geelong and an additional 62 supervised early childhood centre-based play spaces located in facilities operated by City of Greater Geelong.

When planning and developing public play spaces, it is recommended that priority be given to local play spaces and regional play spaces over district and sub-regional play spaces. Local play spaces are accessible to the whole community due to their location within residential neighbourhoods and they provide a range of play opportunities which children and their parents

Executive Summary

/ carers can access independently or via active transport. These spaces provide valuable, inexpensive physical activity and socialisation opportunities in communities. It is important, nevertheless, that these spaces are well designed, inclusive, feature appropriate supporting infrastructure and offer a diversity of play opportunities in an attractive setting. Regional play spaces, because of their size and catchment, can provide a much greater range of activities and experiences and may attract people from the entire municipality and beyond. High quality regional facilities can instil a sense of pride and unique character in communities and add to the sense of place. That being said, there is still a place for district and sub-regional play spaces.



A design matrix has been developed to provide an indication of the type of experiences, opportunities and infrastructure that should be available at

play spaces, depending upon the hierarchy in which various play spaces have been categorised. A more detailed section of the report identifies 31 different design considerations and provides guidelines on how and why such considerations need to be developed. It is envisaged that these guidelines will form a valuable tool for any organisation involved in the design of play spaces such as City of Greater Geelong staff, developers, community based organisations such as early childhood centre committees, businesses and others.

Whilst the City of Greater Geelong has some excellent examples of public play spaces and supervised centre-based play spaces, including the Youth Activities Area on the Geelong Waterfront, The Play Space at Eastern Park in Geelong, Eastern Beach in Geelong, Sparrow Park in West Geelong, Barwon Valley Fun Park in Belmont and Barwon Heads Community Play Park, there are some gaps that need to be addressed to improve play value for residents and visitors to the region.

This Play Strategy has therefore identified opportunities to:

- Improve supporting infrastructure at play spaces, such as natural shade, seats and paths.
- Improve landscaping and public art at play spaces.
- Create better connections to cycling / walking networks.
- Identify appropriate resource levels to maintain and renew existing play stock.
- Improve clarity regarding the process for developing play spaces.
- Improve maintenance for supervised early childhood play settings.
- Improve play value and distribution of play spaces throughout the municipality, utilising design guidelines contained within this Strategy.

Executive Summary

- Improve play opportunities throughout the municipality by focussing on developing a diversity of opportunities and creating informal, spontaneous play opportunities throughout the City for people of all ages and abilities as well as programs to encourage play in public spaces.
- Increase the number of public play spaces to ensure that the majority of residents in the urban area can access a public play space within 400m of their home (approximately a five minute walk).
- Provide play opportunities for under-served age groups, e.g. 0-2 year olds and young people over 10 years of age.
- Increase natural play opportunities and loose materials in play spaces.
- Increase the number of play spaces which offer tactile / sound / sensory experiences.
- Improve opportunities for people with disabilities to access and use play spaces.
- Increase the number of play spaces which offer challenging activities and develop a risk-benefit assessment to support these activities.
- Improve marketing practices, including web based opportunities.
- Identify and develop partnerships with schools and other community-based organisations.
- Shift the focus from fixed equipment to more moveable / flexible equipment in supervised centre-based play spaces.
- The building of several Integrated Children's Centres in the near future where best practice play design principles will be able to be put to use.

- Improve coordination of play space development through the establishment of an Internal-Council working group and identification of Council champions to progress the Strategy.



A detailed list of prioritised actions is contained within the Recommendations section of the Play Strategy.



1.0 Introduction

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Aim of the Strategy

The overall purpose of the Play Strategy is to provide the City of Greater Geelong with a plan for the provision of well located, well designed, fun and accessible play spaces across the municipality. According to the Project Brief, this Play Strategy has the following specific aims:

1. To consult and encourage community involvement including children, in the planning, building and evaluating of play spaces
2. To communicate a **clear vision** in relation to a Council play strategy which has relevance to the diverse needs of people of all ages in the community such as children, parents, grandparents and carers including the provision of public and centre-based play spaces.
3. To establish appropriate **principles, hierarchical structures and quality benchmarks** by which to inform Council, developers, and service providers in the location of, design, refurbishment, enhancement and management of public play spaces and supervised centre-based play spaces / play environments.
4. To **promote the importance of play** as an essential part of children's development, health and wellbeing, social interaction, and creation of community connections for both children and families.
5. To establish **clear rationale for the delivery of play environments** in public settings and in centre-based play spaces across the municipality.
6. To establish **guidelines** for the minimum provision and management of outdoor playground environments and associated infrastructure within Council owned facilities.
7. To **improve the design standards** of all playgrounds throughout the municipality.
8. To provide a strong **commitment and leadership** to ensure that quality play environments and experiences are available for all children and families.
9. To establish appropriate **policies and procedures** to ensure maintenance and inspection regimes are consistently and routinely implemented to ensure that local playgrounds are safe and structurally sound.
10. To produce a single **cohesive and integrated Municipal Play Strategy** for the City of Greater Geelong through collaboration between Council's Recreation and Open Space, Parks, Family Services and Community Development Departments.
11. To ensure that the Strategy **complements the Infrastructure Development Guidelines** and other relevant documentation such as the Australian Safety Standards.
12. To develop a comprehensive **action and implementation plan** for progressive refurbishment and upgrade of existing playgrounds and installation of new playgrounds.
13. To provide an **equitable distribution of quality playgrounds** at facilities across the municipality and identify gaps or shortfalls in current playground provision which Council can work toward addressing over time.

1.0 Introduction

1.2 Structure of the Strategy

This Play Strategy comprises of two parts, in addition to two appendices:

Part 1 comprises of an overview of the value of play; the development of a vision and planning principles; an overview of the current provision of play; an analysis of gaps and opportunities; and the development of a series of prioritised recommendations.

Part 2 comprises of discussion about planning and development of play spaces; management, marketing and maintenance of play spaces; provision of planning and design guidelines; and best practice case studies for centre-based play spaces. There are a series of recommendations contained within this section of the Strategy.

Appendix 1 comprises of details of the community consultation undertaken and the literature review.

Appendix 2 comprises of an overview of the spatial mapping processes undertaken; an overview of each precinct (suburb) incorporating population projections and play opportunities; an audit of each play space; mapping; and a staged work plan.



Figure 1: Child playing on pirate ship at the Geelong Play Space

1.0 Introduction

1.3 Methodology

A detailed methodology was developed in order to gain the information required to prepare the Play Strategy. This methodology included:

- Regular Meetings with the Project Control Group and Project Working Group.
- Two project bulletins.
- Literature review.
- Assessment of the value of play.
- Trends analysis.
- Demographic analysis.
- Spatial analysis.
- Key stakeholder interviews.
- Reference group workshop.
- Surveys of families and carers.
- Children's art exhibition.
- Written submissions.
- Mobile workshop with young people.
- Visual inspection of a sample of play spaces.
- Development of play space hierarchy.
- Identification of industry standards.
- Identification and analysis of gaps and opportunities.
- Development of a management and maintenance plan.
- Development of guidelines and policy directions.
- Development of a works implementation schedule.

1.4 Scope of the Study

Although play spaces can include a range of different types of places, both indoors and outdoors, for the purposes of this Play Strategy, play spaces refer to the following:

- Areas of public open space containing playground equipment.
- Areas of public open space without playground equipment.
- Public sports reserves containing playground equipment.
- Public sports reserves without playground equipment.
- Play spaces located in early childhood and neighbourhood house facilities (referred to as centre-based play spaces throughout the document) which accommodate services such as kindergartens, long day care and occasional care programs (which may not necessarily be operated by Council, however are Council owned facilities).



Figure 2: Play space in Corio Community Park

1.0 Introduction

Open space areas such as bush land, conservation areas, coastal reserves, roadside reserves, etc, although often used for play, have not been specifically identified as 'play spaces' in this Play Strategy. However such areas have been considered in the spatial analysis as providing important play opportunities where gaps exist in the provision of formal playground or other public open space.

Privately owned play spaces such as indoor playgrounds, play spaces at aquatic centres (occasional care play spaces at aquatic centres included but not water park play spaces) and caravan parks, although owned in some instances by City of Greater Geelong, have not been included in the spatial analysis, as these play spaces are not always accessible to the broader community, or are only accessible upon payment of an entrance fee at certain times. Non-Council owned centre-based play spaces have not been included in this report.

Similarly, school playgrounds, although identified on each map in a different colour to public play spaces, have not been assessed as part of the audit for each suburb or precinct as they are not owned or managed by City of Greater Geelong and details of access and opportunities

contained within these places is not known. As can be seen from the spatial mapping, however, schools can play an extremely valuable role in ensuring that there is a play space within 400 metres of urban homes. Access to school play spaces, through Joint Use Agreements and other management and partnership agreements needs to be a high priority of the Play Strategy so that greater spatial coverage of play opportunities is achieved.

The Play Strategy reflects the Victorian Local Government Act, Section 3E, specifically two of the functions of Council noted in this Act, i.e.:

- Planning and providing services and facilities for the local community; and
- Providing and maintaining community infrastructure in the municipal district.



2.0 Our Community

2.0 Our Community

The City of Greater Geelong features the largest regional city in Victoria, along with a number of smaller townships and rural localities in its 1,250 square kilometre land area. Located 75 kilometres south west of Melbourne, this thriving centre is an important commercial centre for south western Victoria and features a range of industries, rural areas, residential developments and historic coastal towns and resorts.



Figure 3: Maze at Sparrow Park

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recorded an enumerated population (excluding overseas visitors) of 193,615 at the time of the 2006 Australian Census. It estimates that the current population is around 221,635 and that the population will grow at an average annual rate of 1.59% each year (between 2011 and 2031).

In ten years time there is expected to be an additional 40,427 residents living within the City of Greater Geelong, making a total of 262,062; and by 2031 this figure is estimated to be 303,729 (82,094 more residents than in 2011).

Population increases over the past ten years have been attributed to the growth in service industries and the demand for coastal resort living, i.e. 'sea change'. The following graph shows the expected increase in population for various age groupings within the municipality over the next twenty years.

