

GEELONG PLAY STRATEGY: PART 2

Planning and Design Guidelines, Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Space



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

Acknowledgements

The contribution of the following individuals to the development of the Geelong Play Space Strategy is gratefully acknowledged:

Name	Organisation
Kathryn Cotter	City of Greater Geelong
Genevieve Twyford	City of Greater Geelong
Stephen Parker	City of Greater Geelong
Paul Jane	City of Greater Geelong
Felix Hemingway	City of Greater Geelong
Paul Cotter	City of Greater Geelong
Grant Baverstock	City of Greater Geelong
Adrian Cobb	City of Greater Geelong
Marshall Sullivan	City of Greater Geelong
Liz Wood	City of Greater Geelong
Erin McHugh	City of Greater Geelong
Frank Giggins	City of Greater Geelong
Duncan Esler	City of Greater Geelong
Lisa Demajo	City of Greater Geelong
Cr Jan Farrell	City of Greater Geelong
Cr Andy Richards	City of Greater Geelong
Cr Kylie Fisher	City of Greater Geelong
Cr Dr Srechko Kontelj	City of Greater Geelong
Barbara Champion	Play Australia

Name	Organisation
John Evans	Internationally renowned play expert
Susan Sharkey	Community member
Wayne Richard, teachers and students	St Francis Xavier Primary School, Corio
Jan Fagan, teachers and students	St Patrick's Primary School, Geelong West
Lucy Smelter	Geelong West Library
Judith Oke	Corio Library
Steven Read, Leaders, Joeys, Cubs and Scouts	1 st Belmont Scouts
Helen Hetherington	SCOPE
Monica Dillon	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Rebecca Glover	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Maree Crellin	City of Greater Geelong
Merryn Kelly	City of Greater Geelong
Karen Brooke	City of Greater Geelong
Jenny Kelly	City of Greater Geelong
Melissa MacMaster	Gowrie Victoria
Jane Urquhart	Gowrie Victoria
Estelle	Boroondarra Preschool
Myfanwy Evans	Isabel Henderson Kindergarten
Michelle Hocking	Coburg Children's Centre

Table of Contents

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces	1
1.1 Demand for Play Spaces	1
1.2 Understanding Development Needs of Young People	2
1.3 Responsibility for Planning and Design	5
1.3.1 Process for Upgrading an Existing Public Play Space by City of Greater Geelong	7
1.3.2 Process for Developing a New Public Play Space by City of Greater Geelong	10
1.3.3 Process for Developing a New Public Play Space by a Developer	12
1.3.4 Process for Upgrading a Play Space in a Centre-based Play Space	14
1.4 Prioritising Play Space Upgrades	17
1.5 Rationalisation of Play Spaces	18
1.6 External Funding for Play Space Developments	18
1.7 Trends in Play Spaces	18
1.8 Risk-benefit Assessment	23
1.8.1 Why Risk is Important	23
1.8.2 Balancing Risk and Benefits of Risk	23
1.8.3 Playground Equipment Accident Statistics	27

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities	30
2.1 Play Space Design Matrix	31
2.2 Diversity of Play Opportunities	38
2.3 Location and Size	42
2.4 Connectivity to Walking / Cycling Networks	44
2.5 Paths within Play Spaces	46
2.6 Accessibility	48
2.7 Landscaping	50
2.8 Shade	52
2.9 Informal Open Space	55
2.10 Seating	56
2.11 Fencing / Barriers	58
2.12 BBQs / Picnic Tables / Bins	61
2.13 Toilets	62
2.14 Drinking Water	64
2.15 Public Art	66
2.16 Under Surfacing	68
2.17 Edging	72
2.18 Natural Play Elements and Loose Play Materials	74
2.19 Sound / Tactile / Sensory Elements	77
2.20 Skate, Scooter, BMX, Basketball and Netball Facilities	78

2.21 Adult Outdoor Fitness Equipment	80
2.22 Dogs in Play Spaces	82
2.23 Lighting	83
2.24 Signage.....	84
2.25 Car Parks	86
2.26 Bicycle Racks / Rails	87
2.27 Supervision in Centre-based Play Spaces	88
2.28 Program Delivery in Centre-based Play Spaces.....	89
2.29 Equipment in Centre-based Play Spaces	91
2.30 Storage in Centre-based Play Spaces	93
2.31 Involving Local Residents	94
2.32 Utilising Environmentally Sustainable Design Features.....	96

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces 99

3.1 Management of Play Spaces	99
3.1.1 Management by City of Greater Geelong.....	99

3.1.2 Management of Centre-based Play Spaces	102
--	-----

3.2 Marketing of Play Spaces 103

3.3 Maintenance of Play Spaces..... 106

3.3.1 Resources Designated to Public Play Space Maintenance.....	106
3.3.2 Maintenance Plan for Public Play Spaces.....	109
3.3.3 Maintenance Plan for Centre-based Play Spaces.....	111

4.0 Centre –Based Play Centre Case Studies114

4.1 Gowrie Centre, North Carlton	114
4.2 Dame Nellie Melba Preschool, Richmond	116
4.3 Isabel Henderson Kindergarten, Fitzroy North	116
4.4 Coburg Children’s Centre, Coburg.....	117
4.5 Boroondara Pre-School, North Balwyn	118
4.6 ArtPlay - Melbourne	121
4.7 Adventure Playgrounds – St Kilda and South Melbourne	122

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

1.1 Demand for Play Spaces

According to research conducted by Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria¹, priority areas for play spaces are those that have:

- “A high percentage of young children.
- A high percentage of people on low incomes (where people are more likely to be dependent upon local facilities and resources).
- A high concentration of medium or high density housing (and presumably a lack of private play space).”

The report also states that local play spaces are particularly important for people with few options to go elsewhere to play, e.g. young children, older adults and people with disabilities.

In relation to older adults, a report released by Swinburne University and published in the Australian Institute of Family Studies Family Relationships Quarterly² stated that of those interviewed as part of a study to determine the amount of childcare by grandparents, 73% of grandparents see their grandchildren once a month or more frequently and that 47% of grandmothers and 41% of grandfathers provide childcare for their grandchildren at least once per week, with approximately 7% of

¹ Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (2004), *Play Area Development Policy for Local Government*

² Swinburne University, *Grandmothers and Grandfathers Looking After Grandchildren*. Published in Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Family Relationships Quarterly* No. 18: 16 March 2011:
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/afrc/pubs/newsletter/frq018/frq018-3.html>

grandmothers and 4% of grandfathers provide daily care for at least one grandchild. It would be reasonable to expect that demand for play spaces may be relatively high, not only in new growth areas where young families tend to live or in medium to high density housing areas with a high number of young children and people on low incomes, but also in more established areas where grandparents live.

To further complicate the matter, the population of the City of Greater Geelong, particularly in the summer months, expands considerably as people from other parts of the state visit coastal towns along the Bellarine Peninsula. Hence demand for play spaces along the coast is considerably higher during summer.

Therefore, where City of Greater Geelong is faced with competing priorities for play space developments, consideration needs to be given to the existing supply or lack of play spaces in that particular precinct and the quality of play experiences offered within the precinct.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

1.2 Understanding Development Needs of Young People

It is difficult to provide suitable and interesting play opportunities for people of all ages in each play space. Some play spaces will focus on young people over 12 years of age, others will focus on 0-2 year olds; and others on 3-5, 6-8 or 9-12. The different development needs of these age groups are outlined in the following table adapted from information provided by the Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria³ (noting that it is a guide only):

Age	Physical Ability / Interests	Play Requirements
0-2	<p>0-12 months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Become upright and mobile.• Enjoy 1:1 interactions with adults.• Become aware of sensory stimuli sounds and movement.• Begin to sit, crawl, and stand up.• Learn to clamber over low objects.• Copy adult's actions.• Focus on simple events, e.g. wind in the trees. <p>12 months – 2 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More upright and active.• Imitate play / pretend animal play.• Throw, with little control.• Climbing in and through.• Filling, emptying and carrying.• Toppling, pulling and pushing.• Learning meaningful words.• Playing in sandpits.• Pushing trolleys and wheeling prams.• Collecting things.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Babies and toddlers require play spaces that offer challenge and excitement that are suitable to their developmental level• Toddlers need places clear of trip hazards so that they can run and move.• Careful layout of equipment is required as toddlers are unable to forecast consequences, e.g. that a swing will return.• Babies and toddlers learn through sensory exploration and place many things in their mouths – therefore grass or rubber are safer surfaces than bark or mulch.• Shade.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beginning to establish autonomy, but want an adult close by.• May use aggression to solve problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level, grassy areas for running.• Some smooth pathways with non-abrasive surfacing.

³ Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria, *Play Needs of Children*

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

Age	Physical Ability / Interests	Play Requirements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in parallel play with other children. Often move as a group with other children. Develop imitative role play. Refining loco-motor skills. Enjoy physical play. Use wheeled toys. Enjoy manipulating small objects and filling containers. Are interested in birds, insects, flowers and animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting to provide sensory experiences. Some gentle slopes. Small sandpit. Small swings climbing areas with soft fall. Alcove areas landscaped into gardens for small groups to play. Frequent perching areas for adults to sit with children, without intruding in their play.
3-5	<p>3 year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning to interact and will engage in basic socio-dramatic play for short periods, with a focus on domestic play. Enjoy climbing. Can manage a small slide. Enjoy sand and water. Can pour and fill. Enjoy hauling things around. <p>4 year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can share and negotiate. Are inquisitive. Test adult limits. Direct most language to other children. Include violence in play. Show interest in natural science and how things work. Play more fantasy and abstract socio-dramatic play themes. Have basic ball skills. Can participate in group games and activities. <p>5 year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer cooperative play Are physically poised and controlled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of levels and different ways of getting up and down. A variety of surfacing materials. Small areas for 2-4 children to play with sensory materials or imaginative play props. Variety of climbing, sliding, swinging equipment on impact absorbing surfaces – in a reasonably large space, potentially with moveable equipment. Large grassed area for running and ball games. Smaller areas for groups of 3-6 children to work together on cooperative play projects and dramatic play. Low growing plants which create barriers, pathways and private spaces for small group play. Large sandpit. Access to water play. Views of the outside world. Space to ride bikes. Natural environments that provide cubby and camping play opportunities as well as attracting birds and insects. Gardens and animal enclosures.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

Age	Physical Ability / Interests	Play Requirements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like to test out skills and do stunts • Experience change in physical skills – girls develop precisions and boys develop speed and strength. • Enjoy fact finding. • Value group acceptance. • Enjoy constructions and models that are realistic. • Master ball games. • Enjoy games with rules. 	
6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climb confidently – want to master new skills and are prepared to take risks. • Manage ball games. • Are energetic and active and can run or walk for long periods. • Enjoy group activities that are able to be played cooperatively. • Use adults as supporters rather than carers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climbing equipment. • Gymnastics type attachments, e.g. trapeze swings, horizontal ladders or Roman Rings. • Staging area for dramatizations. • Space for team games.
8-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested in competition, sport and energetic activity. • Need flexible space to engage in both boisterous activity and quieter small or individual group experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging climbing equipment. • Challenging gymnastics type equipment. • Space for team games. • Space for quiet activity.
12-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested and skilled in a range of competitive, sporting and energetic activities. • Enjoy taking part in unstructured activities in areas of open space or urban areas such as streets with their friends. • Like places to meet with their friends. • Enjoy challenges and risk taking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space to meet with friends. • Challenging climbing equipment, e.g. rock climbing wall, ropes course. • Space for team games, e.g. kicking a football. • Space for informal sports activities, e.g. half court basketball / netball court, skate ramps, BMX jumps. • Cycle tracks.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

1.3 Responsibility for Planning and Design

In the City of Greater Geelong, planning of public play spaces is usually undertaken by staff from Recreation and Open Space (ROS), Parks and Capital Projects Department (CPD); community-based organisations; businesses; and developers of housing estates.

Council has previously prepared Playground Development Guidelines to assist Council staff, community based organisations, businesses and developers of housing estates to understand:

- Play space hierarchy and associated opportunities.
- Distribution of play spaces.
- Landscape settings.
- Relevant Australian Standards.
- Minimum requirements for aspects such as playground siting, under-surfacing, safe fall zones, etc.

This document provides a good overview of playground development considerations. However, the Play Strategy, and particularly the Planning and Design Guidelines contained within it, have expanded the considerations considerably.

Recommendation:

To replace the Playground Development Guidelines with the Planning and Design Guidelines contained within the Play Strategy-Part 2.

The City of Greater Geelong also recommends the use of the Sustainable Communities Infrastructure Development Guidelines (2010) to assist with planning of open space areas including play spaces. These guidelines also provide an excellent overview of infrastructure development considerations; however, the section on play is limited. The information contained within the Play Strategy, and particularly the Planning and Design Guidelines contained within it, have expanded the considerations considerably.

Recommendation:

To include the Planning and Design Guidelines contained within the Play Strategy as an Appendix to the Sustainable Communities Infrastructure Development Guidelines (2010).

Different types of equipment and play opportunities have a different lifespan, depending upon the type of material they are constructed of, their exposure to weather and coastal conditions, the quality of material used in construction and the amount of use the site receives, etc. Wherever possible, it is recommended that rather than assuming equipment or opportunities need to be replaced in a certain year because that is how long they are reasonably expected to last, that an assessment is undertaken each year to identify ways in which to prolong the lifespan of items. This may mean re-painting steel poles, replacing a play panel on a combination unit, replacing a swing seat, installing a new slide, etc. It

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

may also mean swapping some equipment around from one play space to another in order to create some change and diversity in play spaces. Not only will this reduce the costs required on an annual basis to replace assets, it will also ensure that the environmental footprint of City of Greater Geelong is reduced through the use of recycling. This process is undertaken by a number of local government authorities in Victoria and has yielded an additional five years from play spaces in areas such as City of Greater Bendigo. For the purpose of this Strategy, the following lifespan can be reasonably expected (noting that it may be possible to extend the lifespan through targeted maintenance and minor upgrades):

Type of Play Space	Expected Lifespan
Regional, State and National Facilities	10 years
District / Sub-regional Facilities	10-15 years
Local / Neighbourhood Facilities	15-20 years
Basketball Backboards	10 years
Basketball concrete pads	20 years

Estimated costs of upgrading play equipment, excluding supporting infrastructure are:

- Local / Neighbourhood: \$28,000
- District: \$75,000
- Sub-regional : \$250,000
- Regional , State and National: \$750,000
- State / National \$1,000,000 +

Play spaces are also influenced by changing fashions and standards. Thirty to forty years ago, many play spaces consisted of a swing and a slide and perhaps a few other items such as monkey bars and poles. Twenty to thirty years ago combination units featuring a slide, climbing structures, bridges, play panels and various other items were popular. Currently play equipment in strong demand by young people includes climbers, spinners, spraygrounds (playgrounds featuring water sprays), flying foxes and climbing walls, although the perennial favourites – swings and slides – still rate a very high mention, according to consultation undertaken as part of this Play Strategy (refer to Appendix).

The playground development process currently used by the City of Greater Geelong has been examined and modified to ensure that all relevant Council departments are involved / consulted with at key milestones and to ensure that the community is also involved from the beginning of the process for new play spaces. The roles and responsibilities of each Council department, as they relate to play spaces, are essentially:

- Recreation & Open Space - asset manager of public reserves.
- Parks - maintenance of public facilities.
- Statutory Planning - managing development requirements of new subdivisions.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

- Capital Works - overseeing construction of new facilities.
- Community Development - asset manager of community and early years facilities such as neighbourhood houses, childcare centres and kindergartens.
- Family Services - responsible for the strategic planning of children's care and early education services.
- Environment & Natural Resources - asset manager of natural conservation areas.
- Arts & Culture - bringing art to the community.

- Youth Services - providing opportunities for young people.
- Risk Management - managing risk within Council owned facilities.

The following tables demonstrate the proposed process for upgrading existing play spaces by COGG (first table); developing new play spaces by COGG (second table); developing a new play space by developers (third table); and upgrading an existing play space at a centre-based play space (fourth table).

1.3.1 Process for Upgrading an Existing Public Play Space by City of Greater Geelong

	Task	Lead Role	Support	Comments
1	Prioritise sites for upgrade	Rec & Open Space		Use recommendations from Play Strategy and any high priority issues that have arisen.
2	Visit site	Rec & Open Space and Capital Projects	Parks, Environ & Natural Res Unit	Determine specific requirements for each park. Identify any potential issues such as accessibility to the site for maintenance and flora and fauna values.
3	Determine scope of project and budget	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space; Parks	Identify suitable equipment, landscaping, edging, under surfacing, seating, age groups, materials, fencing, etc, required for project.
4	Write up brief for quotes	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space	Refer to Play Strategy Planning and Design Guidelines.
5	Call for quotes – invite preferred suppliers to quote	Capital Projects		Write to preferred suppliers and designers inviting them to quote.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

	Task	Lead Role	Support	Comments
				Allow 4 weeks for designs.
6	Meet with potential suppliers on site	Capital Projects		Discuss project and scope so it can be quoted accurately.
7	Receive Quotes	Capital Projects		
8	Assess quotes/designs	Capital Projects, Rec & Open Space	Parks	Use selection criteria. Shortlist most suitable designs.
9	Work with preferred supplier to make any changes	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space	
10	Receive revised drawings and quotes from manufacturer	Capital Projects		Drawings and quotes may need to be revised several times.
11	Consult with Community (including young people). Set up a display in the park detailing upgrade and including drawing of designs.	Capital Projects	Parks	Prepare display in-house. Capital Projects Unit to install display.
12	Consult with Stakeholders - send a letter detailing upgrade and a drawing of proposed designs to resident clubs/friends groups/service clubs etc	Capital Projects	Rural Access Disability Advisory Committee	
13	Consult with Neighbours – send a letter detailing upgrade and a drawing of proposed designs to residents adjoining the park.	Capital Projects		
14	Consult with Councillors – send details of upgrade and a drawing of proposed designs	Capital Projects		
15	Receive and assess feedback from residents / clubs / community / Councillors	Capital Projects		Collate responses
16	Work with preferred supplier to make any changes agreed upon from consultation process	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space, Parks	As required
17	Order equipment and landscaping	Capital Projects		Raise order number

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

	Task	Lead Role	Support	Comments
	materials			
18	Create work plan and Safe Working Method Statement.	Capital Projects		
19	Arrange for old equipment to be removed from site	Capital Projects	Fleet Unit	Co-ordinate access to machinery with Fleet Unit. Co-ordinate timing with new installation so site is not without equipment for long.
20	Meet with installers on site to discuss location of equipment and landscaping and any other requirements.	Capital Projects	Parks	
21	Check progress with onsite visits	Capital Projects	Parks	
22	Sign off completion of installation	Capital Projects, Rec & Open Space	Parks	
23	Follow-up paperwork from suppliers for specific maintenance requirements	Capital Projects		Information to be supplied to Parks.
24	Handover Process	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space; Parks	

NB: Recreation and Open Space Unit will only undertake community consultation for regional and district / sub-regional play spaces. Capital Projects Development Unit will undertake community consultation for local play spaces.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

1.3.2 Process for Developing a New Public Play Space by City of Greater Geelong

	Task	Lead Role	Support	Comments
1	Identify site for new play space	Rec & Open Space		Use recommendations from Play Strategy and any high priority issues that have arisen.
2	Visit site	Rec & Open Space and Capital Projects	Parks, Environ & Natural Res Unit	Determine specific requirements for each park. Identify any potential issues such as accessibility to the site for maintenance and flora and fauna values.
3	Consult with Community (including young people). Meet on site to discuss potential play opportunities to be provided.	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space; Parks	Refer to Play Strategy to identify gaps in play provision in the area, demographics, etc.
4	Determine scope of project and budget	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space; Parks	Identify equipment, edging, under surfacing, seating, age groups, materials, fencing, etc, required for project.
5	Write up brief for quotes	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space	To be used in conjunction with Play Strategy Planning and Design Guidelines.
6	Call for quotes – invite preferred suppliers to quote	Capital Projects		Write to preferred suppliers inviting them to quote. Allow 4 weeks for designs.
7	Meet with potential suppliers on site	Capital Projects		Discuss project and scope so it can be quoted accurately.
8	Receive Quotes	Capital Projects		
9	Assess quotes/designs	Capital Projects, Rec & Open Space	Parks	Use selection criteria. Shortlist most suitable designs.
10	Prepare a display on site / in local media to seek feedback on shortlisted	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space	Prepare display / media release in-house. Capital Projects Unit to install

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

	designs			display and to coordinate media.
11	Consult with Stakeholders	Capital Projects	Rural Access Disability Advisory Committee	Send a letter detailing upgrade and a drawing of proposed designs to resident clubs/friends groups/service clubs etc
12	Consult with Neighbours	Capital Projects		Send a letter detailing upgrade and a drawing of proposed designs to residents adjoining the park.
13	Consult with Councillors	Capital Projects		Send details of upgrade and a drawing of proposed designs
14	Conduct a public meeting on site to discuss draft plans	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space	
15	Receive and assess feedback from residents / clubs / community / Councillors	Capital Projects		Collate responses
16	Work with preferred supplier to make any changes	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space	
17	Receive revised drawings and quotes from manufacturer	Capital Projects		Drawings and quotes may need to be revised several times.
18	Work with preferred supplier to make any changes agreed upon from consultation process	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space, Parks	As required
19	Prepare a display on site / in local media to seek feedback on shortlisted designs	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space; Parks	
20	Conduct a final meeting on site to present preferred plan	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space	
21	Order equipment and landscaping supplies	Capital Projects		Raise order number
22	Create work plan and Safe Working Method Statement.	Capital Projects		
23	Meet with installers on site to discuss location and any other requirements.	Capital Projects	Parks	

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

24	Check progress with onsite visits	Capital Projects	Parks	
25	Sign off completion of installation and landscaping	Capital Projects, Rec & Open Space	Parks	
26	Follow-up paperwork from suppliers for specific maintenance requirements – forward to Parks	Capital Projects		
27	Handover Process	Capital Projects	Rec & Open Space	
28	Hold a community celebration at the site.	Rec & Open Space		

NB: Recreation and Open Space Unit will only undertake community consultation for regional and district / sub-regional play spaces. Capital Projects Development Unit will undertake community consultation for local play spaces.

1.3.3 Process for Developing a New Public Play Space by a Developer

Under the City of Greater Geelong's Planning Scheme, developers are required to provide the City with payments or works in-kind towards the provision of infrastructure as part of a new development. Developer contributions can be made through the planning scheme amendment process, the planning permit process or the building process.

In accordance with an approved schedule to Clause 52.01 of the Planning and Environment Act (public open space contribution and subdivision), developers in the City of Greater Geelong are required to provide Council with following cash payment or land containing developed facilities as per the conditions of their development permit:

Number of Lots	Requirements - provision of either cash payment or provision of land.
1 additional lot	None
2 to 9 additional lots	1% per additional lot, up to a maximum of 5% of the site value of the land to be sub-divided.
10 or more lots on land zoned for residential purposes prior to 31 August 2007	5% of the site value of the land to be sub-divided.
10 or more lots on land zoned for residential purposes after 31 August 2007	10% of the site value of the land to be sub-divided.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

The City of Greater Geelong was able to negotiate a contribution of 10% of the value of land to be developed at Armstrong Creek (a new suburb) as unencumbered land for the development of open space incorporating play opportunities.

This process described below for development of new play spaces by developers, has less involvement from Council staff in terms of budgets, and procurement issues than if Council staff were to develop or upgrade a play space, as the responsibility for installation rests with the developer. There is also less community consultation involved as presumably the site to be developed for housing may not be in an area where there are many residences. However, to ensure that the needs of local communities are represented, there will be greater involvement by Council staff in terms of approving the proposed design.

	Task	Lead Role	Support	Comments
1	Developer submits application to planning unit to develop residential housing.	Planning unit		
2	Planning unit to advise on key requirements of the proposed play space (including landscaping).	Planning unit	Rec & Open Space; Environ & Nat Res Unit.	Provide developers with a copy of the Planning and Development Guidelines from the Play Strategy. Also assess any flora and fauna values on the site.
3	Developer to provide Council with a draft concept plan of the play space and a maintenance plan.	Planning unit		
4	Conduct internal meeting to review draft concept plan and suggest any necessary changes.	Planning unit, Rec & Open Space and Parks		
5	Planning unit to meet with developer to identify required changes to plans.	Planning unit		
6	Developer to submit amended plans.	Planning unit		

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

	Task	Lead Role	Support	Comments
7	Relevant Council units to sign off on plans.	Planning unit, Rec & Open Space and Parks	Rural Access Disability Advisory Committee	
8	Planning unit to issue a permit to the developer to proceed with works.	Planning unit		
9	Check progress with onsite visits.	Planning unit	Rec & Open Space and Parks	
10	Sign off completion of installation and landscaping.	Planning unit	Rec & Open Space and Parks	Developer may agree to maintain site for a specified amount of time.
11	Handover Process.	Planning unit	Rec & Open Space and Parks	

1.3.4 Process for Upgrading a Play Space in a Centre-based Play Space

In a centre-based play space, an upgrade may be initiated and funded by the City of Greater Geelong, a Committee / Licensee who lease the facility, or a combination of the two. The following table demonstrates the process for planned upgrades initiated and funded by Council.

Legend:

- C = Committee
- L = Licensee of Service
- FSD = Family Services Department
- CDD = Community Development Department
- Capital Projects = Capital Projects Unit
- DEECD = Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Parks = Parks Unit

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

	Task	Lead Role	Support	Comments
1	Identify site for upgrade.	CDD	FSD / C / L	Use recommendations from Geelong Municipal Early Childhood Infrastructure Plan (draft), master plans, audits, Play Strategy and any high priority issues that have arisen.
2	Visit site.	CDD / Capital Projects		Determine specific requirements for site. Identify any potential issues.
3	Determine scope of project and budget.	CDD / Capital Projects	FSD / C / L	Identify suitable equipment, edging, under surfacing, age groups, materials, fencing, etc, required for project based on Play Strategy and relevant Standards and regulations.
4	Consult with Licensee and DEECD.	CDD	FSD / C	Discuss project scope, timing for works, and impact on the service.
5	Write up brief for quotes.	Capital Projects	CDD	Refer to Play Strategy Planning and Design Guidelines.
6	Call for quotes – invite preferred suppliers to quote.	Capital Projects	CDD / C / L	Write to preferred suppliers inviting them to quote. Allow 4 weeks for designs.
7	Meet with potential suppliers on site.	Capital Projects	CDD/ C / L	Discuss project and scope so it can be quoted accurately.
8	Receive Quotes.	Capital Projects		
9	Assess quotes/designs.	Capital Projects	CDD / FSD/ C / L / Parks	Use selection criteria. Shortlist most suitable designs.
10	Work with preferred supplier to make any changes.	Capital Projects	CDD / FSD / C / L	
11	Consult with Committee members, children and staff. If relevant, set up a display in the centre detailing upgrade and including drawing of designs.	CDD / Capital Projects	FSD Rural Access Disability Advisory Committee	Prepare display in-house.
12	Request sign off on plans from DEECD	CDD / Capital Projects	FSD	
13	Receive and assess feedback from	CDD / Capital Projects	FSD / C / L	Collate responses.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

	Task	Lead Role	Support	Comments
	stakeholders.			
14	Work with preferred supplier to make any changes agreed upon from consultation process.	Capital Projects	FSD / CDD / C / L	As required.
15	Order equipment.	Capital Projects		Raise order number.
16	Create work plan and Safe Working Method Statement.	Capital Projects		
17	Arrange for any old equipment to be removed from site.	Capital Projects	Parks / CDD	Co-ordinate with Parks. Co-ordinate timing with new installation so site is not without equipment for long.
18	Meet with installers on site to discuss location and any other requirements.	Capital Projects	CDD / C / L	
19	Check progress with onsite visits.	Capital Projects	CDD	
20	Sign off completion of installation.	Capital Projects / CDD	C / L / DEECD / Parks	
21	Follow-up paperwork from suppliers for specific maintenance requirements.	Capital Projects	CDD / C / L	Information to be supplied to play space maintenance inspector.
22	Handover Process.	Capital Projects	CDD / C / L	

For projects funded or initiated by a Committee or Licensee of the service, the process may differ to that which is detailed above. Roles and responsibilities will be determined on a case by case basis. Regardless of who manages the process and how it is funded, approval must be sort from the Community Development Department as the Asset manager, prior to the project beginning.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

1.4 Prioritising Play Space Upgrades

The intent of the Play Strategy is to improve the play value, amenity and utility value of all play spaces within the City of Greater Geelong. This means that play spaces that currently lack infrastructure (i.e. shade trees, seats, paths, etc), have limited play opportunities and equipment at or near the end of its lifespan will receive priority for capital replacement. Wherever possible, the lifespan of assets will be extended through targeted maintenance activities and minor upgrades, providing equipment or items continue to meet Australian Standards for safety. Specific planning tools have been developed to assist Council staff to assess priorities for such works.

1. If a playground has been updated with new equipment within the last couple of years, it has been classified as high priority for an infrastructure upgrade.
2. If a playground is well used and doesn't have the appropriate level of supporting infrastructure, it is classified as a high priority.
3. If a playground is not well used because there is a good alternative play opportunity nearby or because it doesn't have the current resident catchment, it has been classified as a low priority for an upgrade. Play spaces that are not well used because they are considered to be boring or unattractive are classified as a higher priority.
4. If the reserve has a current master plan, with upgrades for the playground and supporting infrastructure identified within it, it has been classified as a high priority.
5. If a playground is in a high profile location, it is classified as a high priority.

6. If a playground has capital funding due in next financial year, it has been classified as a high priority.
7. If a playground has just been upgraded during last 12 months (since the last external audit report) it has been classified as a low priority for equipment replacement.
8. Local knowledge of the condition of play spaces.

For public play spaces, additional consideration will need to be given to:

- Geographical gaps in the provision of play spaces in the area.
- Quality and amount of amenities provided at the site.
- Projected growth rate of the area.
- Availability of other publicly accessible play spaces in the area, such as school play spaces (only those with Joint Use Agreements for shared school and community use).
- Housing density.
- Socio-economic status of an area.

For centre-based play spaces, additional consideration will need to be given to:

- Regulatory issues, i.e. visibility, inappropriate equipment for age group, identified by DEECD as a breach of licence.
- Building upgrades, i.e. where an early childhood facility is being renovated the play space may also be considered in the upgrade.
- Children with additional needs enrolled in a program at the site.
- Quality of play experience offered at the site.

Areas in which play spaces need to be developed in the future include growth areas such as Armstrong Creek. Other more established areas

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

such as Corio require an improvement in play value and the development of supporting infrastructure such as seats, shade trees and compacted paths. Details of proposed improvements are contained within the Appendix 2, Section 2.0 of the Play Strategy.

1.5 Rationalisation of Play Spaces

Occasionally play spaces are assessed as being no longer required due to:

- Unsuitability of the existing site – possibly a safety issue.
- An over-supply of play spaces in that area – possibly due to a high number of local play spaces already in existence or due to the development of a new district/sub-regional or regional play space in the area that includes the local population within its catchment.
- Insufficient funding to replace the equipment – as is sometimes the case on public land when committees of management or sports clubs cannot afford to upgrade facilities.
- Lack of usage – possibly due to a decline in the population in that area or a change in the demographics of that community.

In such situations, it is imperative that:

- The community be notified prior to any works occurring and involved in decisions regarding the future use of the site if appropriate.
- Wherever possible the site should remain as public open space, even if play space equipment is removed.

- Any salvageable play equipment (i.e. in good condition and not past the end of its lifespan) is relocated to another play space within the play precinct if possible.

1.6 External Funding for Play Space Developments

Play space developments, particularly those that promote an increase in participation for traditionally disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities or people from low-socio economic backgrounds, are often eligible for State and Federal Government Grants, particularly through organisations such as the Victorian State Government's Department of Planning and Community Development. Alternative sources of funding could also be investigated, e.g. philanthropic trusts, local businesses or trusts / enterprises. Local service clubs and volunteer groups such as Men's Sheds should not be overlooked in the search for funding, labour or equipment.