2.0 Our Community

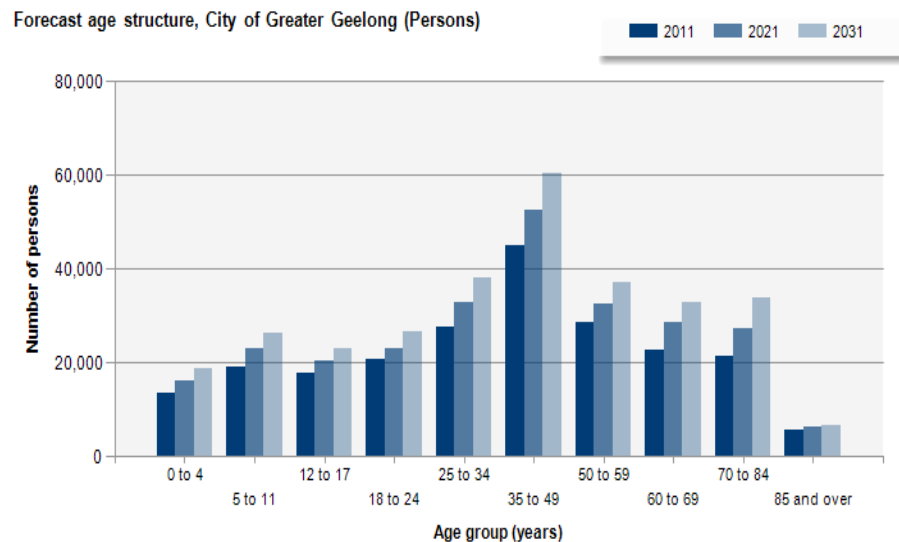


Figure 4: Sourced from City of Greater Geelong Website: Population Forecasts

Of particular relevance to the play strategy is the number of young people expecting to reside in the municipality over the next ten to twenty years (noting that play spaces are not only used by young people). The following table demonstrates the expected increase in young people¹:

Age Group	2011	2021	2031	Change 2011 - 2031
0-4	13,606	16,046	18,767	+5,161
5-11	18,946	22,921	26,355	+7,409
12-17	17,718	20,372	23,069	+5,351
TOTAL	50,270	59,339	68,191	+17,921

Larger numbers of families with children and teenagers (the traditional users of play spaces) reside in areas such as Corio, Grovedale-Marshall, Ocean Grove, Leopold, Newtown, Clifton Springs, Belmont, Lara and Highton. These areas will continue to house high numbers of young people over the next twenty years.

Armstrong Creek is likely to become home to a significant number of young people by 2031. An increase in the number of young people is also expected in the Rural Bellarine – South Barwon area and ‘Other Urban – Corio’ (an area bounded by Robbs Road, Geelong-Ballan Road, Staceys Road, Bacchus Marsh Road, Windermere Road, O’Hallorans Road, Canterbury Road, Forest Road and the railway line in the north, the Hovell Creek, Torresdale Road, the Princes Freeway, Broderick Road, Mont View Road, Bacchus Marsh Road, Plantation Road, Matthews Road, Anakie Road and the railway line in the east, Rollins Road, the Moorabool River and the Barwon River in the south and Golden Plains Shire in the west). The following table identifies the areas where a change in numbers of young people is likely to be significant:

¹ City of Greater Geelong website, *Population Forecasts*: <http://forecast2.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=268&pg=5210>

2.0 Our Community

Suburb	Age Groups					
	2011			2031		
	0-4	5-11	12-17	0-4	5-11	12-17
Armstrong Creek	140	215	156	3041	4544	3565
Other Urban Bellarine – South Barwon	166	194	1045	630	809	1034
Other Urban - Corio	286	510	458	1303	1134	544
Rural Bellarine – South Barwon	248	472	413	861	1651	1460

Table 1: Areas where the number of young people is expected to grow significantly²

Compared to Victoria as a whole, there is a slightly higher percentage of indigenous people living in the Greater Geelong community (0.7% compared with (0.5%) and a slightly higher proportion of local residents born in Australia 79.0% compared with 71.1%). Main countries of birth for non-Australian born residents include United Kingdom, Italy, Croatia, New Zealand, Netherlands and Germany. Predictably, the most common languages spoken at home, other than English, are Italian and Croatian. If the number of non-English speakers increases, there may be a need to translate any information developed to promote play opportunities into key community languages.

The City of Greater Geelong has a similar proportion of young people under the age of 17 (24.0%), compared with Victoria (23.5%) but a larger percentage of people over 60 years of age (20.5% compared with

17.9%). There are smaller percentages of people in the City of Greater Geelong in the 25-34 and 35-49 age cohorts.

The following graph, sourced from profile.id.com.au compares the various age cohorts for the City against the Victorian average.

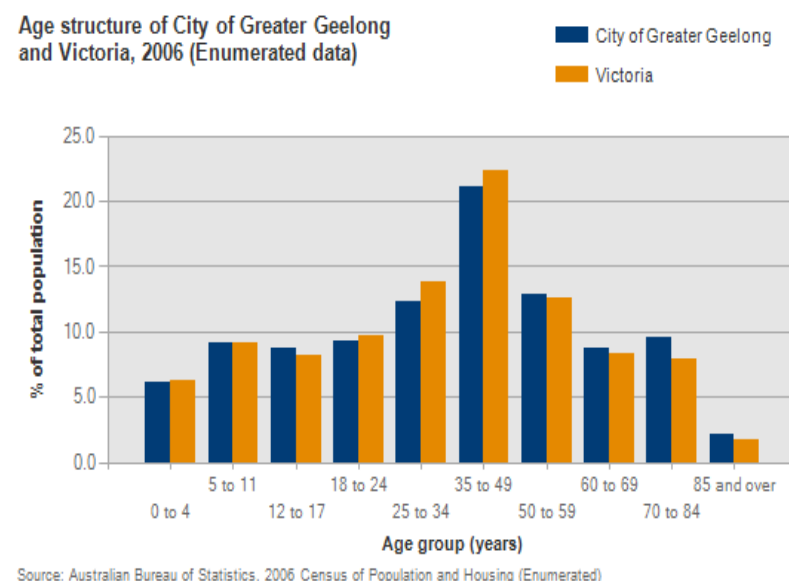


Figure 5: Sourced from City of Greater Geelong's Website: Population Forecasts

An analysis of weekly household income of Geelong residents shows that there are a greater number of low income households earning \$500 or less compared with Victoria, and a lower proportion of high income households, i.e. those earning \$1,700 or more. However, these figures

² City of Greater Geelong website (forecast.id):
<http://forecast2.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=268&pg=5310>

2.0 Our Community

need to take into consideration that the size of households can vary considerably and that many retirees have small incomes but may have other capital resources. Similarly, an analysis of individual weekly income levels shows that 45.7% of local residents (compared with 41.8% of Victorians) are considered to be low income earners, i.e. they earn less than \$400 per week; and 14.6% of City of Greater Geelong residents earn a high income (compared with 17.1% of Victorians), i.e. \$1,000 or more per week.

According to the ABS 2006 Census data, there were 1,044 young people under 19 years of age living in the City of Greater Geelong who require assistance with their self care activities because of a disability or long term health condition (other than usual care required for babies and toddlers). Whilst this figure needs to be used with caution, it provides us with some indication of the potential number of young people in the community who may have difficulties accessing and using community based facilities such as play spaces.

In terms of communication about issues such as play spaces, 55.0% of households in the City of Greater Geelong are connected to the internet – 35.3% have broadband connection, 19.2% have dial-up connection and 0.6% has another form of connection. This compares with 58.6% of Victorian households. When developing communication strategies and play space surveys, it is important to offer hard copies of information and documents to cater for those people who do not have internet access.

Between 2001 and 2006, 69,698 residents (35.3% of the population) moved house, either within the City of Greater Geelong or from other locations in Victoria, Australia or overseas. These residents may not

necessarily be aware of the location of play spaces in their local area or across the City; hence efforts will continually need to be made to increase awareness of play opportunities.

In terms of transport to destinations such as play spaces, 8.2% of households have no vehicles; 35.2% have one vehicle; 36.6% have two vehicles; and 14.1% have three or more vehicles. Figures for Victoria are fairly similar, although there are a slightly higher percentage of households in the City of Greater Geelong with only one vehicle. Hence the need to provide local play spaces with safe and active transport routes is very important.



Figure 6: Play Space at Eastern Beach



3.0 The Value of Play

3.0 The Value of Play

3.1 Definition of Play

Play is spontaneous activity freely chosen by people as a way of expressing themselves; exploring the world in which they live; socialising with others; challenging themselves; and having fun.

The importance of play is recognised at an international level as being an invaluable component of children's lives and their development. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child³ states:

"That every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts".

³ United Nations – cited on International Play Association website:
http://www.ipaworld.org/ipa/ipa_article31.html

3.2 Types of Play

There are three main types of play:

Type of Play	Components
Cognitive	imaginative play, sensory experiences, creating and manipulation of objects – mazes, cubby houses, etc
Social	undertaken with other children – imaginative games, role plays, hop scotch, snakes and ladders, giant chess sets, etc
Physical / active play	running, jumping, balancing, rolling, swinging, climbing, etc

3.3 Definition of Play Space

The term 'play space' refers to the entire site where play can occur, rather than just the site where play equipment or opportunities are located. Play spaces can be formal or informal and provide both structured and unstructured play opportunities. A play space may include landscaping, paths, lighting, fencing, open space for ball games, seating, shade structures, toilets, picnic areas, drinking fountains and BBQs as well as traditional play ground equipment (such as swings, slides and climbing structures) or other items which can be used for play, such as logs, rocks, sand, mounds, water features, etc. Play spaces can be located in parks, at recreation reserves, in early childhood settings, in the street, at the beach, in the bush, in natural settings, plazas or anywhere a person chooses to play.

3.0 The Value of Play

3.4 Benefits of Play

According to the International Play Association⁴, play is “one of the best means to ensure the maximum potential development of every individual and the communities in which they live. Play stimulates creativity and is essential to the emotional, cognitive and physical development of the whole child, regardless of their level of ability”. Play, particularly in centre-based settings, also has enormous potential to educate children about themselves, others and the world in which they live.

Best Play, produced by three UK organisations (National Playing Fields Association, The Children’s Play Council and PLAYLINK⁵) identifies the benefits of play for children as:

- “Freedom, choice and control over their actions.
- Test boundaries and explore risks.
- Physical, social and intellectual experiences”.



Figure 7: Example of cognitive play at Geelong Play Space, Eastern Park

These organisations also identify the benefits of play developed over time for children as:

- “Independence and self-esteem.
- Social interaction and respect for others.
- Supports well-being, healthy growth and development.
- Increases knowledge and understanding.
- Promotes creativity and capacity to learn.”⁶

⁴ International Play Association – website:
<http://www.ipaworld.org/home.html>

⁵ The National Playing Fields Association, The Children’s Play Council and PLAYLINK (2000) *Best Play*

⁶ Ibid

3.0 The Value of Play

3.5 The Value of Play to a Community

Whilst there is generally support for the provision of play opportunities within a local government area and recognition of the physical and mental benefits that play and physical activity can offer, e.g.:

- Improved balance and coordination, resulting in fewer falls.
- Stronger muscles, joints and bones.
- Improved motor skills.
- Greater sense of achievement.
- Higher energy and concentration levels.
- Less likely to become overweight or obese.
- Improved confidence and self-esteem.
- Improved body image.
- Reduced risk of type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure.
- Reduced likelihood of suffering from depression and anxiety.
- Reduced stress levels.
- Reduction in incidence and severity of illness and disability.
- Increased life expectancy.

The level of support is sometimes contested. But what is the cost of not providing such opportunities for physical activity?

From a health perspective, physical inactivity “is estimated to cost the Australian community around \$10 billion nationally each year in direct health care costs; obesity is as high as \$5 billion”¹. VicHealth estimates that physical inactivity is responsible for approximately 8,000 deaths nationally each year¹.



Figure 8: Child riding scooter at Sparrow Park

3.0 The Value of Play

Local play spaces that are accessible to neighbouring residents via foot or bicycle are key community assets where physical activity can occur (both as part of the journey and the destination), without having to pay fees, join a team or rely on a certain number of players to participate.

Play spaces also provide opportunities for people in a community to meet, socialise and get to know their neighbours. Such interactions help to strengthen community bonds and friendships and create social capital – thereby reducing the potential for social isolation, loneliness, depression and associated mental health issues. If a community has been involved in the development of a play space, residents are more likely to develop a sense of ownership of the space and look after the site. The potential for vandalism and other anti-social behaviour is likely to be lessened where there is genuine community involvement and ownership. The value of play spaces to the general community is significant.



Figure 9: Adults using a park in Ocean Grove for fitness training

Nature Deficit Disorder is a phenomena identified by Louv (2005)⁷ after ten years of researching children's access to and participation in nature in the USA. He concluded that:

Children are spending less time outdoors than previous generations of children, resulting in a wide variety of behavioural problems such as “attention difficulties and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses”.

Bagot (2005)⁸ also identifies the value of natural environments over built environments to children's physical and mental health. She argues that natural based settings assist children to concentrate more effectively and to engage more effectively in both physical and creative play.

⁷ Louv, Richard (2005), *Last Child in the Woods*, pg 36

⁸ Bagot, Kathleen (Monash University) (2005), *The Importance of Green Play Spaces for Children – Aesthetic, Athletic and Academic*

3.0 The Value of Play

3.6 Creating Play Value

According to best practice, well utilised play spaces are those that offer a high degree of play value, are generally those that:

- Are inclusive and accessible to all members of the community, using universal design principles.
- Are well designed and provide an inviting, welcoming and stimulating atmosphere.
- Involve communities in the design of the play space, including children.
- Balance safety with risk taking opportunities.
- Have been designed with the whole park and play precinct in mind and provide suitable amenities.
- Offer a range of different opportunities for play and interaction in a space that is sufficient in size for its purpose and allow for change and evolution.
- Provide opportunities for people to interact with the natural environment.
- Promote and protect cultural, natural and heritage features.
- Are well connected to homes via cycling / walking tracks, public transport and roads.
- Are designed with sustainability in mind and are well cared for from a management and maintenance perspective.
- Encourage interactions by the whole community and allow children of all ages to play together.
- Are well promoted to the community, i.e. there is strong public awareness.
- Often provide opportunities for the purchase of food and beverages nearby, e.g. coffee.

Underutilised play spaces, or those that offer limited play value, are generally those that:

- Only meet the needs of a limited number of people within the community and are unable to evolve or change with the community.
- Look and feel tired, run down and boring.
- Don't involve the local community in their design.
- Are considered unsafe or at the other extreme, not sufficiently challenging.
- Do not have sufficient amenities such as seating, shade or paths at the site.
- Provide limited play opportunities and limited play value.
- Do not enable opportunities to interact with the natural environment.
- Are not well connected to homes via cycling / walking tracks, public transport and roads (i.e. are tucked away).
- Have a sense of being uncared for, e.g. rubbish, overgrown grass, graffiti, dog faeces, etc.
- Do not allow opportunities for the community to interact.
- Are not known by the general community.
- Have too much interference from local neighbours.
- Are located next to major barriers such as busy roads or railway lines without sufficient access or buffers.
- Are not well sited and not easily visible.

3.0 The Value of Play

3.7 Barriers to Play

Failure to provide quality, well-maintained play spaces can certainly make it difficult for children to access play spaces, particularly if the closest play space is some distance from their home. This is one area in which the Play Strategy can make a difference. Further, the lack of information about appropriate play spaces may be another factor that prevents young people from accessing play spaces. This too can be addressed by the Play Strategy.

However, whilst the Play Strategy focuses on improving play opportunities across the municipality, it needs to be recognised that there are broader barriers to play at a societal level that impact on how well utilised play spaces are and how often and where children play in general outdoors. Some of these barriers cannot be addressed by the Play Strategy, but need to be identified nevertheless.

One of the key barriers that discourages parents from allowing their children to play outdoors outside the home is 'stranger danger', or the fear that a child may be harmed by someone unknown to them, who may be lurking around a play space or en route to the play space.

A critical part of growing up and play is to explore boundaries and risks; however the litigious society in which we live has also reduced the challenging components of many play spaces to a point where children are no longer interested in using some play spaces and may view them as sterile and boring.

Fear of bullying by other children, often older children, also prevents some parents from allowing their child to visit a play space or some

children from wanting to visit a play space alone or with similar aged friends.

Parental lifestyle whereby parents are increasingly both working and working long hours, limits opportunities for parents to take their children to play spaces. Instead, there has been a growth in organised junior sport in recent years. Whilst this keeps some children physically active, it does not promote opportunities for creative play or self-driven play. Rather, it is highly programmed and regimented by adults, thereby restricting a child's control over their preferred type of play.



Figure 10: Organised Junior Sport

Similarly, the play opportunities in the school environment are far more controlled than they were in past generations. Play time or recess is closely monitored by teachers, who have been given an increased duty of care in recent years to ensure that children do not have serious accidents

3.0 The Value of Play

in the school yard. Through no fault of their own, teachers are having to supervise play more and more in the school yard, thereby inadvertently taking control and creativity away from children in relation to the type of play they choose to engage in.

Backyards in Australia are continually shrinking, with many homes now built on much smaller blocks than they were in the past, with the house taking up most of the block. This limits the space that children have to play outdoors.

More and more traffic in streets, due to our high reliance on vehicles, has also made it difficult for children to play games such as cricket, football, hop scotch or chase in the street. The increasing amount of traffic then has an impact on how children access play spaces. Parents may feel that roads have become too busy and that there are no safe access routes to a play space, so they in turn will drive their children to play spaces, which in itself exacerbates the traffic problem. It also takes away the opportunity for children to develop their skills and enjoyment in terms of accessing play spaces independently.

An increasing reliance on electronic games and computers for entertainment may also diminish demand for play spaces by young people. Such activities discourage physical activity and will often restrict interaction with others. Use of these devices needs to be monitored carefully so that children have the opportunity to develop and explore the natural environment.



Figure 11: Children's drawing - enjoying playing in mud

Finally, the lack of awareness of the value of unstructured play in the lives of children by the general community in terms of physical, social, cognitive and emotional development is one of the major impediments to promoting opportunities for young people to play.

This Play Strategy can therefore have an impact upon the quality and distribution of play spaces as well as identifying ways in which to promote greater awareness of the location of play spaces, but is limited in terms of its ability to change societal attitudes and trends.



4.0 Vision and Planning Principles

4.0 Vision and Planning Principles

4.1 Vision

The vision for the City of Greater Geelong is: “Geelong: coast, country and suburbs is the best place to live through prosperous and cohesive communities in an exceptional environment”. The vision adopted for the Play Strategy is: **Geelong: a Great Place to Play.**

4.2 Planning Principles

Thirteen key play space principles have been developed to assist City of Greater Geelong in its decision making regarding future play space developments, based on information received from community interviews and surveys; written submissions; key stakeholder interviews; and the literature review. Each of these principles is explained in further detail in the following table.

Planning Principle. Play spaces will:	Description
Offer a diversity of experiences	Each play space will be different to every other play space in some way. Equipment will be purchased from a range of different suppliers to ensure that play opportunities vary. Some play spaces will feature natural materials and loose materials and others will feature specific play equipment, open space and opportunities for creative play.
Be inclusive and accessible	Play spaces will be designed to promote inclusiveness for people of all abilities and ages both in accessing equipment and play opportunities and in being able to navigate and enjoy the site. Universal Design Principles and Access for All Abilities Principles will be considered in designs of play spaces. Public play spaces will be provided free of charge to the community and open at all times to the community (except during periods of maintenance).
Be inviting and welcoming	All play spaces will be developed and maintained in such a way as to create a welcoming and inviting atmosphere for all potential users of the site. Sites will be aesthetically pleasing, clean, well maintained and will have relevant signage. Play opportunities available will encourage exploration and fun.
Be unique in design	Geelong is a hub for tourism and the development of highly original and unique play spaces has the potential of contributing significantly to the attraction of visitors (locally and internationally) to the area and for generating local pride.
Be connected to	All play spaces will be connected to the communities in which they are based by cycling / walking networks, roads, public

4.0 Vision and Planning Principles

Planning Principle. Play spaces will:	Description
communities and transport links	transport links wherever possible and will be located within 400 metres (approximately 5 minutes walk) of all urban households.
Be safe, yet challenging	All play spaces will be regularly inspected and well maintained according to relevant regulations and standards, but will focus on balancing risks and benefits by providing challenging and stimulating environments which allow people to explore their boundaries.
Be sustainable	All play spaces will be designed and managed in such a way as to minimise the environmental footprint of the play space. Recycled materials will be used wherever possible and environmentally sustainable design principles used in terms of construction, management and maintenance. Play equipment and opportunities will also be selected based on their longevity and durability.
Promote community interactions	All play spaces will be designed in such a way as to encourage community interactions on play equipment, in areas of open space, in seating areas, in BBQ picnic areas, etc. Play spaces will also be designed in partnership with the community.
Be well designed and planned	All play spaces will be designed in partnership with the community and experienced play space designers, taking into consideration best practice guidelines for such facilities.
Respect and protect heritage, natural, biodiversity and cultural features	All play spaces will ensure that heritage, natural, biodiversity and cultural aspects of sites are respected and protected. Activities such as interpretation and incorporation of themes will be included where appropriate.
Incorporate the natural environment	All play spaces will be in sympathy with and enhance the existing natural assets of the site. Supplementary vegetation may be established to ensure that the play space achieves this objective.
Be well maintained	All play spaces will be well maintained and designed in such a way as to minimise maintenance requirements wherever possible, without compromising the play value of a park.
Extend children's learning, skills and early development	All play spaces will provide opportunities for exploration, discovery and learning; provide the opportunity for linkages between the child and other children; and encourage children to make decisions for themselves and have control of their play.