1.7 Trends in Play Spaces

Play spaces are continually evolving and changing to meet the needs of the community. According to observations within the Australian play industry and USA based Recreation Management⁴, some of the trends currently impacting on play spaces at both a national and international level, are a growth in the following:

⁴ Klingensmith, Dawn in Recreation Management – *Play Hard: the latest in playground philosophy, design and components*:
<http://www.recmanagement.com/200607fe02.php>

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

1. Play spaces designed and constructed by developers and built into new residential areas, generally handed over to Local Government Authorities to manage when lots are developed and after a pre-determined maintenance period.
2. Play spaces designed and driven by landscape architects as opposed to standard off the shelf play equipment purchases.
3. Partnerships between designers of play spaces and playground suppliers to produce more custom made or individualised equipment that reflects local needs.
4. Using artists to help create a sense of place or to develop a prominent theme in play spaces through sculptures and other forms of art.



Figure 1: Mural at Muddy's Playground, Cairns, QLD

5. Play spaces as part of a larger park master plan.

6. Integrating plantings within play spaces so that the landscape becomes part of the play space and part of the overall experience.
7. Educational or interpretive components within play spaces, e.g. cementing faux fossils into the bottom of a sandbox, etc.
8. Physically challenging components.
9. Site specific design (i.e. working with the environment such as existing trees, slope of the site, etc) as opposed to an equipment-centric design approach.



Figure 2: Trees forming part of the play experience at Geelong Play Space

10. Including water features in play spaces (e.g. misters, sprayers, oscillating sprinklers, in-ground geysers, stationary water guns and cannons, sculptures that emit water, etc) outside aquatic centres.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces



Figure 3: Water park in Germany



Figure 4: Geelong Play Space dramatic play opportunity



**Figure 5: Playground utilising natural slope of land
(photo courtesy of the Natural Playground Company)**

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

11. Designs incorporating multiple levels, intimate spaces, creative entry and exit points and imaginative interiors as opposed to flow through playground designs that soon lose the interest of young people.
12. Incorporating electronic play components into the outdoor play space, e.g. a device that records voices and plays them back in a distorted manner or a device that answers children's questions in a similar manner to the Magic 8 Ball, or projection of images into play space.



Figure 6: Play space in Le Havre, France which projects moveable playful images onto the play surface

13. Play spaces which incorporate natural materials, indigenous vegetation and pre-existing landforms with environmentally inspired structures, e.g. water features, low tree houses, tree

stump climbs, rock gardens, boulders, etc as opposed to brightly coloured components that don't complement the surroundings.



Figure 7: Woodend Playground featuring natural play opportunities

14. Universally accessible play spaces which incorporate items such as ramps that go to the top of a structure, sand boxes raised to table height, swings with high backs and contemporary equipment to suit people of all abilities.
15. Creation of spontaneous play opportunities in the urban environment.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces



Figure 8: Water feature in London, UK



Figure 9: Spinners and spatial net climber, Laguna Park, Palm Beach, QLD

16. Freestanding structures and spinners in play spaces.
17. Features which can be scaled such as realistic rock structures, climbing walls, spatial net climbers, and geodesic or geometric climbers.
18. Sand and water tables.
19. Play spaces that incorporate opportunities for ball games and running games as well as equipment based activities.
20. Inclusion of portable objects or moveable natural materials in supervised outdoor play spaces to allow young people to be creative and to manipulate their environment.
21. Providing play opportunities for 0-2 year olds incorporating equipment such as short tunnels, sliding beads, mirrors, etc on a surface which allows infants to crawl, lie or roll.
22. Development of skate parks within a broader youth hub incorporating performance space, half size basketball / netball courts, meeting places and flexible space for other physical activities.
23. Activities for young adults such as parcour, whereby people use existing fixed structures in the urban environment (e.g. fences, walls, seats, trees, etc) as part of an obstacle course.
24. Providing supporting infrastructure such as toilets, seating, lighting, signage, viewing areas for carers, shade, drinking water, bicycle racks, as well as connections to walking and cycling paths.
25. Involving communities in the design and management of play spaces.
26. Urban sporting reserves being used for informal play.

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

27. Interaction with nature.
28. Promotion of dramatic play.
29. Employment of play workers in some parks in the UK.
30. Fixed outdoor fitness equipment in parks or along linear trails which can be used by all age groups.
31. Less informal play occurring in residential streets.
32. Greater number of people accessing play spaces by car.
33. An increase in the number of indoor play spaces where participants pay to play and parents can sit, watch and buy a coffee.
34. Increasing number of children 0-5 attending early childhood centres and taking part in educational and recreational programs with a strong emphasis on play.
35. Increasing focus on risk avoidance due to fear of injuries to children and fear of litigation.

1.8 Risk-benefit Assessment

1.8.1 Why Risk is Important

Risk taking is an important part of growing up. It allows children to learn how to deal with different situations; to learn about success and failure; to judge speeds and distances; to understand limitations of materials; to become more confident; to become more resilient; and to challenge themselves both physically and mentally. Unfortunately the litigious society in which we live and the trend towards avoidance of all risks in daily life have had a major impact on children's exposure to places where they can explore their boundaries and their capabilities.

Many play spaces have been designed to avoid risks at all costs. Whilst it is extremely important to provide a place where young people are protected from avoidable harm and to ensure that all aspects of the play

space meet Australian Standards in terms of safety, too often the challenge, fun and adventure has been removed from play spaces. So what we are left with is a series of bland boring play spaces that offer very little interest or play value to our children.

1.8.2 Balancing Risk and Benefits of Risk

The traditional way of viewing risks is to develop a table which identifies the likelihood of an incident occurring versus the consequence of that incident.

LIKELIHOOD	Very likely	Yellow	Red	Red
	Likely	Green	Yellow	Red
	Unlikely	Green	Green	Yellow
		Minor	Moderate	Major
CONSEQUENCE				

Incidents that are unlikely to occur and are likely to have minor consequences are generally rated as 'green', indicating that they can be managed reasonably well without any major interventions. In a play space, this may include a child tripping over on soft fall and grazing his or her knee. Incidents that are likely to occur and have moderate consequences are rated 'yellow' and require some form of intervention to reduce the likelihood of the incident occurring and the likelihood of

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

injury. In a play space such an incident may include repositioning a swing so that it is not in the path of play to protect any child who may run into the path of a person on a swing. Incidents which are likely or very likely to occur and major consequences are labelled 'red' and must be addressed as a matter of priority. In a play space this may include inadequate under surfacing or excessive free fall heights, both of which may result in serious injuries to children if they are to fall.

"Children and young people need to encounter some real risks if they are to respond positively to challenging situations and learn how to deal with uncertainty. This cannot be achieved by limiting them to supposedly safe environments. Therefore, providers of play opportunities have no choice but to offer situations in which children and young people can experience real, not make-believe hazards"

Play England.

What is needed, however, is a balance between acceptable risk and the benefits that such risks may provide to the development and well-being of young people. Play England⁵ recommends that risk-benefit assessments should be documented in a style similar to the following:

Hypothetical Risk-benefit Assessment: Should Tree-climbing in the City's Parks be Allowed or Prohibited?

Issue	Commentary	Information Sources
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The pleasure it gives children and young people.• Benefits to health, confidence and well-being.• Benefits of regular contact with nature in promoting environmental awareness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forestry Commission Growing Adventure report (Gill, 2006).• Play England publications on the benefits of play.• Everyday experience and observation
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk of minor injuries and long bone fractures.• Lesser risk of more serious injuries.• Risk of damage to trees.• Risk of complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National accident data.• Local knowledge about injuries and complaint levels.• Information about claims

⁵ Play England *Managing Risk in Play Provision: Implementation Guide Page*

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

Issue	Commentary	Information Sources
	from some residents; risk of claims, litigation and loss of reputation.	from colleagues and professional networks.
Expert Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arboriculture inspection shows some obviously weak branches in some trees. • Different expert views: positive attitudes from child development experts. • Concerns from accident prevention professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arboriculture inspection reports. • Play inspectors views. • Play England publications. • Published guidance from accident prevention organisations
Relevant local factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely prevalence of tree-climbing. • Location and species of tree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park managers
Options and their Costs, Pros and Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave trees as they are, and allow climbing. • Remove some weaker branches and allow climbing. • Remove trees and/or lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new information: • Options need to be discussed and pros and cons weighed up.

Issue	Commentary	Information Sources
	branches to prevent climbing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to stop children from climbing by using enforcement and education. • Talk with children about making their own judgements about strength and safety of branches. • Arboriculture, educational or enforcement action all have financial costs. • Removing weaker branches may send too strong a signal that the trees have been modified to make them safe for intensive climbing, and may encourage concentrated use. • Enforcement is likely to antagonise children and be only partially successful. It may 	

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

Issue	Commentary	Information Sources
	also lead children to go to elsewhere to climb, or do other less desirable things.	
Precedents / Comparisons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cityville Metropolitan Borough Council has a policy allowing tree climbing and this has had a positive outcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional networks. Play England, Greenspace, CABE and other national agencies.
Risk-benefit Judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general benefits outweigh risks but these need to be managed, so leave trees as they are, and allow tree climbing. Monitor carefully at different times of year and review decision in one year or earlier if change in situation. Provide information to park staff and local people about decision and 	

Issue	Commentary	Information Sources
	rationale.	
Implementing Judgement Locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree-climbing as a child was a common experience for many adults, and something that many would agree is of value for children today. Parents, carers and other adults in a supervisory role are likely to set rules about tree-climbing, since they are aware of the risks. Consider publicising the decision, to demonstrate the council's approach to risk-taking and to highlight this to parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience from others in similar circumstances, gained from professional networks. Support from national agencies.

[Note: in this example all statements are hypothetical.]

Issues assessed through this process may include water features, boulders, self-built structures, fencing, tree climbing, high ropes, swinging

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

bridges, flying foxes, etc. Relevant Australian Standards for playgrounds will also need to be considered in the development of this risk-benefit assessment.

It will be crucial to engage Councillors, all relevant Council staff, Council's insurers and the broader community in the development of the risk-benefit assessment for new equipment / objects which are considered more challenging and may not necessarily come with Australian Standard approval. The continuing education of parents and carers is a key component of this 'shift' to a risk-benefit approach. The document will need to be made accessible to all of those who need it. Further, it will be necessary to continue to monitor, review and update the assessment on a regular basis.

Recommendation:

To develop a risk-benefit assessment approach to play spaces which incorporate 'more challenging equipment / objects' whereby Council officers and Council insurer's work together to identify both the risks and the benefits of risks in play spaces with a view to providing more challenging play spaces which still meet Australian Standards for safety.

1.8.3 Playground Equipment Accident Statistics

Play spaces are relatively safe places compared with activities such as football. However, minor accidents are inevitable. Monash University Accident Research Centre⁶ recorded approximately 4,000 presentations to the emergency department of Victorian hospitals annually between 2006 and 2009 for children sustaining an injury at home (36%); in schools / day care centres / public administration areas (32%) or in places for recreation (19%) from playground equipment and trampolines. As a comparison, the number of people presenting to the 38 Victorian public hospitals in 2007/08 was 1,350,046⁷.

Accidents from playground equipment and trampolines equates to only 0.3% of all emergency department presentations in Victoria.

⁶ Monash University Accident Research (April 2010) *Playground Equipment and Trampoline Injury in Children (0-14 years)*:

<http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/VISU/reports/playground.html>

⁷ Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government, *National Partnership Agreement on Hospital and Health Workforce Reform*:

http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/national_partnership_agreements/HE003/implementation_plans/VIC%20-%20TPOPH.pdf

1.0 Planning and Development of Play Spaces

Approximately 17% of the children who presented to the emergency department were admitted to hospital, with the most frequent injuries generally occurring on the upper extremity of the body as fractures (47%), sprains / strains (20%) and open wounds (10%). The majority of accidents occurred from falls from heights over one metre (55%) and falls from less than one metre (26%). Although the gender distribution of injuries is equal between males and females, children between five and nine years of age were most likely to present to emergency departments for treatment (58%). Equipment with the highest number of injuries recorded were monkey bars, trampolines and slides.



Figure 10: Child exploring risk at Sparrow Park

Statistics from Play England⁸ show similar accident data for the UK. It also shows that:

per hour of participation, “accident rates for sports such as rugby and football (soccer) are at least 10 times as high, and even racket (sic) sports like tennis and badminton have accident rates several times as high as for playing in play provision.”

Whilst it is difficult to obtain similar statistics for Australia, a study undertaken by Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) (2002) showed that people who take part in Australian Rules Football, bicycle riding, basketball and soccer are more likely to present to emergency departments with an injury than a child who has fallen from play equipment. In fact, based on the research conducted by MUARC information, an Australian Rules Footballer is almost four times more likely to present to an emergency department with an injury than someone who is injured whilst playing on play equipment.

⁸ Play England (March 2009) *Policy Briefing 6: Managing Risk in Play Provision: A Briefing for Risk Managers*



2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

The aim of this chapter of the Strategy is to assist City of Greater Geelong staff, developers, community based organisations such as kindergarten committees, businesses and others to improve the standard and design of play spaces so that the City of Greater Geelong features quality, diverse and engaging play spaces available for all.

A range of different factors from play equipment through to landscaping have been considered in this chapter as sub-headings. Each sub-heading has been divided into three sections:

1. Rationale - why that particular item or function is considered in play spaces.
2. Planning considerations - it is important to note that whilst many of the planning considerations in public play spaces and supervised early childhood centres are similar, there are some marked differences, particularly in areas such as:
 - Fencing.
 - Supervision.
 - Storage.
 - Equipment.

Hence this section provides planning considerations for all play spaces, with additional items of information specific for public play spaces or centre-based play spaces if relevant. These planning considerations have been formulated based on existing policy directions adopted by City of Greater Geelong, Children's Services Regulations, Australian Standards or best practice initiatives locally and internationally.

3. Relevant Standards - involves identifying relevant Australian Standards or relevant guidelines that need to be considered in the design, development, management and maintenance of certain aspects of play spaces. Note that the list provided in this Strategy is not exhaustive. It is the responsibility of the organisation developing or upgrading play spaces to become familiar with all relevant regulations, legislation, planning schemes and building codes.
4. References – this section provides links to further information about the item or function.