5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

5.1 Number of Play Spaces and Play Space Hierarchy

There are currently 276 public play spaces managed by the City of Greater Geelong and an additional 62 centre-based playgrounds across 51 facilities owned by Council. There are a further 124 centre-based playground facilities which are provided by other organisations in locations such as primary schools, childcare centres, kindergartens and indoor commercial play centres.

The City of Greater Geelong's *Sustainable Communities: Infrastructure Development Guidelines* (2010) provides guidelines in relation to play spaces. It recommends that play spaces should be developed within 500m walking distance of every household (taking barriers into consideration) and that one playground should be provided for every 250 children under the age of 12, (equating to a minimum of 120 playgrounds). Following a spatial analysis of the City of Greater Geelong, it became apparent that the one play space for every 250 children under 12 years of age did not help to address the gap in distribution of play spaces. Further, best practice internationally suggests that a five minute walk equates to 400 metres. This is the distance used by play associations around the world and is therefore the distance that will be used in the City of Greater Geelong to identify catchments of play spaces.

The Guidelines also describe a basic Play Space Hierarchy to identify the type of features that should be incorporated into the different levels of

playgrounds provided by Council. Under Council's responsibility, there are currently:

Public Play Spaces:

- 204 local / neighbourhood play spaces in the City (including 6 not managed by Council).
- 46 district play spaces (including 3 not managed by Council).
- 11 sub-regional play spaces (including 2 play spaces not managed by Council).
- 4 regional play spaces.
- 1 state / national play space.
- 10 Skate Parks (5 local / neighbourhood, 3 district and 2 regional).

Centre-based Play Spaces:

- 51 community facilities with outdoor play spaces where a variety of early childhood programs are run including kindergarten, long day care, occasional care, playgroup and neighbourhood house programs. The majority of centre-based play spaces are licensed under the Children Services Act.

The characteristics of local, district, sub-regional, regional and state / national play spaces are as follows:

5.1.1 Local / Neighbourhood Play Spaces

These play spaces are located within walking distance of homes and are particularly important given the decreasing size of house blocks, rising levels of childhood obesity and the increasing cost of fuel. Local play spaces can be easily accessed by young people (as well as other people in the neighbourhood such as older adults and people with disabilities) by

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

foot or bicycle, hence promoting active transport and reducing the need for vehicular transport. Although the activities offered are not as extensive as those offered in district and regional play spaces, the activities are free of charge and can help to improve health and fitness levels, as well as providing creative outlets. Additionally, there is potential to meet with and play with other people in the neighbourhood which can result in strong community connections, independence and a sense of community belonging. Local play spaces are particularly important to people in the community who have limited transportation options. Smaller townships generally only contain local play spaces.



Figure 12: Play space at Portarlington

These play spaces have a catchment of approximately 400m, or 5 minutes walking (which equates to a 280m radial distance for the purpose of spatial mapping). They tend to contain opportunities for solitary, parallel and group play, designed for 3-7 year olds. Where possible, these playgrounds should provide some open space for informal games such as tiggly, chasey, kite flying, kicking a football as well as multi-activity play equipment. Seats on swings should be fitted with toddler straps and strap seats and carers should be provided with a seat. A tree planting plan is essential for all new local / neighbourhood playgrounds in order to provide natural shade and to improve the amenity and natural values of the site.

5.1.2 District

Generally there will be fewer District play spaces throughout the municipality, but their value lies in drawing a larger number of users from a greater catchment area. They may provide a wider range of play opportunities than local / neighbourhood play spaces or be single purpose and are usually located within a 15 minute cycling trip or a short car trip from most people's homes in the urban area (a catchment area of 500m – 2km). Hence they are relatively accessible, particularly for older children.

They are larger than local / neighbourhood play spaces and service a number of neighbourhood areas. Usually they are strategically located in such as within larger reserves, adjoining sporting reserves or close proximity to large open space areas suitable for ball games and contain a range of amenities including seating, shade, car parking, paths, bins, drinking fountains. In terms of play opportunities, these spaces may contain several different items of play ground equipment for each age group, offering a range of different play opportunities. Skate parks have

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

been included in this category as these installations generally have a larger catchment given the mobility of users. They can also service areas where there are gaps in the special distribution service a larger area than neighbourhood play spaces.

5.1.3 Sub-Regional Play Spaces

The Sub-Regional Play Space will draw from a larger catchment of 5 - 10km, or a 30 minute cycling trip or a car trip. It will service whole suburbs or across several suburbs.

They are large play spaces providing wider range of play experiences than the District play spaces but less than a Regional Play Space. They will cater for all age groups and abilities and be built as part of a larger open space or multi use centre. There will be a higher matching infrastructure.

Visitation numbers will be higher than smaller play spaces and people will stay for longer periods of time.



Figure 13: Skate park at Sparrow Park

5.1.4 Regional Play Spaces

These spaces are generally fairly large and provide a broad mix of different play opportunities and experiences for all ages and abilities or may be larger, single purpose facilities. With a catchment of 10km or more, there is a tendency for longer visits, family outings and family / community celebrations by both local residents and people from further afield. Generally there are only a few regional play spaces in the community, but usage is high. The majority of people visiting regional play spaces will travel by car; however, the provision of networked non-road transport such as bicycle paths may encourage cycling or walking. Regional play spaces not only provide health and social benefits, but also provide economic benefits by attracting people from other areas.

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong



Figure 14: Barwon Heads Community Play Park

Regional play spaces are often designed by play space experts or landscape architects and where possible, retain natural features of the site and incorporate these into the overall design. These play spaces are generally located in close proximity to open space suitable for ball games.

Amenities typically found at regional play spaces include: toilets, paths, seats, shade (trees and / or shade sails), bins, lighting, drinking fountains, picnic tables, shelter, BBQs, car parking and connections to cycling / walking paths.

5.1.5 Statewide / National Play Spaces



Figure 15: Geelong Youth Activities Area

Some play spaces, because of their size and unique or innovative features, have the potential to attract people from all over the state or inter-state to use them. These play spaces are likely to include some significant features or design components that may not be found elsewhere in the state or the country and are of major appeal to potential users. It is likely that these play spaces will feature toilets, paths, seats, shade (trees and / or shade sails), bins, lighting, drinking fountains, picnic tables, shelter, BBQs, car parking and connections to cycling / walking paths as well as highly innovative play features. Special events, which can

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

attract hundreds or even thousands of participants or spectators, may also be held at these sites. Hence the economic impact of the play space may be significant. These play spaces will be designed by leading play space experts or landscape architects and may form part of a larger precinct. The Geelong Youth Activities Area, located on the waterfront and featuring the skate park is an example of such a facility. The You Yangs Mountain Bike Park (Parks Victoria) may also sit within this category.

5.1.6 Centre-Based Play Spaces

Centre-based play spaces typically have kindergarten, long day care, occasional care, playgroup and neighbourhood house programs run in them. These services can be provided by a range of organisations such as Council, schools, church-based organisations, community groups, commercial child care operators and not-for-profit child care operators.

The majority of these centre-based play spaces are licensed and registered under the Victorian Government's Children's Services Act 1996 and abide by the Victorian Government's Children's Services Regulations.



Figure 16: Centre-based play space in Geelong

These play spaces differ to public play spaces in a number of ways:

1. The playgrounds provide a learning environment for young children. The outdoor environment — and the programs planned in it—provide unique opportunities to develop and extend children's learning, skills, and early development;
2. Children are generally supervised at all times in these playgrounds either by teachers, carers, and/or parents;
3. The playgrounds are designed to be suitable for particular age groups and abilities. For example, a stand-alone kindergarten playground may be suitable for 3-5 year olds whereas an integrated Children's Centre may have playgrounds suitable for

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

children aged from 0-5 year old (and will sometimes have multiple playgrounds for different age groups within that age range);

4. Minimum regulatory requirements and standards for outdoor space exist and must be adhered to in order for a children's service to be licensed;
5. Both public and centre-based playgrounds must meet Australian Standards for Playground Equipment, however the Standards differ in some circumstances (i.e. regulations concerning swings and fall zones for example) for a 'supervised early childhood setting';
6. It is critical for teachers, carers and parents to be able to observe children in all play spaces at all times, therefore playgrounds must be designed in such a way to ensure appropriate safety and surveillance is provided;
7. Playgrounds must be enclosed by a fence or barrier of at least 1.5 metres to meet Children's Services Regulations, and restrict access by non-authorised persons; and
8. Playground access and facilities must provide an inclusive environment that accommodates the needs of children of all abilities.

5.1.7 Other Play Spaces

There are a range of other play spaces that are located on City of Greater Geelong owned land but not accessible to the general public at all times, e.g. Aquatic Centre play spaces (occasional care play spaces at aquatic centres included but not water park play spaces) and play spaces located at caravan parks.

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

5.2 Distribution of Play Spaces

For the purpose of this Play Strategy, City of Greater Geelong has been divided into 34 different precincts, based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics State Suburbs. The following table provides an overview of each of these districts and the number of play spaces within each:

Precinct	Estimated Population in Precinct in 2011 (n=221,636)	% of Municipal Population in the Precinct in 2011	No. of Public Play Spaces in the Precinct excluding schools, etc. (n=276) in 2011	Ratio of Public Play Spaces Per Person in the Precinct in 2011	Regulated and Restricted Access Play Spaces	
					No. of Schools in Precinct (n=115)	No. of Centre Play Spaces in Council owned buildings in Precinct (n=62)
Armstrong Creek	1,868	0.8%	1	1:1868	1	0
Barwon Heads	3,419	1.5%	6	1:570	1	1
Bell Park	5,223	2.4%	5	1:1045	6	1
Bell Post Hill	5,109	2.3%	5	1:1022	2	1
Belmont	15,006	6.8%	18	1:834	9	2
Clifton Springs	8,361	3.8%	10	1:836	2	2
Corio	16,112	7.3%	21	1:767	8	5
Drysdale	2,945	1.3%	4	1:736	2	3
East Geelong	4,065	1.8%	2	1:2033	2	1
South Geelong – Geelong – Drumcondra	6,569	3.0%	14	1:469	8	0
Geelong West	6,755	3.0%	5	1:1351	2	0
Grovedale – Marshall	16,449	7.4%	10	1:1645	6	3
Hamlyn Heights	6,374	2.9%	9	1:708	5	1
Hearne Hill	3,616	1.6%	3	1:1205	3	1
Highton	16,540	7.5%	15	1:1103	6	3
Lara	12,552	5.7%	16	1:785	4	4
Leopold	8,739	3.9%	16	1:546	1	2

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

Precinct	Estimated Population in Precinct in 2011 (n=221,636)	% of Municipal Population in the Precinct in 2011	No. of Public Play Spaces in the Precinct excluding schools, etc. (n=276) in 2011	Ratio of Public Play Spaces Per Person in the Precinct in 2011	Regulated and Restricted Access Play Spaces	
					No. of Schools in Precinct (n=115)	No. of Centre Play Spaces in Council owned buildings in Precinct (n=62)
Manifold Heights	2,646	1.2%	2	1:1323	1	0
Newcomb – Moolap	5,639	2.5%	17	1:332	3	1
Newtown	10,084	4.5%	11	1:917	12	3
Norlane – North Shore	8,940	4.0%	12	1:745	5	5
North Geelong – Rippleside	3,945	1.8%	6	1:658	1	0
Ocean Grove	12,660	5.7%	15	1:844	4	5
Other Urban – Bellarine – South Barwon	2,860	1.3%	5	1:572	3	0
Other Urban - Corio	4,222	1.9%	2	1:2111	4	0
Portarlington	3,267	1.5%	9	1:363	1	1
Rural Bellarine – South Barwon	4,555	2.1%	5	1:911	4	0
Rural Corio	2,474	1.1%	1	1:2474	1	1
St Albans Park	5,188	2.3%	6	1:865	0	1
St Leonards – Indented Head	2,724	1.2%	10	1:272	1	0
Thomson – Breakwater	2,825	1.3%	6	1:471	4	2
Wandana Heights	1,919	0.9%	1	1:1919	0	0
Waurin Ponds	3,671	1.7%	3	1:1224	0	0
Whittington	4,310	1.9%	5	1:862	3	4

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

5.3 Assessment of the Quality of Public Play Space Opportunities

Each play space within the municipality has been desk assessed against specific criteria to determine the quality of experiences available at the site (refer to the Appendix 2, Section 2.0 of the Play Strategy for details). The desk assessment involved reviewing Council's annual audit of play spaces, checking each play space against aerial photography images and also physically visiting a sample of play spaces. Local residents also provided information through community consultation processes about the quality of play spaces in their local area.

Based on this assessment, the following observations are made of public play spaces:

1. There are several excellent examples of well designed district, sub-regional and regional play spaces that are very attractive, well utilised by children and their parents / carers in the municipality and provide access for all abilities, e.g. Geelong Play Space at Eastern Park, Sparrow Park, Eastern Beach, Barwon Heads Community Play Park and Barwon Valley Fun Park.
2. The Youth Activities Area on the Waterfront is a space with national appeal and is very well designed.
3. Most of the play equipment in play spaces is in reasonably good condition and has obviously been purchased in the last ten years or so – there are not many examples of play spaces featuring old equipment well beyond its lifespan (as is the case in many municipalities).

4. There are few components within the CBD streetscape that could be considered a play opportunity or that encourage informal and spontaneous play by people of all ages and abilities.



Figure 17: Example of a sculpture in public open space outside Chinese Museum Precinct in Bendigo that encourages spontaneous and creative play

5. There seems to be a gap in play opportunities for young children between 0-2 years of age. This gap may be filled to some degree by commercial indoor playgrounds and/or playgroups. Although it is noted by Play Australia that “There is a greater need than ever before for our council parks to plan for mothers and carers in particular and children aged 0-2, as the demand is overwhelming, and the reality is that this is a time when

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

significant periods of time are spent in parks, which should be encouraged by councils.⁹

6. There are few areas where creative games can be played in play spaces (Geelong Play Space at Eastern Park is a notable exception).



Figure 18: Child engaging in creative play at Geelong Play Space

⁹ Email from Barbara Champion, Play Australia, dated: 30 May 2011.

1. Many play spaces provide play opportunities for children from approximately 2 years of age to around 10 years of age. There is little for young people over 10 years of age, except in some district / sub-regional play spaces where there are activities such as half court basketball / netball courts or skate parks.
2. Not many play spaces, particularly local / neighbourhood play spaces have paths within the play space leading to seats and play opportunities. This may not provide adequate access for people with disabilities or mobility issues.
3. There are few areas which are designed to allow young people to meet and chat with their friends in play spaces.
4. More natural shade is required in play spaces overall.
5. Some play spaces need additional seating for children to rest on and for parents / carers to watch their children playing.
6. Some local / neighbourhood play spaces in particular lack landscaping amenity and could be vastly improved with modest effort and expenditure.
7. Loose play materials such as branches, twigs, leaves, gumnuts, stones, etc are absent from most play spaces.

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong



Figure 19: Example of Loose Play Materials at a Play Space

5.4 Assessment of the Quality of Supervised Centre-based Play Spaces

A quality supervised centre-based play space is one which features:

1. A space that complies with regulation requirements and provides for a range of flexible quality play experiences for children
2. A site that is inviting and welcoming for all users.
3. A range of fixed and moveable equipment suitable for the development needs of each child (regardless of their ability) and which is able to be adapted or used in different ways (to provide for a diversity of experiences).
4. Fixed and moveable equipment that meets Australian Standards for safety and design.

5. A site that features quality landscaping including use of trees, plants and grass, with only minimal artificial surfaces used.
6. A site that provides children with the opportunity to interact with nature.
7. A site that provides opportunities for children to interact with other children.
8. A site that provides shade for all users.
9. A site that is suitably fenced to prevent children from wandering from the site.
10. Staff / volunteers / parents who actively engage with children using the site.
11. Educational and recreational programs that are specifically designed to meet the cognitive, social, physical, emotional and creative development needs of each individual child.
12. Play space that provides good surveillance for Staff / volunteers / parents / carers supervising children.
13. Environmentally friendly materials and sustainable features.
14. Suitable storage space for equipment.
15. A design that ensures ease of maintenance and access for maintenance vehicles.

Each supervised centre-based play space in the City of Greater Geelong was desk assessed against the specific criteria listed above to determine the quality of experiences available at the site. The desk assessment involved reviewing information contained within the annual audit of play spaces. However, it was not possible to assess programs or staff / volunteer / parent organised programs or capacities from this information. Hence this assessment is purely based on the physical layout of each site.

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

City of Greater Geelong's centre-based play spaces appear to have:

1. Reasonable amounts of shade in most play spaces (particularly over sand pits), with a strong emphasis on shade structures rather than trees.
2. Opportunities for children to express their creativity in some play spaces (e.g. murals, outdoor chalk boards, etc).
3. Limited areas of natural turf for children to play on.
4. Limited landscaping, e.g. trees, shrubs, plants, rocks, logs, etc.
5. Predominantly fixed equipment (although moveable equipment may not have been on display at the time audits were undertaken) which may become less interesting to children as they master this type of equipment.
6. Limited natural, loose materials for children to play with such as twigs, leaves, sticks, pebbles, water, etc.
7. Large expanses of bark chips and / or artificial grass surfaces in some instances.
8. Limited areas where children can partake in creative activities.
9. Some play spaces have limited spaces for children to run around in or to play ball games.
10. Areas that may be difficult to supervise due to L-shaped design.
11. Varying standards of maintenance.
12. Access to various play experiences and resources such as sand pits, water play equipment, etc.

Centre-based play spaces in the City of Greater Geelong therefore appear to have:

1. A combination of fixed and moveable equipment, although some play spaces may have too great an emphasis on fixed equipment

which may become less interesting to children as they master this type of equipment and requires a higher level of maintenance.

2. Good areas of shade in most play spaces, although tend to be shade sails / structures rather than trees.
3. Limited visual appeal in some play spaces, i.e. not very inviting.
4. Limited areas of natural turf in some play spaces, with a focus on bark chips or artificial grass surfaces instead.
5. Some areas that are hard to supervise due to shape of land around the building or position of cubbies or sheds.
6. Weed growth in some play spaces.
7. Poor landscaping in some play spaces – a lack of trees, shrubs, plants and garden beds.
8. Limited loose materials to play with in some play spaces.
9. Lack of artwork in play spaces.
10. Limited equipment that makes sounds.
11. Varying standards of maintenance.

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong



Figure 20: Kirralee Early Learning Centre, Newcomb

Quality centre-based outdoor play spaces can provide:

- Open sided cubby houses.
- Loose play materials, e.g. leaves, twigs, etc.
- Quiet and active areas for children to play in.
- Shady areas.
- Aesthetically attractive play areas with flowers.
- A variety of plants.
- Trees with low branches suitable for climbing.
- Garden beds for vegetables and herbs.
- Mounds.

- Bridges.
- River beds (that can be either wet or dry).
- Different surfaces.
- A variety of moveable equipment that can be reconfigured to provide different play opportunities.
- A focus on play with natural materials such as sand, earth and water.
- Opportunities to learn about sustainability, e.g. tanks with water pumps.
- Art work, e.g. mosaics.