It must be noted, however, that regulations and best practice currently evolve and change, hence this section of the Strategy needs to be continually updated to represent these changes.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.1 Play Space Design Matrix

The table on the next page provides a summary of how play space planning principles and design considerations can be used in practice across the various types of play spaces in the City of Greater Geelong. This matrix recognises that it is not possible to provide every type of opportunity at each local play space, but rather opportunities are spread across each play space precinct (suburb – as defined by Australian Bureau of Statistics). It also recognises that local / neighbourhood play spaces will predominantly cater for people who may not have access to vehicles, such as parents with young children in prams, older adults, people with disabilities, etc as well as local community events, e.g. picnics, etc. District, sub-regional and regional play spaces will cater for the whole community, but will have a greater focus on young people from 3-18 years of age from a play perspective. Play spaces in supervised early childhood centres will predominantly cater for children from 6 months of age to 12 years of age in a fenced, supervised environment. A summary of each of these play spaces follows:

Hierarchy of Play Space	Features
Local / Neighbourhood Play Space	Walking distance from homes (400m radius); some open space and some equipment / natural features for play.
District Play Space	500m-2km catchment or 15 minute bicycle trip; service a number of neighbourhood areas; more extensive play opportunities and amenities than local play spaces; may be linked to recreation reserves.
Sub-regional Play Space	5-10km catchment or a 30 minute bicycle trip; service a whole suburb or several suburbs; part of a larger open space or multi use centre; will incorporate amenities and wide range of play opportunities.
Regional Play Space	10km+ catchment; will service the region; wide range of play opportunities and high standard of amenities; high level of visitation.
State / National Play Space	National / state catchment; contain unique or innovative play features; supported by high standard of amenities; may also be the site of major events
Early Childhood Centres	Centre-based play spaces typically have kindergarten, long day care, occasional care, playgroup and neighbourhood house programs run in them and the majority 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.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Key: ✓✓ = Must have ✓ = Might have X = Should not have XX = Must not have

	Local / Neighbourhood Play Spaces	District Play Spaces	Sub-Regional Play Spaces	Regional Play Spaces	State / National Play Spaces	Early Childhood Centres
Play Space Principles						
Diversity of experiences	As part of the local precinct / suburb	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Inclusive and accessible	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Inviting and welcoming	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Connected to communities and transport links	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Safe, yet challenging	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Sustainable	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Promote community interactions	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Well designed and planned	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Respect and protect heritage and cultural features	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Incorporate the natural environment	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Be well maintained	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Type of Play Activity						
Cognitive play (role plays, drama)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Creative play (free, imaginative,	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

	Local / Neighbourhood Play Spaces	District Play Spaces	Sub-Regional Play Spaces	Regional Play Spaces	State / National Play Spaces	Early Childhood Centres
manipulative)						
Active play on equipment (slides, swings, climbing apparatus)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Active games (bike riding, football, basketball, skating, chasey, Frisbee, etc)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Play through learning (counting, reading, mobility skills, discovery, etc)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Supervised play (by an educator)	X	X	X	X	X	✓✓
Location						
Walking time	5 mins	10-20 mins	1-2 hours	2 hours+	2 hours+	N/A
Driving time	1-2 mins	Up to 5 mins	Up to 10 mins	15 mins+	15 mins+	N/A
Distance to homes	400m maximum	2-4km	5kms to 9km	10km+	10km+	N/A
Target User Groups						
Toddlers (0-2)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Young children (3-5)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Mid range children (6- 8)	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Older Children (9-12)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Young people (13-18)	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	X

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

	Local / Neighbourhood Play Spaces	District Play Spaces	Sub-Regional Play Spaces	Regional Play Spaces	State / National Play Spaces	Early Childhood Centres
Parents / carers	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Older adults	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
People with disabilities	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Whole of community (social space)	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓
Minimum Infrastructure						
Linked to walking / cycling paths	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Access to play space from street	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	X
Compacted path within play space	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Natural shade	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Shade sails	X	X	X	X Only where there is good passive surveillance	X Only where there is good passive surveillance	✓
Shaded seating	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Picnic tables	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	X
Fence	X Only as a barrier near a source of potential danger	X Only as a barrier near a source of potential danger	X Only as a barrier near a source of potential danger	✓	✓	✓✓
BBQ	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	X
Shelter	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Bike racks	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Signage	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓ at entrance to centre

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

	Local / Neighbourhood Play Spaces	District Play Spaces	Sub-Regional Play Spaces	Regional Play Spaces	State / National Play Spaces	Early Childhood Centres
Drinking fountain	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Landscaped areas	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Grassed areas	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Artificial grass	X	X	X	X	X	✓ Less than 25% of total surface
Art work	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Toilets – including family change and disabled	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	In centre
Designated car parking (incl. Disabled car parking)	X	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Lighting	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Storage shed / cupboard	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	✓✓
Minimum Play Opportunities						
Swinging elements	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Sliding elements	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Spinning elements	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Balancing elements	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Climbing elements	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Creative play elements, e.g. cubby house	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Play through learning elements (counting, reading, mobility skills, discovery, etc)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Loose play material (sand*, leaves,	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

	Local / Neighbourhood Play Spaces	District Play Spaces	Sub-Regional Play Spaces	Regional Play Spaces	State / National Play Spaces	Early Childhood Centres
branches, pebbles, etc)						
Natural play elements (boulders, trees, logs, water*, etc)	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Sound / tactile / sensory elements	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Ball games area	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Sand Pit	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Basketball or netball ring	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Moveable equipment	X	X	X	X	X	✓✓
Play Value – what each play space should achieve						
Site is accessible	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Site provides a choice of different activities	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Site is complementary to other sites in the precinct / suburb	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Opportunity to master skills and challenges	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Opportunity to enjoy physical activity and movement	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Opportunity to experience sensory qualities of the outdoors	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Opportunity to use the environment as part of	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

	Local / Neighbourhood Play Spaces	District Play Spaces	Sub-Regional Play Spaces	Regional Play Spaces	State / National Play Spaces	Early Childhood Centres
the play experience						
Opportunity to engage in social and imaginative play	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Opportunity to learn new educational skills	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Opportunity for carers and older adults to enjoy watching others play in comfort	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Opportunities for staff, parents and carers to provide clear lines of surveillance and supervision	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Opportunities for people of all ages to meet and play together	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓

* Sand and water features to be provided only in some district, sub-regional, regional, state, national play spaces and in all centre-based play spaces.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.2 Diversity of Play Opportunities

Rationale:

According to the International Play Association⁹:

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 opportunities provided in the City of Greater Geelong should be inclusive of people of all ages and abilities and should provide opportunities for children to undertake a range of different activities such as physical games / play; creative and cognitive play; and social dramatic play. Play spaces should be designed in a flexible manner to encourage children to: be independent; be creative; be contemplative; be resilient and get along with other people; learn how to resolve problems and to

⁹ International Play Association – website:
<http://www.ipaworld.org/home.html>

deal with changes; develop their physical strength; challenge themselves; interact with nature; and enjoy spatial qualities of open space areas. Play spaces should provide opportunities for children to play alone, with other children or with their parents / carers.



Figure 11: Children using a tree as part of the play experience at Geelong Play Space

Young children enjoy play spaces that provide a range of different activities that allow them to climb, swing, slide, spin, balance, run around, hide, play creative games, manipulate their environment and develop new skills. Sand pits, water courses, loose play materials, natural environmental features, bridges, tunnels, swings, slides, climbing structures, spinners, cubby houses, mazes, bicycle paths, quiet places with seats and open space are often found in play spaces for younger

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

children and have been identified through consultation processes as highly valued (refer to Appendix).



Figure 12: Spinners and climbing wall at Eastern Park

Children enjoy manipulating their environment, or creating and building different aspects. At the beach, children have access to a range of loose materials such as sand, shells, seaweed and sticks from which to build sandcastles, moats, sand sculptures, tunnels, etc. The ability to build such things helps children to develop their creative skills and to understand the properties of various items found in the natural environment. In parks, access to loose materials can be somewhat restricted. Consideration needs to be given to not only providing loose natural materials such as

leaves, grass, gum nuts, bark and twigs, but potentially larger loose materials such as branches, pieces of wood, large rocks, old tyres, etc which children can use to construct things. Some members of the community may object to the 'untidiness' of loose materials or the potential for such materials to be removed from the site and used for other purposes.

In the interests of children connecting to the natural environment, having the opportunity to be creative and wanting to visit play spaces regularly, there should be at least a number of play spaces in the City of Greater Geelong where larger loose items are provided for children's play.

There may even be demand in the future to create a supervised adventure playground in an inner urban area of Geelong, similar to Skinners Adventure Playground in South Melbourne. This type of playground is often referred to as a neighbourhood backyard, whereby a paid play supervisor works with children after school and on weekends in free, unstructured activity. In these spaces, young people get the opportunity to build things from wood and other materials, cook over fires, play with animals, grow plants, run around and play.

Consideration needs to be given to the position of the play space and what exists around it. A review of the precinct audit in Appendix 2, Section 2.0 of the Play Strategy will help to identify any specific gaps in

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

certain areas. Further, play spaces in inner suburbs such as Geelong West may need a greater focus on natural play opportunities as much of the area is built up and open space areas limited. In contrast, play spaces in rural areas such as Anakie where many children live on farms or have access to open space, but where there may be fewer children to play with, may require a greater focus on activities involving socialisation.

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

In order to encourage children and families to enjoy play spaces and to benefit from the opportunities play spaces can provide, it is critical that play space designers focus on maximising play value of these important community assets. To maximise play value, these spaces need to:

- Be inclusive and accessible to all members of the community, using universal design principles.
- Be designed with sustainability in mind and are well cared for from a management and maintenance perspective.
- Provide an inviting, welcoming and stimulating atmosphere.
- Involve communities in the design of the play space.
- Balance safety with risk taking opportunities.
- Provide appropriate amenities consistent with the Play Space Design Matrix.
- Offer a range of different opportunities for play and interaction in a space that is sufficient in size for its purpose and allows for change and evolution.
- Provide opportunities for people to interact with the natural environment.
- Promote and protect cultural, natural and heritage features.

- Be developed using quality materials and finishes, including recycled materials where appropriate.
- Meet Australian Safety Standards and any other relevant regulations / legislation.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

In order to encourage as many people as possible from the community to enjoy play spaces and to benefit from the opportunities play spaces can provide, it is critical that play space designers focus on maximising 'play value' of these important community assets. To maximise play value, these spaces need to:

- Be designed by people with experience in play design.
- Be designed with the whole park and play precinct in mind.
- Be well connected to homes via cycling / walking tracks, public transport and roads.
- Encourage interactions by the whole community and allow children of all ages to play together.
- Be well promoted to the community.
- If play spaces are within 30 metres of a waterway they must comply to the RLSSA guidelines - Urban Waterway Developments
- Play equipment needs to be set back at least 25 metres from any roadway.

Planning Considerations for Centre-based Play Spaces:

- Refer to Section 2.27-2.30.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.
- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.
- Australian Standard AS 2316.1 – 2009 Artificial climbing structures and challenge courses – Fixed and mobile artificial climbing and abseiling walls.
- Royal Life Saving Society of Australia Guidelines.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- Play Australia, *Précis of Article Planning a Playground*: www.prav.asn.au .
- Play Australia, *Why are Playgrounds Needed*: www.prav.asn.au .
- Play Australia, *Play Needs of Children*: www.prav.asn.au .
- Play England (2008), *Design For Play: A Guide to Creating Successful Play Spaces*.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.3 Location and Size

Rationale:

The location of a play space can have a significant impact on whether or not it is well used. Careful consideration needs to be given to ensuring that play spaces are well located in the community, in areas that are easily accessible, visible and safe and in areas people would naturally choose to go.

It should be noted that informal play opportunities can exist in areas outside of playgrounds, i.e. in streetscapes, shopping precincts, plazas, sculpture, water fountains, hopscotch in paving, etc

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

1. Play spaces should be designed in such a way as to allow the space to be used for a variety of different activities and functions.
2. Play spaces should enrich and complement the existing character of the community and its landscape.
3. Play spaces should be located to take advantage of the existing landscape features to assist in providing protection from weather.
4. Play spaces should be designed so that children have attractive vistas both on the ground and from equipment with height, as opposed to looking at run-down buildings, busy roads or fences – which all detract from the play experience.
5. Play spaces should have sufficient space to allow maintenance vehicles to enter the site.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

1. Local / neighbourhood play spaces will generally be a minimum of 1 hectare in size (or the equivalent of 100m x 100m), district play spaces will generally be a minimum of 2 hectares, sub-regional play spaces a minimum of 5 hectares and regional play spaces a minimum of 5-10 hectares.
2. Local / neighbourhood play spaces need to be a minimum of 80m wide in order to allow children to explore spatial qualities of the site.
3. Play spaces should have street frontages on at least two sides.
4. Play space frontages should be inviting and welcoming.
5. Play spaces should be linked to existing cycling / walking networks.
6. Larger play spaces should be located near public transport routes
7. Play spaces should be linked to other areas of open space, wherever possible.
8. Play spaces should be designed to maximise passive surveillance by neighbours, with no blind spots or hidden corners.
9. Regional and district / sub-regional play opportunities should be located close to supporting infrastructure such as car parking, shelter, toilets, water fountains, etc and community meeting facilities.
10. Play spaces should be located on land which maximises the number of people who can access the site within 400 metres (or 5 minutes walking distance) from their homes.
11. Play spaces should not be located at the end of a t-intersection as children may feel unsafe with cars appearing to be driving straight towards them.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

12. Play spaces designed by developers should be provided on unencumbered land.
13. Play spaces should not be located under power lines due to limitation of design in respect to height.
14. Play spaces should not be located next to major barriers such as highways, busy roads and railway lines as these barriers may limit the number of people who can easily and safely access the space.
15. Play equipment should not be located in retarding basins due to the potential of floods at the site and the possibility that paths and equipment may be damaged.
16. Drainage must be provided in play spaces that are low lying or subject to inundation.
17. Apply native vegetation framework principals to the design, i.e. to avoid / minimise offset impacts on native vegetation.

Planning Considerations for Centre-based Play Spaces:

1. Development and provision of centre-based play spaces must conform to Victorian Children's Service Regulations and Australian Standards. (Refer also Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services).
2. Regulations state play spaces must provide a minimum unencumbered space of 7-12 square metres per child depending on the nature of the program being delivered. City of Greater Geelong prefers that minimum play space requirements are above those stipulated by regulations to accommodate any future changes in outdoor space requirements. Play spaces should preferably be designed so that they are north facing.

3. Soil testing must be undertaken if the surface is to be dug at a depth greater than 1,000mm (for footings of play equipment or shade structures for instance).
4. Double gates should be constructed on one side of the fence to allow maintenance vehicles to enter the site.
5. To allow effective and active supervision to take place, play spaces in supervised early childhood centres need to be designed so that children can be seen at all times by staff, volunteers or parents, i.e. there are no areas hidden by bushes, storage sheds, large pieces of play equipment, corners of buildings, etc.
6. Provide a stimulating play environment and opportunity to accommodate and facilitate a wide range of different play experiences.
7. Ensure that the outdoor space is linked to the indoor area.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.
- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.
- Children's Services Regulations 2009.
- Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong (2009) *Playground Development Guidelines*.
- Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines (2010) – City of Greater Geelong:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>.



Figure 13: Barwon Heads Community Play Park

2.4 Connectivity to Walking / Cycling Networks

Rationale:

These walking / cycling networks are the paths that lead to play spaces from local residential areas and key community facilities. By linking play spaces to a walking / cycling network of paths, opportunities for children and families to access play spaces through active and independent transportation (i.e. walking, cycling, riding a scooter, riding a skate board, using roller blades, etc) is greatly increased. Access for people in wheelchairs, on motorised scooters, walking frames and pushing prams is also greatly enhanced by providing paths connecting play spaces to residential areas.

Active transport reduces the reliance on cars and subsequently helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also contributes to health and wellbeing of residents and helps to reduce the likelihood of diseases such as Type 2 Diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer as well as conditions such as obesity. Independent transport is particularly important for those members of the community who may not have their own transport, e.g. young people, people with disabilities and older adults. By being able to access community facilities within their neighbourhood independently, these residents become less dependent on others, learn general road safety skills, have a greater freedom, meet people in their local community, have the opportunity to experience nature and landmarks along the way, enjoy distant views and help to provide a sense of activity in the local community.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

Walking / cycling paths leading to play spaces need to be well designed and constructed to cater for potentially high levels of use and extreme weather events. They need to connect to local residential areas and other key community facilities such as sport and recreation facilities, schools and shopping / entertainment areas.

The material used for construction will be dependent upon local area planning and may include granitic sand, asphalted surfaces or concrete. The surface needs to be compacted to allow easy access to the site by people whether they are walking, cycling, in a wheelchair or pushing a pram. Shared cycling / walking paths need to be a minimum of 2.5 metres wide and should incorporate directional signage at regular intervals, as well as trail head signage if appropriate. Seats, natural shade and safe exit and entry points should also be incorporated into the design. To assist people with vision impairments to interpret their surroundings, patterns in the pavement or changes in texture of the surface may be used.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- AS1742.9.
- AS2890.3.
- Austroads – AP – 11.14/99.
- Austroads – AP R194/01.
- Austroads – AP R193/01.

- VicRoads Bicycle Notes 1-19.



Figure 14: Walking / cycling trail through a park

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines (2010) – City of Greater Geelong:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

- Clause 56 Walkability Toolkit – City of Greater Geelong:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd9bd471204de4-Walkability%20Toolkit.pdf>.