Case studies of highly regarded centre-based play spaces in Victoria, which rate well against the criteria listed in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's *Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services* (2007), have been included in Part 2 of the Play Strategy.

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong



Figure 21: River bed at Bond Street Kindergarten.
Photo courtesy of Bond Street Kindergarten



Figure 22: Moveable equipment at Bond Street Kindergarten.
Photo courtesy of Bond Street Kindergarten

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

5.5 Gaps in Provision of Play Opportunities

Spatial mapping of each precinct was undertaken in order to gain a visual understanding of gaps in the distribution of play spaces. The spatial distribution of play spaces across the City of Greater Geelong is generally very good. Spatially, it is desirable to provide at least one play space within 5 minutes walk (400m) of all residential dwellings in urban areas, which may be approximated by a circular 'catchment' of 280m radius.

Detailed analysis of spatial distribution of play spaces within each precinct reveals that the majority of residential areas are very well catered for. It is recommended that Joint Use Agreements be sought with schools that have accessible play spaces; this will serve to fill many gaps in the spatial distribution of council play spaces alone. Many informal parks, Utilities and Services Reserves, Sports fields and other Public Open Space provide play opportunities and these also help to fill the gaps where formal playgrounds do not exist. Notwithstanding this observation, most precincts also contain gaps of various sizes where provision of play spaces is less than perfect. In an ideal world '100% coverage' would be achieved, however in reality this is not possible due to cost constraints or the paucity of suitable/available land parcels. Where new residential developments are occurring, an imperative must be stipulated to the land developers (through the Planning Scheme and their permit) to incorporate adequate play spaces such that the above criterion is satisfied. Established residential areas are sometimes poorly serviced by play spaces but often opportunities exist to establish new play spaces on vacant council land or private lots (which must be purchased).

Other gaps may be filled by creating new play spaces on land already owned by council and this would be the preferred option wherever

possible. Suggestions for possible opportunities for new play spaces in strategic locations are contained in the Precinct Description section of Appendix 2, Section 2.0.

As mentioned, the importance of school play spaces in the spatial distribution of play opportunities in the municipality is very apparent. Without access to a school play space in certain areas, some people in Geelong have to travel significantly further than 400 metres to their nearest play space. However, access to play spaces is dependent upon whether or not school principals and school councils allow such access to occur. A change in management and / or governance of a school can also alter previous access arrangements as there is no requirement or legislation that states that school facilities must be accessible to the general community after hours.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development nevertheless recognises that there can be significant benefits achieved by the sharing of facilities, such as play spaces, with the community after hours, including:

- Stronger social networks between schools and communities.
- Better availability of facilities.
- More community involvement in school activities and young people's learning.
- Financial savings by sharing costs.
- Improved school security and reduced vandalism.

5.0 Existing Play Spaces within the City of Greater Geelong

It has produced two sets of guidelines to assist schools to understand the benefits of shared arrangements and to set up appropriate structures to enable this to happen^{10 11}.

Recommendation:

That the City of Greater Geelong actively engages with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to promote the benefits of shared play spaces and works towards developing individual Joint Use Agreements with schools and a Common Heads of Agreement to enable this form of access to occur, particularly in areas where there are obvious gaps in distribution of play spaces and infrastructure at present.

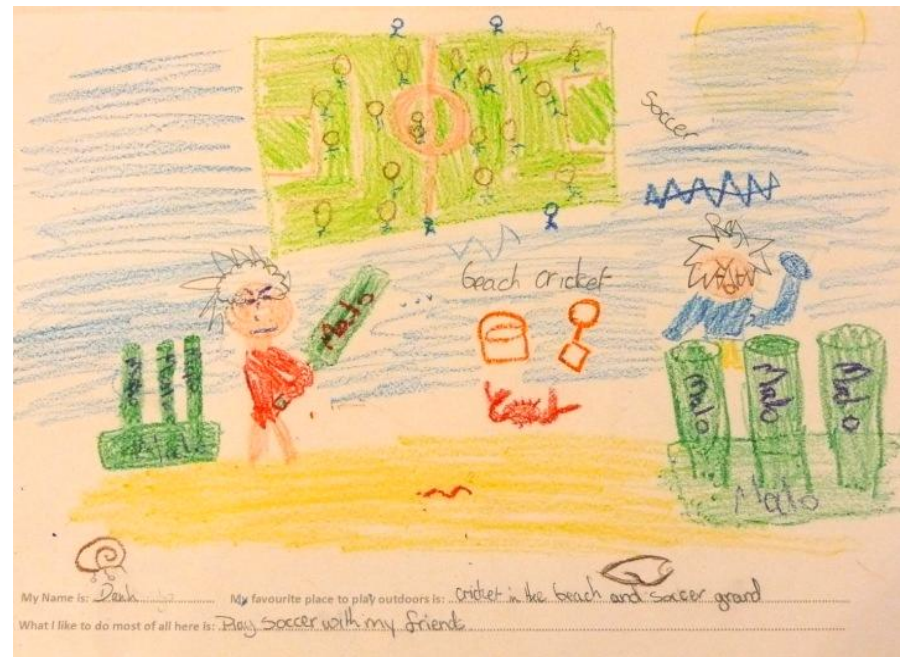


Figure 23: Children's drawing - enjoying playing cricket with friends

¹⁰ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2005) *Schools as Community Facilities – Policy Framework and Guidelines*:
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/propman/facility/SACF-PolicyFramework-Guidelines.pdf>

¹¹ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2007) *Shared Facility Partnerships – A Guide to Good Governance for Schools and the Community*:
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/propman/facility/sharedfacilities.pdf>



6.0 Community Consultation

6.0 Community Consultation

In order to gain a clear idea of the needs of the community and key stakeholders in terms of play space provision, demand and quality, a broad range of consultative processes was undertaken, as demonstrated in the following diagram.



A summary of each form of consultation is as follows, with a more detailed analysis provided in Appendix 1 (Sections 1.1-1.8) of the Play Strategy:

Consultation Type	Number of Participants	Comments
Key Stakeholder Interviews	23	Key stakeholder interviews were held with City of Greater Geelong Councillors and staff and leading play specialists / advocacy groups to identify key priorities in the development of a Play Strategy.
Reference Group Workshops	7	Organisations representing families and children were invited to take part in a workshop to identify key issues related to play space design. Participants included representatives from : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCOPE • Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Specialist Children's Services • City of Greater Geelong, Community Child Health Team • Grandparents Association
Young People's Mobile Workshop	19	19 young people between four to twelve years of age visited five play spaces to assess the play value and offer suggestions for improvement
Children's Art Exhibition	158	158 primary school aged children from two schools were invited to draw a picture of their favourite

6.0 Community Consultation

Consultation Type	Number of Participants	Comments
		activities to do outside. This information has been analysed and used to assist play guideline development.
Children's Surveys / Interviews	73	Young people under the age of 18 were interviewed at one of three community events held in Ocean Grove and Geelong on Australia Day. Young people were also invited to fill in a Play Strategy survey that was promoted in school newsletters and on Council's website.
Parents and Carers Surveys / Interviews	105	Parents and carers living in City of Greater Geelong were interviewed at one of three community events held in Ocean Grove and Geelong on Australia Day. Parents and carers were also invited to fill in a Play Strategy survey that was promoted in school newsletters and on Council's website.
Barwon Valley Fun Park Surveys	50	36 young people and 14 adults were interviewed by the Belmont 1 st Scouts at Barwon Valley Fun Park in order to gain ideas about desirable features in play spaces.
Written Submissions	6	Local residents were invited to submit a written submission, outlining their ideas on play development in the municipality.

Consultation Type	Number of Participants	Comments
		The opportunity to undertake written submissions was advertised in the media and also on Council's website.
TOTAL	441	

Figure 24: Children's drawing: enjoying playing football with Dad





7.0 Analysis of Gap and Opportunities

7.0 Analysis of Gaps and Opportunities

An analysis of existing play opportunities in the City of Greater Geelong reveals that there are a number of gaps which need to be addressed to improve both play opportunities and play value.

7.1 Gaps

These gaps include:

1. **Lack of play opportunities in the urban environment.** Rather than restricting play to designated places in the community, play should be all encompassing and spontaneous. It should be readily available to people of all ages. The development of playful elements in urban design (in public places such as streets) can help people to develop a sense of connection to their local environment and provide opportunities for people of all ages to connect and have some fun. Examples of such opportunities include sculptures, rocks, water features, lighting, items that can be moved, items that can make sounds. It is recommended that all major urban developments in the City of Greater Geelong consider the inclusion of features that encourage spontaneous play by people of all ages.
2. A **lack of shade** over seating and play equipment in some play spaces to protect children and their carers from too much sun exposure. The preference is for tree-based shade. It also needs to be recognised that it may not be desirable for the entire play space to be covered by shade or by full shade, particularly in the cooler months.
3. A **lack of compacted / firm paths** within play spaces leading to play equipment and to other areas such as seating. This reduces accessibility to the site by people with mobility issues and those using wheeled transport such as prams and bicycles.
4. **Poor landscaping** in many play spaces; which results in a bland, sterile environment that is neither welcoming nor inviting. Landscaping can provide a whole suite of additional play opportunities and materials, as well as improving the overall look and feel of a play space.
5. **Limited opportunities for people with disabilities** to access and use play spaces. The focus needs to be on using Universal Design Principles and ensuring that play spaces are designed in such a way as to be inclusive of people with disabilities.
6. **Some urban areas which are not serviced by a play space within 400m of homes.** Locally accessible play spaces are particularly important, given the decreasing size of house blocks, rising levels of childhood obesity and the increasing cost of fuel. Local play spaces can be easily accessed by young people (as well as other people in the neighbourhood such as older adults and people with disabilities) by foot or bicycle, hence promoting active transport and reducing the need for vehicular transport. They also provide opportunities for social interactions with neighbours. Wherever possible, houses in urban areas should have access to a play space within 400m (the equivalent of a five minute walk).
7. **Lack of diversity of play opportunities** throughout the City. The focus of most local play spaces is on commercial equipment featuring a climbing frame with slide and various other items, a swing set and a bouncing critter. It is important to ensure that a broad range of different opportunities are provided within each

7.0 Analysis of Gap and Opportunities

suburb and that a variety of different play space suppliers are used to ensure that equipment varies from place to place.