2.5 Paths within Play Spaces

Rationale:

Whilst it is important to provide paths to play spaces to enable people to physically get to the site, it is also important to provide paths within play spaces so that people are easily able to move around within the space, or so that they have a 'Continuous Accessible Path of Travel' (i.e. a continuous route, free of steps, that link key elements of the play space together and that can be safely negotiated by all people of all abilities). Compacted or sealed paths allow people, particularly those using mobility aids such as crutches, walking frames, motorised scooters and wheelchairs, as well as those using bicycles, rollerblades or pushing prams, to access various parts of the play space with relative ease.

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

1. Paths can be constructed of granitic sand, asphalt, concrete, pavers, stone or timber sleepers / decking, providing that the surface is compacted, well formed, well made and regularly maintained.
2. Paths should be a minimum of 1.8m wide with a minimum clear height of 2 metres (i.e. clear height above the path).
3. Paths should have a gradient of no more than 1:20 and a cross fall of no more than 1:40.
4. Kerb cuts and kerb ramps should be incorporated into paths.
5. Paths should be as smooth as possible without tree root damage, cracked paving or raised paving.
6. Paths should connect to all entrances and allow people to access seats without getting off the path.
7. All potential obstacles such as bins and drinking fountains should be positioned so that people using the path are not likely to accidentally bump into them.
8. There must be sufficient space to allow any mobility aid to turn around on paths.
9. Tactile Ground Surface Indicators and contrasting colours should be incorporated into the path design where appropriate to warn path users, particularly those with vision impairments, that there is a hazard ahead, e.g. step, ramp, etc.
10. Long sight lines should be provided along paths and into nearby spaces to ensure visibility.
11. Signage should be provided along paths to assist with way finding.
12. In some instances the path may lead to play equipment, but not always. Rubber soft fall paths can provide an accessible connection to play opportunities.
13. Ramps can also allow people with mobility issues to access areas of the play space that they would not otherwise be able to.
14. Paths should not run downhill or into barriers such as fences or walls.
15. Apply native vegetation framework principals to the design, i.e. to avoid / minimise offset impacts on native vegetation.
16. Consider use of paths with different textures to add interest to the play space.
17. Recognise that the path can be part of the play space.
18. Ensure that a path is not positioned in the middle of an active zone (e.g. an area of open space used for ball games).

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities



Figure 15: Paths in Geelong Play Space

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Walking tracks, Classification and Signage – AS2156.1.
- Walking tracks, Infrastructure Design – AS2156.2.
- Design for Access and Mobility – AS1428.
- Disability Discrimination Act (1992).

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf> .
 - City of Greater Geelong, Clause 56 *Walkability Toolkit*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd9bd471204de4-Walkability%20Toolkit.pdf> .
- Achieving Access Anywhere (2004), *How to Develop More Accessible Parks and Outdoor Areas*.
- Department of Sustainability and Environment and Crime Prevention Victoria (2005), *Safer Design Guidelines*:
http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/41231/Safer_Design_Guidelines.pdf .
- Department of Planning and Community Development (2007), *The Good Play Space Guide: I Can Play Too*:
http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/39183/Good-Play-Space-Guide_2011.pdf .
- Australian Human Rights Commission website:
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/faq/access/access.html#footpath .

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.6 Accessibility

Rationale:

People of all abilities have the right to use and enjoy play spaces. Meeting the needs of everyone in one particular play space can be very difficult, however, particularly in smaller play spaces. What is an accessible space for someone who is blind, has a vision impairment, is deaf or who is hard of hearing may not be accessible for someone with a physical, intellectual or cognitive issue.

According to The Department of Planning and Community Development's "The Good Play Space Guide"¹⁰ most equipment and amenities in play spaces are designed to meet the needs of the 'average' person, whereas a shift to 'universal' design which focuses on products that are accessible to people of any age or ability, would make a significant difference to access.

It is suggested that the City of Greater Geelong makes an ongoing commitment to removing barriers to accessibility in existing play spaces throughout the municipality wherever possible and ensuring that all new play spaces are developed with universal design principles and play opportunities for people of all abilities. Therefore, when upgrading existing play space or developing new ones, consideration should be given to items such as compacted paths, activities that children can do together (e.g. hammock swing) and choosing activities that are accessible to many people (e.g. raised sandpit or a play opportunity at ground level whereby a child with a disability can join in with other children). It is

¹⁰ Department of Planning and Community Development (2007), *The Good Play Space Guide*, pg 12

important to "provide accessible play spaces that lead to social inclusion and participation in play by children with a disability"¹¹.



Figure 16: Raised sand table at Geelong Play Space

The Department of Planning and Community's "The Good Play Space Guide"¹² suggests that it may in fact be more important to provide access in local play spaces as those are the ones that are close to the homes of people with varying abilities and therefore likely to be visited more often (providing these spaces have some degree of accessibility) with family or friends or even independently.

¹¹ Department of Planning and Community Development (2007), *The Good Play Space Guide*, pg 20

¹² Department of Planning and Community Development (2007), *The Good Play Space Guide*, pg 20

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

Items to be considered (depending on the hierarchy, precinct and purpose of the play space) to improve accessibility across the City's play spaces are:

1. Physical access, e.g. installation of paths and ramps.
2. Choice of accessible activities e.g. those that encourage movement; creative and sensory play; different degrees of challenge and scale within the activity; artistic elements, natural elements; opportunities to manipulate the environment; and opportunities to take part in imaginative role plays.
3. Opportunities for children to join in with other people socially.
4. Opportunities for children of all abilities.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

1. Supporting amenities, e.g. disabled toilets (only in some district and sub-regional play spaces and in regional play spaces), tables which can be accessed by people in wheelchairs, seats with high backs and arm rests, compacted surface next to existing seats suitable for the parking of wheelchairs.
2. Inclusion of accessible activities (suitable for people of all ages and abilities to use), e.g. raised sandpits, hammock swings, low equipment that does not require climbing / reaching to use, tactile elements, quiet places for children to be alone.

Planning Considerations for Supervised Centre-based Play Spaces:

- To improve accessibility for the vision impaired, contrast markings, preferably in yellow, to be used to highlight change in levels in high traffic areas (i.e. steps, edging). Where padding is

required on poles such as shade structures, a bright colour should be used.

Relevant Standards

Including, but not limited to:

- Children's Services Regulations
- Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/
- Council's Disability Action Plan.
- Council's Municipal Public Health Plan.

References

Including, but not limited to:

- Department of Planning and Community Development - The *Good Play Space Guide: I Can Play Too* (2007):
http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/39183/Good-Play-Space-Guide_2011.pdf.
- Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development, *Inclusive consultation and communication with people with a disability*:
http://www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au/docs/Inclusive_consultation_communication_guide.doc.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.7 Landscaping

Rationale:

Landscaping of play spaces has a significant impact on how inviting and welcoming the place appears. Landscaping can create welcome shade for parents, carers and children on hot days. It can provide grassed areas for games such as tiggy, flying kites and ball games. It can provide rocks and paving to add sensory qualities to a play space. And it can divide play spaces into specific areas for both passive and active activities or connect play structures to the landscape through the use of a wide range of natural materials.

Elements such as Casuarina glades, bamboo thickets, large logs and other simple maintainable landscape elements can also create a range of imaginative play opportunities for children. Mounding and land shaping can also encourage a variety of play opportunities.

In public play spaces, landscaping can be used instead of fences to provide safety barriers, or be used to screen fences (however, this is not the case in centre based play spaces). It can be used to provide colour and texture to a space. It can provide children with loose materials or spaces for creative play and form habitat for local birds, insects and animals. It also has the advantage of being able to connect local residents to the environment and help them develop an increased appreciation of nature. It can also provide a link to its surrounds.

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

1. Plants should generally be drought tolerant and indigenous to the local area, although some plants may be chosen because of their

particular colour, texture, flowers, etc. Plants need to be approved by Council.

2. Landscaping should aim to minimise maintenance requirements.
3. Landscaping in play spaces should embrace water sensitive design principles. Mulch should be used wherever possible to reduce the amount of water required to keep plantings alive. The type of mulch selected should be approved by Council and should be free of propagules and green material.
4. Landscaping materials should be sustainable and easily accessed in the local area.
5. Existing landscaping should be aesthetically pleasing to users of play spaces.
6. Turf in play spaces should be selected based upon soil type, access to water, environmental conditions, proposed use and should be predominantly made up of warm season varieties. It is difficult to establish grass in high traffic areas in play spaces and in particularly shady parts of the site.
7. Turf surfaces should be strategically positioned to provide the best possible chance for the grass to grow and thrive.
8. Grassed slopes in play spaces generally should not have a gradient of more than 1:6 due to the difficulty in mowing such an area.
9. Dense foliage and other structures which can create visual barriers are not encouraged adjacent to play areas.
10. Consider using archways, canopies and open sided-cubby houses to create 'secret' areas for children to play.
11. Artificial grass can provide greenery in areas where it is difficult to grow turf grass due to limited access to water and high traffic volumes and is becoming increasingly popular in school play

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

spaces. However, as priority of the Play Strategy is to encourage young people to engage with the natural environment for play, the use of this form of surface should be discouraged in public play spaces. In centre-based play spaces, where there can be high amounts of foot traffic on a daily basis (which can make the growing and maintenance of grass difficult), the amount of artificial surfacing (e.g. synthetic grass / carpet, rubber, etc) should not exceed 25%.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

- A landscaping plan needs to be developed by a suitably experienced person for all new play spaces designed by developers. This plan needs to incorporate both function and form of the space.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS4419 Soils for Landscaping and Garden Use

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong, *Indigenous Plants of the Geelong Region*: <http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cbde4aa0c981de-Indigenous%20Plants%20of%20the%20Geelong%20Region.pdf>
- Play Australia, *Gardening for Children*: www.prav.asn.au

- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*: <http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>



Figure 17: Example of attractive landscaping at play space at Geelong Waterfront

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.8 Shade

Rationale:



Figure 18: Shade tree at Geelong Play Space

Shade provides children and adults the opportunity to enjoy play spaces fully or partially protected from the sun. Shade can be provided via roofed structures, shade sails or trees. In general trees are the preferred source of shade in play spaces as they are usually prone to less vandalism, are more cost effective to install, help to provide an aesthetically pleasing and natural looking play space and also provide loose play materials such as leaves, bark and twigs. However, regional play spaces, centre-based play spaces and occasionally district / sub-regional play spaces may

feature shade sails, particularly if there is a large play area with limited opportunities to establish shade from trees. However, Council's preference, wherever possible, is to encourage the provision of natural sources of shaded through mature trees rather than artificial structures.

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

1. Advanced trees, rather than tube stock should be planted for shade.
2. Trees planted should, where possible, be native indigenous species.
3. Trees should be planted close to play equipment, seating, BBQs and picnic tables to enable these areas to receive benefit from shade provided by trees in the afternoon. However, trees should not be planted in fall zones / barrier free safety zones.
4. Existing mature trees may need to be assessed by a qualified arborist to test for structural safety.
5. Shade sails or roofed structures should be positioned where there is a high degree of passive surveillance.
6. Any shade sails or roofed structures must be designed to be as vandal resistant as possible.
7. Shade sails need to be positioned to ensure that shade is provided when and where it is needed.
8. Professional shade planning, including shadow projections should be undertaken.
9. Any structure with a fabric roof should provide at least 90% shade and 95% UV-B block-out.
10. Shade sails must provide adequate clearance above any play equipment (1.5 metres), and posts should be positioned at least

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.5 metres away from play equipment to prevent people from climbing from the equipment onto the shade sails.

11. The roof of any shade structure needs to be pitched to shed rain water.
12. Shade structures must be designed by a professional Structural Engineer to reduce the likelihood of the structure being damaged by strong winds.
13. Posts on shade structures need to be set in concrete footings specifically designed for the site conditions.
14. Shade should only cover 50% of a sandpit as sun is needed to sterilize sand.



Figure 10: Shade sail at Hays Paddock. Photo courtesy of Tim Buykx

Planning Considerations for Supervised Centre-based Play Spaces:

1. Regulations state adequate shading must be provided to protect children from harmful exposure to the sun.
2. According to the relevant building code, in the instance where footings for a shade sail must be deeper than 1000mm, soil testing is required.
3. The design of a shade structure or planting of trees must not impede the vision of carers/staff.
4. Careful planting of trees along fence lines is required to ensure a climbing or escape hazard is not created.
5. Padding is required on shade poles situated in high traffic areas.
6. Vertical shade structure supports must not be scalable by children, or make the fence scalable.
7. There should be no more than three shade structures (preferably less) in a centre-based playground.
8. When erecting a shade structure, consideration should be given to planting an advanced canopy tree at the same time which should replace the shade structure when the tree reaches maturity.
9. Pergolas with ornamental vines can be used to provide shade in summer and a 'secret' place for children to play.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS4174-1994 Synthetic Shade cloth.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

- Australian Standard AS/NZS 4486.1 – 1997 Playgrounds and playground equipment – Development, installation, inspection, maintenance and operation.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong, *Indigenous Plants of the Geelong Region*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cbde4aa0c981de-Indigenous%20Plants%20of%20the%20Geelong%20Region.pdf>
- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>
- The Cancer Council of Victoria, *Shade for Everyone, a Practical Guide for Shade Development*:
http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/html/prevention/sunsmart/downloads/theshade_handbook.pdf



Figure 11: Shade sails at Sparrow Park

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.9 Informal Open Space

Rationale:

An area of open space in a play space provides children with the opportunity to explore the spatial qualities of the site and to take part in a range of imaginative and physical activities such as playing chasey or tiggy, lying on their backs watching cloud formations, flying a kite, doing cartwheels, chasing butterflies, throwing a Frisbee or kicking a football around. Many of the games undertaken by children involve both the open space and any play equipment that may be present.



Figure 19: Informal open space suitable for ball games, flying kites, etc

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

1. Open space areas should be suitable for their intended use, yet flexible enough to provide for a wide range of activities to occur.
2. Open space areas should be integrated into the play space and allow the opportunity for children to use both the open space area and formal play equipment as part of their play (i.e. the open space area should flow into the formal play equipment area, rather than be completely segregated).
3. Open space areas should be designed to create an inviting and welcoming feeling.
4. Open space areas should incorporate natural and cultural features where possible.
5. Open space areas should be designed to maximise passive surveillance.
6. Open space areas need to have some form of barrier if located next to a busy road, railway line or water course, or if located in a supervised early childhood play space.

Relevant Standards:

- N/A (covered under individual components of play spaces such as paths, etc)

References:

Including, but not limited to:

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>



Figure 20: Informal open space at Woodend Play Space

2.10 Seating

Rationale:

Seating is developed in play spaces to allow parents or carers a place to sit comfortably whilst watching children play. It also provides a place for children to rest, have something to eat or leave their belongings whilst playing. Sometimes the seat will form part of a game that children play. Young people, particularly teenage girls, often enjoy sitting on seats in parks and play spaces and talking to their friends and older adults sometimes enjoy visiting a play space to watch children play. The provision of seating can influence the length of time parents / carers will bring children to a play space and how often they will visit it.

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

1. Seats should be developed to a high standard, using quality materials (including recycled materials where possible).
2. Seats should be constructed of materials that are hard wearing and resilient to vandalism.
3. Seats should reflect the theme of the play space wherever possible.
4. Seats should be developed with backs and arms to allow people to lift themselves out of seats easily.
5. Seats should be provided in a variety of sizes to cater for different users, from children to adults.
6. Seats should be constructed on a compact surface so that people with wheelchairs, prams or mobility aids can park themselves next to the seat.
7. Seats constructed on a concrete pad should have additional space next to it to allow for the parking of a wheelchair or pram.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

8. Seats should be positioned in a location which maximises usage and allows clear views of the play space.
9. Seats should be positioned near trees to maximise the opportunity for afternoon shade.
10. Seats should be made using Australian materials.
11. Seats should be cost effective to repair and replace, and parts should be readily available.
12. Additional informal seating can be provided close to play equipment in the form of wooden ledges around sandpits, rocks, etc.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standards AS 1428 – Parts 1 and 2 Design for Access and Mobility (General requirements for access – new building work and Enhanced and additional requirements – buildings and facilities).

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong, *Urban Furniture Style Manual*.
- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>

- Achieving Access Anywhere (2004), *How to Develop More Accessible Streetscapes and Footpaths*.



Figure 21: Example of seat with arm rests and high back

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.11 Fencing / Barriers

Rationale:

There is a diversity of views regarding fencing of play spaces. Some people argue that fences provide a safe play space for children and allow parents to relax knowing that their children cannot wander from the play space. Others argue that a fence around equipment does not recognise that play occurs in the entire space; hence fencing can prohibit children experiencing the spatial qualities of the play space. It is also argued that fencing can discourage supervision of children as well as interaction between parents / carers and their children.



Figure 22: Fence at Maryborough Play Space that is easy to see through

Best practice suggests that fences should only be provided:

1. Where there is a danger to children close to the play space, e.g. a busy road or water course (although the fence may only need to be constructed on a few sides); or
2. Where the construction of a natural barrier through plantings, logs, rocks, etc is not adequate to protect children from a potential danger;
3. Where regulations require provision of a fenced playground area as is the case with supervised children's centres.

Further, it is recognised that some children with special needs require a secure place to play, hence the provision of a number of fenced play spaces strategically positioned throughout the municipality is important to provide access for these children and their families to quality play opportunities.

Maintenance costs of fenced play spaces are considerably higher than non-fenced, non-gated play spaces and are expensive to install.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

1. Development of natural barriers through plantings, logs, rocks, etc is generally preferred over fencing.
2. Where there is a danger that cannot be adequately protected by natural barriers, a partial or full fence should be installed.
3. Fully enclosed fences with gates will need regular inspections.
4. Gates on fully enclosed fences need to be self-closing and self latching.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

5. If fencing is developed, it should incorporate the entire play space, not just the equipment.
6. Some seats should be provided within the fenced area to encourage parental / carer supervision and interaction.
7. Fencing should reflect the theme of the play space and should be both attractive and suitable for the play space.
8. The design of fences should allow for passive surveillance by neighbours and others.
9. Fully fenced play spaces with gates, due to their high maintenance requirements, should only be provided in regional play spaces or supervised early childhood play spaces.



Figure 23: Fence and gate at Geelong Play Space

Planning Considerations for Centre-based Play Spaces:

1. Centre-based play spaces must be enclosed on all sides with fences or other barriers at least 1.5m high from ground level (measured from inside the fence) to prevent children from going through, over or under the fencing / barrier. However Council's best practice states that new fences will not be built below 1.9 metres for paling or colourbond materials or 1.8 metres for "pool" fencing due to the risk of soft fall building up along fence lines. NB any boundary fence or gate over 2 metres in height or any front fence over 1.5 metres in height will require a Building Permit.
2. Fences cannot be scalable, should have no gaps in palings and should reach the ground at its bottom surface.
3. Paling fences (usually boundary fences) should have the "smooth" side (i.e. not the side with horizontal posts) facing into the facility due to scaling potential.
4. Fences and gates need to be permanent structures with all vertical posts concreted into the ground.
5. Gates must be hung so that they swing outwards – away from the play area.
6. All gates must be fitted with a device that will return the gate to the closed position and operate the latching device from any position with a stationary start without application of a manual force.
7. Fencing may be constructed of any type of material, providing that the finished fencing complies with the requirements of the

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Standards including Building Regulations 2006. Fences made of chicken wire or shade cloth are unacceptable as they are considered to be scalable.

8. All front fencing and gates plus any boundary fencing (excluding boundary fencing constructed of palings, colourbond and pool fencing) will require consultation with the City of Greater Geelong Building Department to determine whether a Building Permit is required.
9. At times a solid screen will be desirable (i.e. paling or colourbond), but it is often beneficial to provide sections that children can see through (i.e. pool fencing). Pool fencing is also beneficial if the site has limited passive surveillance to reduce the risk of vandalism.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Children's Services Regulations
- Australian Standards: AS 1725.5-2010 Chain link fabric fencing – sports ground fencing – general requirements.
- Australian Standards: AS1926.1 – 1993 Swimming Pool Safety Part 1: Fencing for swimming pools.
- Building Code of Australia.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- Play Australia: <http://prav.asn.au/index.html>

- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning (1996) *Children's Services Act 1996*.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning (2009) *Children's Services Regulations*.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning (2004) *Fencing Guidelines for Licensed Children's Services*.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.12 BBQs / Picnic Tables / Bins

Rationale:

BBQs, picnic areas, shelters and bins are generally only provided in play spaces where it is expected that people will stay for extended periods of time due to the size of the space, other attractions nearby (such as the beach) or the range of activities available. Such facilities help to create a place for the community to hold family celebrations or to meet new people and to socialise with friends. These facilities are a valuable asset in terms of community networking and bonding.



Figure 24: BBQ, shelter and picnic table at Sparrow Park

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

1. BBQs, picnic tables and bins should reflect the theme of the play space where possible or consider the use of Council's corporate logos.
2. Consideration should be given to providing shelter over BBQs and / or some picnic tables to protect people from inclement weather or from the sun.
3. Picnic tables and bins should be situated in close proximity to BBQ facilities and preferably in an area that attracts afternoon shade.
4. Picnic tables should be designed to be as vandal-proof and graffiti resistant as possible.
5. Picnic tables should feature recessed table legs to allow wheelchairs to be parked at the short ends of the table.
6. BBQs need to be designed for ease of maintenance.
7. BBQs, picnic tables and bins should be located close to the car park and on the internal path network of the play space.
8. Bins should be located close to BBQ areas and picnic tables, but also close to the road or car park so that rubbish trucks can easily collect and empty the bins (i.e. no more than 20m inside park).

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standards AS/NZS 60335.2.78: 2005/ Amendment 2: 2009 Household and Similar Electrical Appliances – Safety – Particular requirements for outdoor barbeques.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong, *Urban Furniture Style Manual*.
- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>



Figure 25: BBQ at Woodend Play Space

2.13 Toilets

Rationale:

Toilets are often provided in district / sub-regional and regional play spaces in recognition that people using these spaces may stay for extended periods of time and partake in activities such as picnics or BBQs. Toilets may also be provided on recreation reserves that are adjacent to, or include, a play area.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

1. Where toilets are not provided in play spaces, and where there are public toilets nearby, signage should be made available to indicate the direction and the distance to the nearest toilet block.
2. Signage may be required in larger play spaces to indicate the location of toilet facilities.
3. Clear signage needs to be provided on the exterior of the toilet using internationally recognised symbols for toilets as well as Braille signage for people with vision impairments.
4. Signage should be installed inside toilet blocks with contact phone numbers for Council or management authority to allow members of the public to report a maintenance issue.
5. Toilet blocks should include toilets that are accessible for people with disabilities.
6. Toilet blocks in district / sub-regional and regional play spaces should feature at least one unisex child sized toilet.
7. Toilet blocks in district / sub-regional and regional play spaces should feature baby change facilities.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

8. Toilets should generally feature: cisterns, basins, hooks on the back of toilet doors to hang bags, soap dispenser, sanitary bins, sharps disposal bin and electric hand dryers.
9. Toilets should be designed in such a way as to provide ease of maintenance.
10. Toilets should be kept in an attractive and clean state as much as possible.
11. Toilets should be located in a visible location, free of bushes and potential hiding spots.
12. Toilets should be located close to sealed footpaths and car parking areas.
13. Entrances to toilets need to face the play area so that people can be seen entering or leaving the facility.
14. Entrance to toilet buildings should be a minimum of 1500mm wide to allow two people to pass each other and to allow enough space for a pram to be brought into the building.
15. If the toilets are used at night time, lighting is required. Consider the use of solar lighting where possible.
16. If the toilets are not required 24 hours per day, they need to be locked with galvanized iron gates when not in use.
17. All fittings should be vandal resistant.
18. The toilet block should be designed so that people are protected from the weather as much as possible, i.e. it should have a roof and be designed so that leaves and rubbish are not blown into the building.
19. Natural light and ventilation should be used as much as possible in the design of the facility.

20. Consider use of environmentally friendly design and materials in the construction of toilet facilities, e.g. rainwater tanks for flushing of toilets and hand washing, self-composting toilets, etc.
21. Low flow taps or sensor taps or automated cut off taps, as well as dual flush toilets must be incorporated into the design.
22. New toilets developed should be unisex where possible.
23. Preference is for open wash basin areas which provide maximum visibility to the toilet cubicles and are likely to reduce crime and other inappropriate behaviours.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- AS 1172.1 – 2005 Water Closets.
- AS 1371-1973 Toilet seats of moulded plastics.
- AS/NZS 1730 – 1996 Washbasins.
- AS/NZS 3500.2 – 2003 Plumbing and Drainage – Sanitary Plumbing and Drainage.
- AS/NZS 3718: 2005 Tap Ware.
- AS 5200.000 – 2006 Technical specification for plumbing and drainage products - Procedures for certification of plumbing and drainage products.
- AS1428 – disabled toilets.
- Children's Services Regulations

References:

Including, but not limited to:

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

- City of Greater Geelong (2007), *Public Toilets in Reserves Guidelines* (currently being reviewed).
- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>



Figure 26: Toilet block design

2.14 Drinking Water

Rationale

Access to water in hot weather or in places where people undertake vigorous physical activity is important as it helps to reduce the likelihood of dehydration. Drinking water is a requirement in supervised centre-based play spaces, however, it is not often provided in public play spaces. By providing drinking fountains in public play spaces, people visiting the site may choose to stay longer and are less likely to use plastic water bottles or to buy bottled water. There are often significant environmental and energy costs associated with producing the packaging of bottled water and transporting the bottles to a point of sale.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

Due to the expense of providing drinking fountains and the need to ensure that the fountain is connected to safe drinking water, it is recommended that drinking fountains are provided in regional and sub-regional level play spaces, but not necessarily in local / neighbourhood or district play spaces.

The design chosen should be as vandal resistant as possible and be designed to allow universal access so that all people of all abilities can use the device, including young children and people in wheelchairs. The unit should be located along a pathway with good passive surveillance, preferably near any BBQ / picnic areas. The unit should also provide a bowl at the base which is suitable for dogs to drink from; however this unit will need to be 10 metres from a play space due to animal regulations.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities



Figure 27: Example of drinking fountain, including dog bowl at base

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- AS/NZS 3500.2 – 2003 / Amendment 2: 2006 Plumbing and Drainage – Sanitary Plumbing and Drainage.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.15 Public Art

Rationale:

Sculpture and art work whether permanent or temporary, can add an extra dimension to children's play, particularly if children have been involved in its creation. Works of art can greatly enhance the understanding of a particular theme or bring to life interpretive opportunities in play spaces. It can help to create a sense of place.

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

1. Art work needs to reflect the theme or respond to the play space environment and / or the location in which it exists.
2. Art work should be designed in consultation with the local community and will ideally involve children in its development.
3. Artwork can include sculptures in a broad range of hard wearing mediums suitable for the outdoors: tiles; mosaics; paving; seating; creative signage including imagery etc and may also include artworks involving sensory experience (sound, touch, taste, smell etc) such as: auditory installations and sound scapes; water features; planting etc.
4. Any art work included in play spaces needs to be vandal resistant, weather resistant and easily maintained.
5. Due to the cost of works of art, artwork will generally only be provided in district or regional play spaces.
6. Art works within play spaces must take into consideration Australian Standards for playground safety and design, particularly in relation to fall heights, possible entrapment, under surfacing, etc.
7. Sculptures may require an engineering report prior to installation.

8. Artworks details including artist, materials and a maintenance plan must be retained for future reference on the Council Public Art Register.



Figure 28: Public Art at Barwon Heads Community Play Park

Relevant Standards:

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.
- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong Public Art Policy (currently in development).



Figure 29: Example of Public Art in London, UK



Figure 30: Example of Public Art in Le Havre, France

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.16 Under Surfacing

Rationale:

Under surfacing is provided beneath play equipment in order to decrease the severity of injuries sustained in falls. A range of different energy absorbing materials are used in play spaces. Loose fill materials include pine bark chips, double milled wood chips, shredded rubber, sand, mulch, pea gravel and pea mulch. Solid surfacing products include rubber or synthetic materials such as rubber that have been manufactured into formats such as tiles, sheets or wet substances that set when poured on site.



Figure 31: Rubber matting under swings

Council's preference is wherever possible and practical for maximum natural surfaces to be provided rather than artificial surfacing. In Council owned centre-based play spaces, artificial surfacing is not to comprise any more than 25% of the overall outdoor surface area.

Figure 32: Example of play surface that encourages social play



2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

1. Under surfacing must be purchased from the City of Greater Geelong's preferred supplier to ensure that a consistent type of surface, colour and quality is achieved.
2. If the fall height is less than 500mm, the surface may be used without its impact attenuation being tested. Materials such as well maintained grass, mulch and naturally occurring sandy soils have been shown to have some limited impact attenuation functions and are suitable for use in these situations¹³.
3. An additional 25% (50% in the case of centre-based playgrounds) of the impact absorbing material is required to ensure that when compacted there is still 200 millimetres of material on which to land.
4. The area in which under surfacing is to be spread (i.e. the fall zone) needs to be completely cleared of any potential hazards or contaminants prior to installation.
5. If rubber surfacing is to be installed, suppliers must have a current impact attenuation certificate. The rubber surfacing needs to be installed according to the manufacturer's specifications to ensure that it is suitable for the potential fall heights that may occur in that particular space.
6. Rubber pads should be installed in high wear points such as the base of slides or beneath swing seats. Rubber pads, when used in conjunction with mulch, should be installed at least 100mm below the required mulch level to remove potential trip points if the overall depth of material fails.
7. Sand should be granulated; should not absorb water and should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that it does not become compacted.
8. The area in which under surfacing needs to be provided, is dependent upon the potential free height of fall (i.e. the height from which a child could fall in a play space). If the free height of fall is 0.5m, then 1.5m fall zone distance is required; if the free height of fall is 1.0m, then 1.7m fall zone distance is required; and if the free height of fall is 1.5m, then 1.9m fall zone distance is required. There are separate regulations for fall zone distances around swings.
9. Equipment footings need to be buried 50-100mm underground and covered with impact absorbing material to the required depth.