8. **Limited natural play opportunities and loose materials** in play spaces. Natural play spaces (i.e. those which feature rocks, logs, mounds, sand, water, etc) and loose materials (e.g. twigs, leaves, pebbles, etc) provide important opportunities for children to connect with nature and to manipulate their environment to create a variety of different play structures and imaginative games (cognitive play).
9. **Limited number of play spaces which offer tactile / sound / sensory experiences.** Such experiences can greatly enhance play opportunities and young people's enjoyment and understanding of a site. These types of experiences are particularly important for young people with disabilities.
10. **Limited number of play spaces which offer challenging activities** or activities that are perceived to be challenging or risky by participants, e.g. flying foxes. Learning to take risks is an important part of childhood development and helps children how to deal with different situations. Play spaces that do not provide any activities that at least are perceived to be risky by young people may not hold the interest of young people for long and do very little in respect to teaching them about how to deal with uncertainty in the wider world.
11. **Lack of resources to effectively maintain play spaces.** As new play spaces are developed and existing play spaces reach the end of their lifespan, even greater demands will be made upon maintenance staff and maintenance budgets. Hence an increased resource allocation (both financial and staff) will be required. In

the case of centre-based play spaces, a Council maintenance budget needs to be established.

12. **Lack of signage both to play spaces and within play spaces.** Signage at the entrance of a play space assists people to develop a connection to the site and signage within play spaces assists with way finding.
13. **Lack of play opportunities for 0-2 year olds and young people over 10 years of age.** Most play spaces in the City of Greater Geelong focus on children between two to ten years of age, particularly the four to seven year old age cohort.
14. **Lack of seats** for carers and spaces for young people to meet and chat with their friends in some play spaces. Seats encourage parents, grandparents and carers to visit sites more often or to stay at a play site longer to enjoy the benefits that such sites can offer. Attractive seating areas can also provide a setting whereby young people can meet, socialize with their peers and develop strong community connections.
15. **Greater focus on fixed equipment rather than moveable equipment in some supervised centre-based play settings.** Whilst it is considered acceptable to have a mix of fixed and moveable equipment, the preference is for a greater proportion of play opportunities to be provided by moveable equipment that can be used in a variety of different ways.
16. **Varying levels of maintenance for supervised early childhood play settings.** Maintenance levels vary from site to site depending on the roles and responsibilities identified in leases/agreements. The lack of Council maintenance budget places responsibility on volunteers and contractors to undertake maintenance works.

7.0 Analysis of Gap and Opportunities

17. **Lack of artwork in play spaces.** Artwork can help to brighten up a play space, help to develop a theme and help to create a sense of place. It can help people to understand their environment, their culture and their heritage.
18. **Lack of clarity regarding the process for developing play spaces.** There are numerous different units within Council responsible for various aspects of play space design and development, all of whom need to communicate at certain key points in the development. Similarly, Committees of Management, who at times are involved in play space design and development at supervised early childhood centres are often unaware of the process to develop play spaces. These processes need to be clearly articulated.
19. **Lack of connections to walking / cycling networks.** In order to encourage active transport and ease of accessibility, play spaces should be connected to the existing walking / cycling network.



Figure 25: Play space in City of Greater Geelong

7.2 Opportunities

Whilst a number of gaps have been identified, there have also been some opportunities identified.

These include:

1. **Integration of Play throughout City of Greater Geelong Strategies and Policies.** A key outcome of the Play Strategy is to educate and inform various departments within the City of Greater Geelong about the value of play and the importance of integrating formal and informal play opportunities for people of all ages and abilities into infrastructure developments, facilities, programs and services.
2. **Provision of diverse, quality and accessible play spaces.** By using the Planning and Design Guidelines contained within the Play Strategy – Part 2, Council officers, developers and community-based organisations will be provided with tools to help develop diverse, quality, spontaneous and accessible play opportunities.
3. **Establishment of an Internal-Council working group.** In order to improve processes around design, development, management, maintenance and marketing of play spaces, it is important that all parties are aware of their responsibilities and meet to discuss play space developments. It is therefore recommended that an internal-Council working group comprising of representatives from Recreation and Open Space; Parks; Statutory Planning; Capital Projects; Community Development; Family Services; Environment and Natural Resources; Social Planning; Arts and Culture; Youth; Risk Management; Aged and Disability; Rural Access; and any other relevant units, be established to meet two

7.0 Analysis of Gap and Opportunities

times per year. From this working group, it is anticipated that a group of champions can then incorporate aspects of and reference the Play Strategy into their own departmental projects and strategic documents.

4. **Development of community partnerships.** In order to ensure that limited resources are maximized, it is recommended that where appropriate, suitable partnerships are developed to develop and maintain play spaces. Examples of suitable partners include schools, community centres and sometimes businesses.
5. **Development of a risk-benefit assessment** to ensure that children have the opportunity to be exposed to activities that are perceived by them to be somewhat risky or challenging (but still meet Australian Standards for safety) so that they are able to learn to deal with different situations. This will need support of Council, Council officers and Council insurers.
6. **Improved marketing practices.** If people are unaware of play spaces, they will not utilize them. Hence it is important to promote the existing play spaces in the municipality. There is a place for traditional marketing methods such as maps, brochures and signs, but particularly for websites. Smart phone applications may be considered too. The development of material in community languages may also be important in some areas.
7. **Integration of Play Spaces into Surroundings.** By taking into consideration the whole site, rather than just an area that play equipment is to be sited in, play spaces are more likely to utilise the natural contours and shape of the site as part of the play experience, be connected to transport links, feature appropriate

supporting infrastructure such as trees, shade and path in suitable locations and provide increased play value.

8. **Involvement of Council Staff in some maintenance of centre-based Play Spaces.** Some centre-based play spaces, particularly those managed by volunteers, do not necessarily have access to appropriate maintenance equipment, personnel willing to volunteer their time to undertake maintenance, or people with the appropriate skills to maintain equipment. Hence the handing over of maintenance responsibilities to Council staff is likely to result in improved maintenance and minimised risk at centre-based play spaces.
9. **Development of new integrated children's centres** with state of the art facilities and design features. This will provide Council and the community with a new benchmark and will encourage best practice in future playground provision.
10. Encourage greater use of parks and play spaces by implementing a range of **programs** such as:
 - ❖ Developing Park Passports, whereby participants send in a photo of themselves to the Recreation and Open Space Unit at a certain number of parks in order to receive a prize.
 - ❖ Install signs at parks asking people if they have been to other parks (which are listed and named on the sign), as a form of cross-promotion.
 - ❖ Holding play days in parks.
 - ❖ Working in partnership with Maternal and Child Health Nurses to prescribe 'play scripts' for families to encourage them to visit parks and play.
 - ❖ Holding community art days in play spaces where participants create playable features under supervision of artists.



8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

A series of recommendations and priorities have been developed, based on an analysis of:

1. The literature review (including policies and strategies adopted by City of Greater Geelong).
2. Demographic projections.
3. Trends in play spaces nationally and internationally.
4. Future growth areas of the municipality.
5. Current supply and distribution of play spaces.
6. 'Play value' of existing spaces.
7. Vision and planning principles.
8. Community consultation.
9. Gaps and opportunities in play space provision.

Some key priorities include:

1. Ensuring that play spaces are well designed and offer 'play value' to all who use the site.
2. Ensuring that all urban homes in the City of Greater Geelong have access to a public play space within 400m (a 5 minute walk) wherever possible.
3. Ensuring that the City of Greater Geelong makes an ongoing commitment to reducing the barriers to accessibility wherever possible and using Universal Design Principles to create more accessible play spaces.
4. Ensuring that play spaces meet Australian Standards and other relevant regulations and legislation.
5. Ensuring that play is considered in other non-recreational based projects.

8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

The recommendations and priorities are as follows:

#	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS								
1	City of Greater Geelong to adopt the Play Strategy.	Play Strategy	None	High	None	None	Recreation and Open Space; Community Development; Family Services	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Capital Projects; Risk Management
2	To ensure that the City of Greater Geelong recognises the value of play in children's development, especially natural play opportunities and incorporates this value in to strategic documents and actions.	Recognition of Value of Play	None	Ongoing	None	None	Recreation and Open Space; Community Development; Family Services	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Capital Projects; Risk Management
3	To encourage Council departments to consider opportunities to develop opportunities for informal and spontaneous play for people of all ages and abilities through their infrastructure developments (including urban design in public places), facilities, programs and services.	Opportunities for Informal and Spontaneous Play	Staff time	Ongoing	None	None	Recreation and Open Space; Community Development; Family Services; Urban Design; Arts and Culture.	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Capital Projects; Risk Management
4	To recognise Council's role in educating the broader community of the benefits of play and how appropriate risk can enhance children's opportunities to explore, experiment and learn within a play space.	Risk Management	None	Ongoing	None	None	Recreation and Open Space	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Family Services; Community Development; Capital Projects; Risk Management
5	To ensure maintenance audits and equipment inventories at all Council owned play spaces are undertaken on an annual basis.	Maintenance Audits	Refer to recommendations 18 and 24.	Ongoing	None	Recreation and Open Space, Community	Recreation and Open Space; Community Development	Parks; Family Services Community Development

8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

#	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS								
						Development and Parks budget		
6	To ensure that play spaces are planned in consideration of the surrounding environment (built and natural) to integrate and complement the existing landscape.	Whole of Site Planning	Staff time	Ongoing	None	None	Recreation and Open Space; Community Development; Family Services	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Capital Projects;
7	To ensure that play spaces are developed in consultation with residents, service providers, users of the facility and committees (where appropriate).	Consultation	Staff time	Ongoing	None	None	Recreation and Open Space; Community Development; Family Services; Capital Projects	
8	To continue to recognise that high quality play spaces have potential value to the municipality from a tourism and economic development perspective.	Investment	None	Ongoing	None	None	Recreation and Open Space; Capital Projects	
9	To ensure that local area structure plans, strategies and policies reflect the content of the Play Strategy where relevant.	Policy Relationship	\$0	Ongoing	None	None	Recreation and Open Space	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Family Services; Community Development; Capital Projects; Risk Management
10	To replace the Playground Development Guidelines with the Planning and Design Guidelines contained within the Play Strategy – Part 2.	Playground Development Guidelines	Staff time	High	Playground Development Guidelines	None	Recreation and Open Space	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Family Services; Community Development;