¹³ AS 4422:1996 Page 6 Section 6

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Table: Minimum Extent of Fall Zone – Supervised Early Childhood Settings

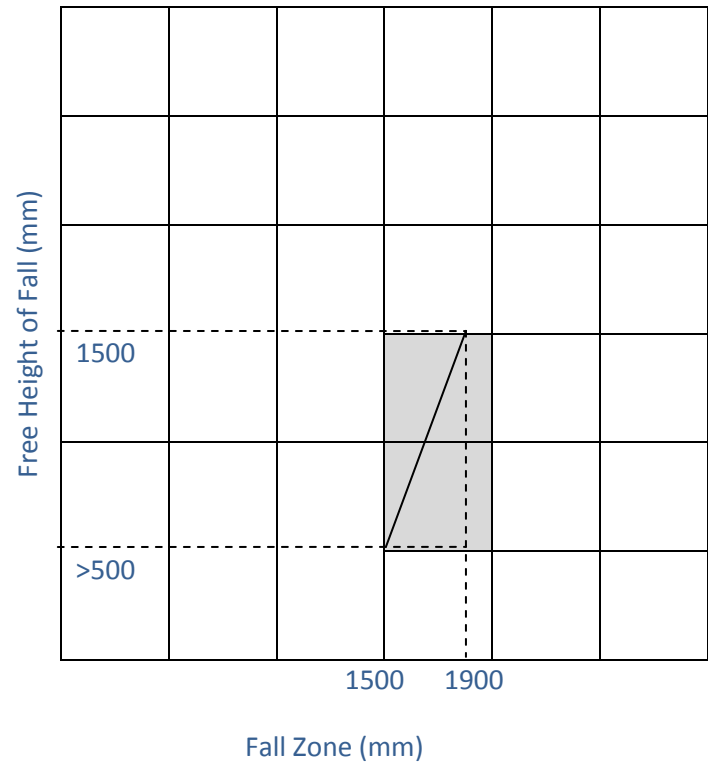
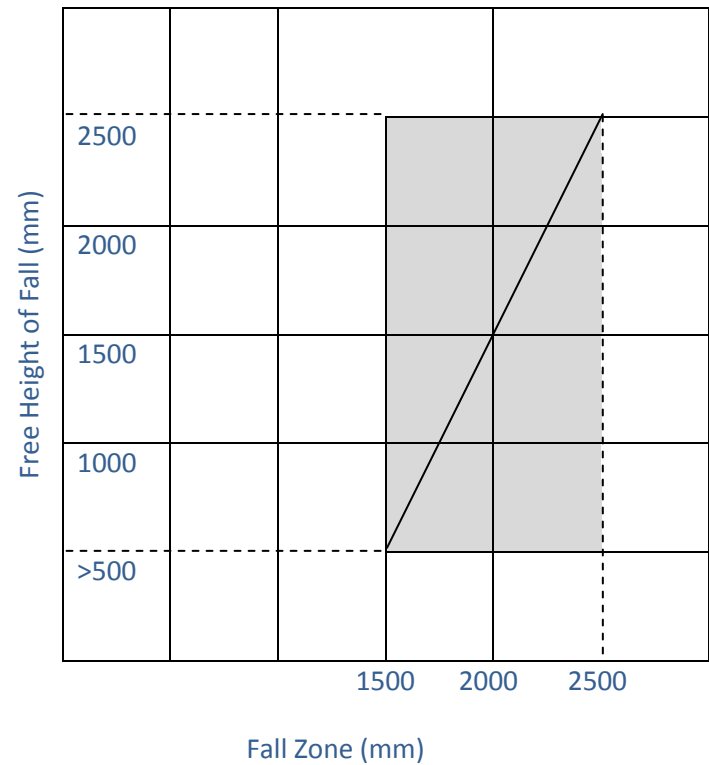


Table: Minimum Extent of Fall Zone – Other Cases



2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Planning Considerations for Centre-based Play Spaces:

1. In order to make play spaces more interesting and exciting for children, it is recommended that a variety of different natural ground surfaces are used in play spaces. These different surfaces allow children to learn about the properties of different spaces and to navigate different surfaces.
2. Although the Australian Standards for playground equipment identifies a maximum free height of fall (i.e. the height from which a child could fall in a play space) of 1500mm for centre-based play spaces, Play Australia recommends that for children 0-3, this free height of fall is no more than 1000mm.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.
- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.
- Children's Services Regulations.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong (2009) *Playground Development Guidelines*.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2007) *Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services*.



Figure 33: Sand under surfacing at Barwon Heads Community Play Park

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.17 Edging

Rationale

Edging is often provided around the perimeter of play spaces to keep soft fall within a defined area and also to add interest to a play area. Edging can be made from timber at various heights which can then be used as stepping stones or part of a leap frog game. Timber edging can also be used for seating if it has a flat top. Rocks used as edging can have the added benefit of being incorporated into garden beds and the play experience. Other materials that can be used for edging include recycled rubber, moulded high-density polypropylene and recycled plastic.



Figure 34: Timber edging in a playground

Planning Considerations for All Play Spaces:

Edging is often raised, making access for people with wheelchairs or prams difficult and acting as a potential trip hazard for some people. However, there are products available on the market to create access across edging (essentially a ramp built across one part of the edging).



Figure 35: Play Area Entrance Ramp. Photo Sourced from: Special Needs Playground Equipment USA

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

It is also possible to contain soft fall within a play area by excavating the site, installing drainage and the equipment and then topping up the soft fall level with the surrounding lawn area. This arrangement generally provides better access for wheelchairs and prams, and lessens the likelihood of people tripping on the border. However, due to resource constraints, it will not always be possible to do this.

It is not always necessary to provide edging around the entire play area. A sandpit with one open edge allows children in centre-based play spaces to access the site with wheelbarrows.



Figure 36: Rocks used as edging around sand pit at Geelong Play Space

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction

References:

- N/A.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.18 Natural Play Elements and Loose Play Materials

Rationale



Figure 37: Rocks and pebbles in play space on the Geelong Foreshore

A play space featuring natural play elements such as rocks and boulders, logs, plants, mounds, sand and water encourages children to interact with “plants and animals, water, dirt, weather and the lifecycle¹⁴”. These ever evolving spaces can stimulate the senses and provide a sense of wonder and discovery at every visit; encourage children to learn about risk taking; and allow children to explore and manipulate their environment in ways

¹⁴ Greenman J (1988), *Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children’s Environments that Work*

that are generally not possible in more traditional equipment-based playgrounds.



Figure 38: Children playing in loose materials (autumn leaves)

Important components within natural play spaces are loose play materials such as sticks, twigs, bark, leaves, seed pods, flowers, sand, soil, rocks, grass and water. These materials offer children the opportunity to construct or build different items each time they visit a play space or to use these items as props in creative and imaginative games. Therefore, the inclusion of loose materials can make each visit to a play space a unique experience. Loose materials also help children to develop an understanding of the environment in which they live.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Planning Considerations

Consideration should be given to including natural elements in play spaces. Some examples of natural play elements are:

1. Rocks and boulders – these can be used as stepping stones, paths, and a place to sit or even form a maze.
2. Logs – young people can use these for climbing over, sitting on and for all types of imaginative games, e.g. imagining that the log is a dragon, a horse, a rocket, a pirate ship, etc. These logs can be hollowed out or left as they are.
3. Mounds – not only do mounds create a variation to the usual topography found in most play spaces, children often enjoy climbing mounds to look out over a play space or to roll down the slope. Mounds can form the basis of all types of imaginary games.
4. Plants – trees, shrubs, flowers and grass can all be used to create imaginative play spaces such as cubby houses, forts, castles, jungles, African savannahs, home bases, etc. The leaves, flowers, twigs, gum nuts and fruit from plants can be used in games. Plants can also be used to beautify areas, provide shade and provide sensory experiences for young people and their carers. Plants often house birds or insects, which can help children to learn about habitats and lifecycles.
5. Sand – sand can be used in play spaces to encourage children to feel the texture of this medium on their skin and to construct an array of different objects such as castles, tunnels, holes, water courses, etc. Sand can be incorporated through the development of sand pits or raised tables in play spaces suitable for a person in a wheelchair to use. Sand pits will need to be inspected regularly to ensure that they are free of any hazards, compaction and debris. Due to the high inspection regime required, sand should be limited to district / sub-regional and regional play spaces and centre-based play spaces.
6. Water – many young people love to play with water. It is an ever changing medium that provides a sensory experience and can be used for a range of imaginative games such as sailing boats or leaves, etc. Depending on the design of the water feature, it can be used to cool down, jump over, run through, re-direct in a different direction, fill a vessel, pour from a vessel, etc. Water can be incorporated into play spaces through water sprays, hand pumps, water channels that can be manipulated through a series of small gates, water walls, shallow wading pools, etc. Any water features will require a reasonably high level of maintenance to ensure that water and the area in which it is located is clean (to ensure health and wellbeing of children) and operating effectively (so that water is not wasted). Potential water restrictions, recycling systems, water storage and drainage all need to be considered prior to developing water features. Water features should only be provided in district / sub-regional and regional play spaces and possibly centre-based play spaces. Water quality must meet Department of Health regulations.
7. Safety - natural play elements need to take into consideration playground standards in terms of maximum height and fall zones. Some modification to various aspects of the natural

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

elements may also be required at times, e.g. rounding of sharp edges, etc. Potentially dangerous items (e.g. wire and nails) brought to the play space by children for the purpose of constructing items will need to be removed from the site. Landscaping of play spaces should consider the inclusion of some loose materials such as small rocks or pebbles, however, these items can also be hazardous during maintenance procedures such as mowing or slashing or could be used to vandalise the play space or buildings.

Planning Considerations for Centre-based Play Spaces:

- Vegetable and herb gardens can increase children's appreciation of the environment, and can foster a responsibility to preserve it.
- Any loose materials or large natural features (i.e. logs or boulders) must be considered in relation to Regulations (i.e. ensure a trip hazard, head or hand entrapment is not created).

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Royal Life Saving Society of Australia (2003), *Guidelines for Water Safety – Urban Water Developments*.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.

- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.

References

Including, but not limited to:

- Elliott, Sue (2008) *The Outdoor Playspace Naturally for Children Birth to Five Years*.



Figure 39: Children playing in long grass

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.19 Sound / Tactile / Sensory Elements

Rationale:

Sensory qualities such as sounds, colours, different textures, light, smell, patterns, space and motion can greatly enhance a play space for children. Some children rely on these elements to help them negotiate their way around a space, whilst others enjoy these elements as part of the overall experience or to help them learn about aspects of their environment. Sensory elements can be particularly important for children who may not be able to use physical elements in a play space.

Planning Considerations:

Consideration should be given to providing some sensory elements in play spaces, e.g. plants with different textures, shapes, smells and movement; textured paths; items that make noises such as bells, xylophones and wind chimes; items that can be manipulated by hand such as abacus beads; art work and sculpture that can be touched and enjoyed and may tell a story. When installing sound elements, thought must be given to surrounding residents.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.

- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- “I Can Play Too” – Department of Sport and Recreation Victoria and Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria: http://www.dpzd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/39183/Good-Play-Space-Guide_2011.pdf



Figure 40: Musical bells in decking at Eastern Park Play Space

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.20 Skate, Scooter, BMX, Basketball and Netball Facilities

Rationale:

Skate facilities are provided in play spaces or open space areas to allow young people to express themselves, challenge themselves, hang around with friends and to have fun. It's an activity that can occur at anytime without commitment to training or game days and can be undertaken as an individual or with a group of friends. It is a place that young people can call their own and a place where they are recognised as legitimate users. Skate facilities particularly appeal to young men between 10 to 16 years of age, although the number of girls skating is increasing. Other than skate boarding, people use skate facilities and their surrounds for inline skating, BMX riding and sitting around talking with their friends.



Figure 41: Skate Park

Older children, particularly those from around eight years of age and upwards, enjoy activities that involve sport or modified versions of various sports. A half court netball / basketball court whereby both a basketball ring and a netball ring are provided at the edge of an asphalt pad (often with line markings) provides an ideal place for individuals or groups to practice throwing goals, play half-court games or to take part in games such as 'Donkey'. Other similar facilities include climbing walls and 'hit-up walls' where people can hit a tennis ball or other type of ball against a solid wall. Skate / scooter / BMX parks are also extremely popular.

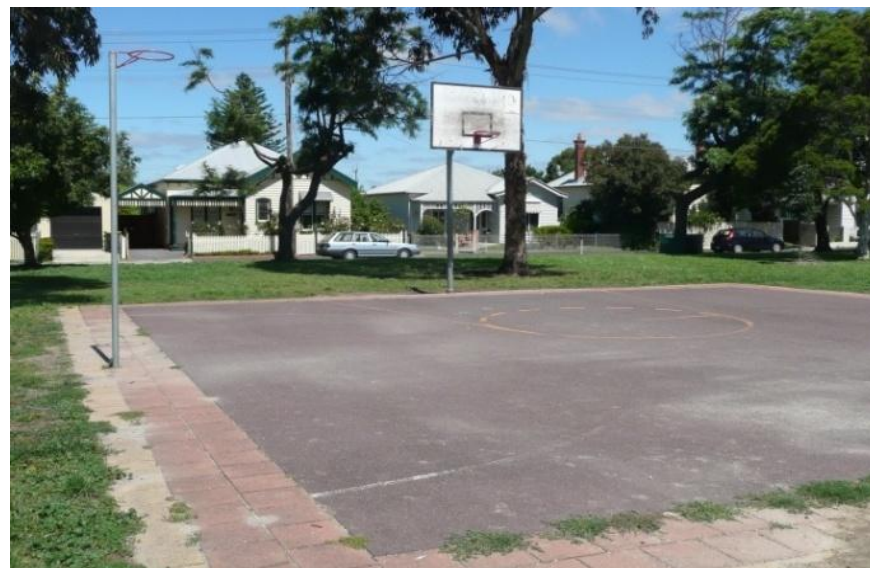


Figure 42: Half court basketball / netball court at Sparrow Park

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

1. Skate facilities should be located at visually prominent places where young people want to hang out and where they can be seen, e.g. in district or regional play spaces, at recreation reserves, along foreshores, in community hubs, etc.
2. Skate facilities should be located on land that has good public surveillance.
3. Skate facilities should be linked to cycling / walking networks and located in close proximity to public transport.
4. Skate facilities should not be located too close to homes, incompatible uses or major roads.
5. The direction of motion in skate parks should be aligned in a north-south position to avoid users skating straight into the sun.
6. Cars should be restricted in the vicinity of skate parks to prevent young people from skating by car headlights at night.
7. Lighting may be provided in some skate parks until a set time.
8. Supporting infrastructure such as seats, viewing areas, toilets, water, shelter and shade should be available in close proximity to the skate facilities.
9. Consideration should be given to creating youth performance spaces close to the skate facilities.
10. Skate facilities should be accessible to emergency vehicles.
11. Half court basketball / netball courts need to be carefully positioned so that a stray ball is not likely to hit other children playing on site or people sitting on seats.
12. The development of such a facility should be considered in areas where there is a high percentage of young people over eight

years of age and where there are limited opportunities available for basketball or netball at nearby recreation reserves.

13. The courts should be constructed to a high standard to ensure longevity and minimal maintenance.
14. The courts should be a minimum of 7 metres x 7 metres and should be designed with removable sleeves to allow the post to be regularly inspected and maintained.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.
- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- “The Skate Facility Guide” – Sport and Recreation Victoria (2002). Trade Practices (Consumer Product Safety Standard) (Basketball Rings and Backboards) Regulations 2005:
<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2005L02920> .

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities



Figure 43: Skate bowl at Barwon Heads Community Play Park

2.21 Adult Outdoor Fitness Equipment

Rationale:

In recent years there has been growth in the provision of adult outdoor fitness equipment in parks and areas of open space. This fitness equipment is similar to the type of equipment found in commercial gymnasiums, but is designed for outdoor use and is therefore more hard wearing. One benefit of this type of fitness equipment is that it can be incorporated into an outdoor workout at no cost to the participant.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

1. Outdoor fitness equipment should be positioned either in a cluster or along linear pathways.
2. Outdoor fitness equipment should ideally be situated in areas where adults already go to take part in physical activities such as walking and jogging, e.g. near a lake, beach, or river.
3. Equipment with scissor actions and moveable parts should be avoided due to potential safety issues and high maintenance requirements.
4. Universal design principles need to be considered prior to purchasing equipment to ensure that items are of a suitable size and design to be used by the majority of people.
5. Outdoor fitness stations can be heavily utilised by a core group of people, hence conflicts may arise if there are not adequate exercise stations or if people use certain items for too long.
6. Instructions on correct use of equipment will need to be provided. There is potential for equipment to be used incorrectly and possibly cause the user some form of injury as the exercise stations are not supervised.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

7. Equipment should have suitable under-surfacing.



Figure 44: Adult Outdoor Fitness Equipment

- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.

References:

- N/A

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.22 Dogs in Play Spaces

Rationale:

Although many people enjoy walking their dog to public open space, including play spaces, it is recognised that not everyone is comfortable around dogs. Hence the City of Greater Geelong has developed a Local Law which states that dogs must be on a leash within ten metres of children's play equipment and within ten metres of picnic and barbeque areas, including picnic tables and associated seating.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

Play spaces need to be designed so that local residents are aware that dogs are not permitted within 10 metres of play equipment and BBQ / picnic areas. Signage may need to be installed at play spaces to create awareness of this Local Law if it is not adhered to by residents or visitors to the area. Similarly, information needs to be provided to the community about appropriate off-leash areas for dogs.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- None known.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- "Domestic Animal Management Plan" – City of Greater Geelong (2008):
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Document>

[s/8cb6afded41a3be-](http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Document/s/8cb6afded41a3be-Domestic%20Animal%20Management%20Plan.pdf)

[Domestic%20Animal%20Management%20Plan.pdf](http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Document/s/8cb6afded41a3be-Domestic%20Animal%20Management%20Plan.pdf)

- Play Australia, *Dogs and Playgrounds*: www.prav.asn.au



Figure 45: Dog regulation sign

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.23 Lighting

Rationale:

Lighting of play spaces encourages use by families in the evening for activities such as BBQs or picnics. Lighting is generally only provided in district and regional play spaces that have facilities for BBQs and picnics.