8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

#	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS								
								Capital Projects; Risk Management
11	To include the Planning and Design Guidelines contained within the Play Strategy – Part 2 as an Appendix to the Sustainable Communities Infrastructure Development Guidelines (2010).	Sustainable Communities Infrastructure Development Guidelines	Staff time and some printing costs	High	Sustainable Communities Infrastructure Development Guidelines (2010)	None	Recreation and Open Space	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Family Services; Community Development; Capital Projects; Risk Management
12	To establish an internal Council working group comprising of representatives from all relevant units, that meets twice per year to discuss play developments and to oversee and update the Play Strategy.	Internal-Council Working Group	Staff time	Medium	None	None	Recreation and Open Space	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Family Services; Community Development; Capital Projects; Statutory Planning; Social Planning; Arts and Culture, Youth; Risk Management
13	To focus marketing efforts for play spaces on websites (as the highest priority), signage, and printed maps to increase awareness of the benefits of play and to identify locations.	Marketing	\$5,000 per annum	Medium	None	Recreation and Open Space budget	Recreation and Open Space;	Marketing; Family Services; Community Development
14	To develop a risk-benefit assessment approach to play spaces whereby Council officers and Council insurer's work together to identify both the risks and the benefits of risks in public and centre-based play spaces with a view to providing more challenging play spaces which still meet Australian Standards for safety.	Risk Management	Staff time	Medium	None	N/A	Recreation and Open Space	Parks; Environment and Natural Resources; Family Services; Community Development; Capital Projects; Risk Management

8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

#	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS								
15	To develop a group of champions who can incorporate the Strategy within their own departmental projects and strategic documents.	Internal Council Working Group	Staff time	High	None	None	Recreation and Open Space; Parks; Family Services; and Community Development Departments	
16	To provide staff responsible for maintenance of play spaces suitable training on a regular basis to ensure that equipment, materials and infrastructure meet Australian Safety Standards.	Staff Training	\$3,000 per annum	Ongoing	None	Recreation and Open Space, Community Development and Parks budget	Recreation and Open Space; Community Development	Parks; Family Services Community Development

	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
PUBLIC PLAY SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS								
17	To actively engage with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to promote the benefits of shared play spaces and works towards developing individual Joint Use Agreements with schools and a Common Heads of Agreement to enable this form of access to occur, particularly in areas where there are obvious gaps in distribution of public play spaces at present.	Partnerships	Staff time	High	None	N/A	Recreation and Open Space	Parks; Family Services; Community Development; Capital Projects; Risk Management
18	To ensure that equipment and play opportunities are upgraded /	Play Equipment /	Minimum of \$500,000 per	Ongoing	None	COGG	Recreation and Open Space	Parks, Environment and Natural Resources

8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
PUBLIC PLAY SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS								
	renewed in existing play spaces and that all play spaces meet minimum standards for infrastructure (i.e. shade trees, seats and paths) according to the works schedule identified in Appendix 2, Section 3.0 and according to the Planning and Design Guidelines in Part 2, Section 2.0 of the Strategy.	Opportunity and Infrastructure Upgrade / Renewal	annum (increasing by CPI annually)					
19	To develop new play spaces and opportunities according to the works schedule identified in Appendix 2, Section 3.0 and according to the Planning and Design Guidelines in Part 2, Section 2.0 of the Strategy.	Development of New Play Spaces and Opportunities	As per schedule in Appendix 2, Section 3.0, which varies annually and is assessed on case by case basis	High	2010/2011 Budget	COGG, grants and developer contributions	Recreation and Open Space	Parks, Environment and Natural Resources
20	To ensure that the Public Arts Plan links closely with the Play Strategy and that a member of the Recreation & Open Space Unit sits on the Project Control Group of the Plan.	Public Arts Plan	Staff time	Ongoing	None	None	Recreation and Open Space	Art and Culture

	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
CENTRE-BASED PLAY SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS								
21	To ensure a high standard of centre-based play spaces and to minimise risk, Council to assume responsibility for the maintenance of fixed play equipment and paths of travel within all Council centre-based play spaces to meet quality and regulatory	Council Maintenance Responsibility	Refer to recommendation 25	High	None	2012/13 budget	Family Services; Community Development	Capital Projects; Parks

8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
CENTRE-BASED PLAY SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS								
	compliance.							
22	To develop a five year plan to ensure that new national and state early childhood requirements relating to outdoor play are embedded in Council's centre-based play spaces.	National and State Regulations	Staff time	High	None	None	Family Services; Community Development	
23	To ensure that all new developments in centre-based play spaces meet new regulations pertaining to outdoor play spaces.	National and State Regulations	Staff time	Ongoing	None	None	Family Services; Community Development	
24	To develop an asset renewal strategy for fixed play equipment at supervised centre-based play spaces, including four major play space upgrades per annum.	Asset Renewal Strategy	\$130,000 per annum (increasing with CPI each year)	High	None	Recurrent budget	Community Development; Family Services	Capital Projects; Parks
25	To develop a maintenance budget for centre-based play spaces to ensure that assets are maintained in accordance with Australian Safety Standards, Children's Services Regulations and Work Cover legislation.	Maintenance Budget	\$265,000 in the 2012/13 budget, which includes set up costs of \$122,000. Set up costs not required in subsequent years, but an amount of \$143,000 will need to be made for play space maintenance, plant maintenance and depreciation	High	None	2012 / 13 budget	Community Development; Family Services	Parks

8.0 Recommendations and Priorities

	Action	Action Name	Cost Estimate	Priority	Predecessor	Funding Source	Dept. Responsibility	Responsibility Other
CENTRE-BASED PLAY SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS								
			costs annually (increasing with CPI).					
26	To ensure the future planning of play spaces be prioritised and given due consideration in the development of new sites or services.	Priority for Play Developments	Staff time	Ongoing	None	Recurrent Budget	Community Development; Family Services	Capital Projects
27	To provide all committees and licensees involved in developing, managing and maintaining play spaces with a copy of the guidelines produced as part of the Play Strategy. The roles and responsibilities of all parties to be detailed in individual leases / agreements.	Agreements / Leases	Staff time	High	None	None	Community Development; Family Services	Risk Management; Corporate Strategy; and Property Management
28	To develop a costing model for new centre-based play spaces to allow for annual maintenance budget to be adjusted as new facilities and playgrounds are established.	Costing model	Staff time	Ongoing	None	Cost estimate to be addressed annually	Community Development	
29	To encourage developers to consult Council's Play Strategy prior to designing centre-based play spaces in new community facilities.	Developer Involvement in Centre-based Play Spaces	Staff time	Ongoing	None	None	Community Development	Corporate Strategy and Property Management Department; Department Education and Early Childhood Development

❖ Note that as the number of play spaces in the municipality increases, so too does the maintenance costs of the City of Greater Geelong.

9.0 Definitions

9.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
Accessible Play space	A play space that considers and responds to the needs of people with accessibility issues (not just focused on traditional play space equipment), e.g. people with disabilities, people with prams, people with walking frames, people with mobility scooters, etc.
Amenities	Supporting infrastructure found within play spaces that help to promote a comfortable and accessible environment, e.g. landscaping, paths, lighting, fencing, seating, shade structures, BBQs, etc.
Capital Works	New – creation or acquisition of new assets that previously did not exist in the City Upgrade – works to refurbish or replace existing assets with assets of a greater capacity or performance capability Renewal – works to refurbish or replace existing assets with assets of equivalent capacity or performance capability.
Community	Social or cultural groups or networks that share a common purpose, heritage, rights and responsibilities and / or other bonds.
Supervised centre-based play spaces	Play spaces within facilities where the following types of programs are delivered: long day care, occasional care, kindergarten and similar services.
Early Childhood Educators	Early childhood practitioners who work directly with children in early childhood settings.
Learning	A natural process of exploration that children engage in from birth as they expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional and creative capacities. Early learning is closely linked to early development.
Maintenance	All actions necessary for retaining an asset as near as practicable to its original condition, but excluding renewal of asset.
Natural Surface	A natural surface in play spaces refers to substances such as timber, rocks, dirt, grass and sand
Play	Spontaneous activity freely chosen by people as a way of expressing themselves; exploring the world in which they live; socialising with others; challenging themselves and having fun.
Play-based learning	A context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds, as they engage actively with people, objects and representations.

9.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
Play equipment	Equipment found in playgrounds such as swings, slides, climbing structures, etc, specifically designed for play.
Playground	A site such as a park, reserve, small block of land or land adjoining other recreational or community-based facilities, specifically designated for play and including playground equipment
Play space hierarchies	<p>Play spaces can be categorized into a hierarchy of five different tiers, depending on its purpose, size, catchment and the opportunities available. The hierarchy is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local / Neighbourhood – smallest play space, located close to homes, providing smaller range of play opportunities and amenities, with a catchment of 400m. • District - provide a wider range of play opportunities than local play spaces and cover a greater catchment area (up to 2 km). They are strategically located within larger reserves or sporting reserves and cater for a range of age groups • Sub-regional – a medium sized play space, providing a range of play opportunities and amenities, These Play Spaces will draw from a 5-10km radius. They will cater for all ages and abilities and be built as part of a larger open space or multi-use centre. • Regional – largest play space, providing a broad range of play opportunities and amenities, with a catchment of 10km or more. • State / National – play space of state or national significance, usually part of a precinct.
Play opportunities	The provision of an environment that encourages people to play and / or interact with others and their surroundings. Such spaces may include traditional playground equipment, engaging in or utilising various forms of play, or alternatively, opportunities for play with naturally occurring features such as logs, rocks and water.
Play space	The entire site where play can occur, rather than just the site where play equipment or opportunities are located. A play space may include traditional playground equipment or other natural features which can be used for play, such as logs, rocks, sand, water features, etc. It may also contain a range of amenities, e.g. seats, shelter, paths, shade, toilets, bins, etc. A play space can also be part of the built environment (without traditional play equipment) featuring sculpture, plazas, paved areas, water features, etc.
Play value	An assessment of the quality of the play experiences and opportunities provided at a site.
Precinct	A designated area in the municipality, defined within specific boundaries – usually a suburb or several suburbs joined together.
Synthetic Surface	A synthetic surface is a man-made substance such as rubber or artificial grass / carpet.