Planning Considerations:

1. Where possible, solar lighting should be used.
2. Lighting with timer automated cut-off sensors should be used in play spaces.
3. Where lighting is provided in a play space, it is important that the lights illuminate features such as toilets, signage, BBQ / picnic area, play equipment, entrances and pathways.
4. Lighting should be even and consistent.
5. Style of lighting should reflect the theme of the park.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standards AS/NZA 1158 – Lighting for Roads and Public Spaces.
- Australian Standards AS 1428 – Design for Access and Mobility.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>



Figure 46: Lighting in a play space

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.24 Signage

Rationale:

Signage in a play space can help to create a sense of place and a sense of arrival. It can be designed in such a way as to encourage people to want to go into the play space and explore. Way finding signage is also important as it enables people to navigate their surroundings (particularly important in district / sub-regional, regional play spaces and state / national play spaces) and provides them with information about other locations and distances to these locations by foot or cycle. Signage may also have an interpretive function, or provide information about a particular site for users. It may also be used to advise people of appropriate behaviour or warn people of potential dangers.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

1. Signs need to be located in key access areas and directional decision points, e.g. approach to a play space, car park, and the principal public entrance.
2. Signage needs to be installed using Universal Design Principles, so that people of all ages and abilities (including a seven year old child and a person in a wheelchair) can see the sign.
3. Wording on signage should be in simple, plain English. Depending upon the area in which signs are located, there may also be a need to replicate wording in other languages.
4. Consider use of universally recognised symbols on signage where appropriate to assist with interpretation of a message.
5. Signage should be suitable for people with vision impairments, i.e. incorporate tactile and Braille components where possible.

6. The luminance factor of the surface of writing or symbols on a sign should be a minimum of 30% different from a non-reflective background. To achieve this, it is recommended that a light background is used and dark lettering, e.g. black on white, yellow on black or ultramarine blue on white.
7. Recycled material should be considered in the development of signage.
8. Signage must be hard wearing and resistant to vandalism and graffiti.
9. Vinyl adhesive lettering should not be used on signage.
10. The height, spacing and weighting of letters on a sign needs to be carefully considered so that people can both read and understand the information contained on the sign. Preferred type face in the Australian Standards is Helvetica Medium.
11. Glass panels and light reflective backgrounds on signage should be avoided.
12. Too many signs at a play space can detract from the overall experience of an open space area and should be avoided.
13. Signage should be combined or grouped.
14. Signage should be consistent with the samples provided in the Infrastructure Development Guidelines.
15. Signs should, wherever possible, have a positive focus rather than a negative focus.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standards AS 1428 – Design for Access and Mobility

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- Achieving Access Anywhere (2004), *How to Develop more Accessible Signage*
- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>
- City of Greater Geelong Marketing References.



Figure 47: Signage at Geelong Play Space

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.25 Car Parks

Rationale:

State / national, regional and district / sub-regional play spaces generally have a catchment of more than 2km. Although a number of people will ride their bicycles or walk to these play spaces, there will be a significant proportion of people who choose to drive. These larger play spaces may attract dozens or even hundreds of people at any time, particularly on weekends. Hence there is a need for a designated car park at state / national, regional and district / sub-regional play spaces.

Planning Considerations for all Play Spaces:

1. Car parks next to the play space must provide direct access for pedestrians to the play space.
2. Car parks should be sealed.
3. Opportunities for harvesting of storm water should be considered in any new car park developments.
4. Car park designs should complement surrounding built structures and landscapes.
5. Car parks should be planted with shade trees at a ratio of one canopy tree for every six vehicles.
6. Disabled car parking should be provided at district / sub- regional, regional and state / national play spaces, along with full width access ramps.
7. Car park designs should minimise the opportunity for conflicts between pedestrians and motorists.

8. Car parks should be designed in such a way as to allow vehicles to enter and exit car parks in a forward direction (i.e. one entrance point and one exit point).
9. Centre based play spaces must also be provided with car parking, preferably off-street. Current planning ratio standard for parking provision for new centre based children's facilities is generally 1:4.
10. Ideally some car parks would be made wider to accommodate visitors to the site who may have a pram.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS2890.1 –2004, Parking facilities, Part 1: Off-street car parking.
- Australian Standard AS/NZS 2890.6 – 2009 Parking facilities – Off-street parking for people with disabilities.
- AustRoads – Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

- Greater Geelong Planning Scheme:
<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/planningschemes/greatergeelong/home.html>
- Crime Prevention Victoria and Department of Sustainability and Environment (2005), *Safer Design Guidelines for Victoria*.



Figure 48: Car Park at Rippleside Play Space

2.26 Bicycle Racks / Rails

Rationale:

In order to encourage people to ride their bicycles to play spaces and park them in safety, bicycle racks / rails should be provided in district, sub-regional and regional play spaces. Generally bicycle racks will not be required in local / neighbourhood spaces as there are likely to be less people at the site and therefore a greater chance of being able to see the bicycle at all times.

Planning Considerations for Public Play Spaces:

Bicycle racks / rails should be located in a convenient and highly visible position near the main entrance to a play space, just off the access path. The racks should be easy to use by people of all ages and abilities and allow the bicycle frame and wheels to be locked securely. The bicycle rack needs to be sturdy and as vandal resistant as possible.

Planning Considerations for Centre-based Play Spaces:

Bike racks for existing play spaces will be considered on a case by case basis where space allows. New sites will follow the same planning considerations as public play spaces. Consideration should also be given to providing an area for parking of prams at centre-based play spaces.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standard AS 2890.3 1993 Parking facilities Part 3: Bicycle parking facilities.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong (2008) *Cycle Strategy*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cbf923faa78640-GreaterGeelongCycleStrategy.pdf>



Figure 49: Example of a Bicycle Rack in Cardiff, Wales

2.27 Supervision in Centre-based Play Spaces

Rationale:

Supervised centre-based play space settings offer educational programs for children between 0-12 years of age. These settings have services such as child care (designed for children 0-5 years of age), kindergartens (designed for children 3-5 years of age) and neighbourhood house programs (play spaces within these settings may be designed for children from 0-12 years of age). Supervision of children in such settings is mandatory under the Children's Services Act 1996.

Planning Considerations in centre-based play spaces:

1. To allow effective and active supervision to take place, play spaces in early childhood centres need to be designed so that children can be seen at all times by staff, volunteers or parents, i.e. there are no areas hidden by bushes, storage sheds, large pieces of play equipment, corners of buildings, etc.
2. To prevent children from wandering or running off from the venue, it is also mandatory that a 1.5 metre high fence with a gate surrounds the outside play area.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (1996) *Children's Services Act 1996 (Section 27)*.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009) *Children's Services Regulations*.
- [Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services](#)

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

References:

- N/A.



Figure 50: Children's drawing: enjoying playing with friends

2.28 Program Delivery in Centre-based Play Spaces

Rationale:

Programs offered in centre-based play spaces assist children to develop socially, cognitively and physically. It is recognised that children can learn a variety of skills and attributes through structured and unstructured play opportunities which have been specially designed, facilitated or encouraged by educators and families. These skills and attributes include: learning to get along with others, having fun with other children, resilience, self-esteem, exploring their environment, developing connections with nature, thinking skills, reflecting skills, being creative, learning about risks, challenging themselves, spatial awareness, manipulating their environment, communication skills, developing gross and fine motor skills and awareness through play, etc.

Planning Considerations in centre-based play spaces:

1. Supervised centre-based play spaces need to be designed to meet the developmental characteristics of the ages of children most likely to use the site (recognising that each child is different and develops at his or her own rate). Refer to Section 1.2 of this Play Strategy for further information.
2. Play spaces need to be as flexible as possible so that educators can offer children variety and challenge in their play environment, whilst also meeting the individual development needs of children. Variety and diversity in programs is important for all children, but particularly for the children who spend a considerable number of hours each day at supervised early childhood centres.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

3. Where there are multiple age groups using the one centre, it may be preferable to set up play spaces for different age groups; to timetable use of the outdoor space; or to develop flexible spaces that can be split, partially closed off or fully open depending upon the circumstances.
4. New national and state early childhood requirements relating to outdoor play are to be considered when upgrading play facilities and building new Centres. Play spaces are characterised by both active and quiet zones that comprise a balance of fixed and moveable equipment, open space to engage in physical activities, and spaces that promote investigation and enjoyment of the natural environment. These spaces are dynamic and flexible and:
 - provide opportunities for unique play and learning
 - complement and extend the indoor activities and learning experiences
 - offer children opportunities to be active, messy and noisy, and play on a large scale.

Relevant Standards:

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (1996) *Children's Services Act 1996 (Section 27)*.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009) *Children's Services Regulations*.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services
- Victorian Early Learning Framework.
- National Early Years Quality Framework.



Figure 51: Children's drawing: enjoying playing on the flying fox and the slide

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.29 Equipment in Centre-based Play Spaces

Rationale:

A major advantage of centre-based play spaces over public play spaces is the capacity to provide both fixed equipment (e.g. a slide, climbing frame, cubby house, sand pit or swing) and moveable equipment (tyres, wooden planks, buckets, tunnels, ladders, scramble nets, trampolines, plastic pipes, cardboard boxes or tricycles). The larger, fixed equipment is able to provide children with opportunities to test and master their physical skills and to experience movement such as sliding and swinging. Moveable equipment is able to provide children with a constantly changing and challenging environment which can be moulded and manipulated. Such an environment can encourage exploration, creativity, socialisation, as well as physical skills such as balance.

Planning Considerations in centre-based play spaces:

1. Fixed or moveable equipment must be suitable for the available space, the age of users and the intended use of the equipment.
2. The amount of large fixed equipment should be limited as once children have mastered the challenges of fixed equipment, they may move on to other forms of play if the fixed equipment is not flexible enough to be used in a variety of different ways or does not provide for their continual skill development over time.
3. Fixed play equipment can cost substantially more than moveable equipment, hence pieces need to be carefully selected to ensure that they will provide continual play value for children.
4. Equipment should be able to be used by children with a range of different abilities.

5. New equipment should complement existing play opportunities in the Centre's outdoor play area and allow for linking or attachment to other play items if desired.
6. Equipment (including equipment sourced internationally) must comply with Australian Safety Standards for design, fall zones, impacting absorbing surfaces, etc and be constructed of non-toxic, smooth surfaces.
7. Moveable equipment must be able to be shifted safely by staff.
8. Equipment and its placement within the play area must be relatively easy to supervise.
9. Equipment should encourage children's skill development and social, cognitive, physical, emotional or creative development.
10. Equipment should be designed to allow children to interact with other children.
11. Equipment should be selected based on its ability to be used in more than one way and based on its ability to be modified or recycled if required.
12. Fixed-theme equipment should be avoided where possible as this type of equipment only provides for limited play opportunities.
13. Equipment in early childhood centres should provide variety within a neighbourhood, i.e. different to the equipment provided in public play spaces in local area'.
14. Equipment should be located so that there is sufficient space around it to connect other moveable items if desired and still allow for safe fall zones and traffic.
15. Play environment and equipment should be stimulating and encourage a broad range of quality play experiences, including water, sand, sounds, imagination, challenge, animals, art, etc.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

16. Maintenance requirement of equipment, availability of spare parts and warranties needs to be considered prior to purchase.
17. Users of the facilities including staff, committee members and parents will be engaged and consulted with at all times.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Children's Services Regulations
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4422 Playground Surfacing.
- Australian Standard AS NZS 4486 Playground Development and Installation.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 1 Playground General Requirements.
- Australian Standard AS 1924 Part 2 Playground Design and Construction.
- Australian Standard AS 4685 General Safety Requirements and Test Methods.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (1996) *Children's Services Act 1996 (Section 27)*.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009) *Children's Services Regulations*.
- Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services



Figure 52: Children's drawing: enjoying playing in the trees

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities



Figure 53: Children's drawing: enjoying somersaults and cart wheels

2.30 Storage in Centre-based Play Spaces

Rationale:

Unlike most public play spaces, centre-based play spaces are attached to a building which is surrounded by a fence. Either the building itself, or the fenced play area usually contain lockable areas (such as sheds or cupboards) where a range of large and small play equipment can be stored. Access to a variety of different items of moveable equipment, props and materials is extremely important in settings as these items are used in the development of programs designed to maximise children's health and wellbeing and early development.

Planning Considerations in Centre-based Play Spaces:

1. Storage spaces should be located in an easily accessible location that does not: impede access by emergency or maintenance vehicles, create spaces that cannot be supervised or diminish the ability of the play space to provide quality experiences.
2. Storage spaces may need a Council planning or building permit prior to construction.
3. Ensure adequate provision of storage spaces that are well organised and can provide for the safe access of staff and movement of play equipment.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Children's Service Regulations
- Australian Standards AS/NZS 1170.0 (2002) Structural Design Actions – General Principles.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

- Australian Standards AS 5104 (2005) General Principles on Reliability for Structures.

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (1996) *Children's Services Act 1996 (Section 27)*.
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2009) *Children's Services Regulations*.
- Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services



Figure 54: Children's Drawing: Enjoying playing on the swings

2.31 Involving Local Residents

Rationale:

Community involvement in play space design is important in terms of the community using a play space, providing public surveillance and having a sense of ownership over the site. Therefore it is suggested that where possible, every public play space upgrade or new development involves community consultation. It is recognised, however, that it is not possible to involve residents in the design of play spaces in new residential subdivisions that are developed prior to land sales occurring. In this instance, it is suggested that designs are continued to be influenced by and approved by City of Greater Geelong staff, based on guidelines and planning framework contained within this Strategy. For Centre-based play space upgrades consultation should be referred to the staff, committees, licensees and user groups.

Planning Considerations:

1. In the instance of a major upgrade or new play space development, residents within the affected radius should be invited by City of Greater Geelong to attend a public meeting or workshop on site, coordinated by Council staff, to discuss the community's particular needs and issues.
2. Community meetings or workshops may involve discussions, drawings, model constructions, etc.
3. It is important that the community is made aware of the parameters of their involvement, i.e. the play space must reflect the planning principles and planning framework contained within the Play Space Strategy. They must also be made aware of other key factors such as the available budget and any other issues that

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

impact on the type of opportunities that can or cannot be permitted on the site.

4. Once suggestions have been received, City of Greater Geelong officers need to develop a sketch, concept plan or master plan and present this information back to the community group for feedback. Dependent upon the scale of the development, external professional assistance may be required for the development of a master plan.
5. Once all feedback has been considered, the project will be referred to City of Greater Geelong for action.
6. It is vitally important that children and young people in the community are consulted as part of this activity.



Figure 55: Consulting with community about play spaces

Relevant Standards:

- N/A

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- “Book 1 – An Introduction to Engagement”, Department of Sustainability and Environment:
[http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/6F16335B7D2564D0CA257085001FBD9B/\\$File/Book+1+-+An+Introduction+to+Engagement.pdf](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/6F16335B7D2564D0CA257085001FBD9B/$File/Book+1+-+An+Introduction+to+Engagement.pdf)
- “Book 2 – The Engagement Planning Workshop”, Department of Sustainability and Environment:
[http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/CEC9B0589CA10C0CA257085001FDCAD/\\$File/Book+2+-+The+Engagement+Planning+Workbook.pdf](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/CEC9B0589CA10C0CA257085001FDCAD/$File/Book+2+-+The+Engagement+Planning+Workbook.pdf)
- “Book 3 – The Engagement Toolkit”, Department of Sustainability and Environment:
[http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/5BEE8070970CF42ACA257085001FEF94/\\$File/Book+3+-+The+Engagement+Toolkit.pdf](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/CA256F310024B628/0/5BEE8070970CF42ACA257085001FEF94/$File/Book+3+-+The+Engagement+Toolkit.pdf)
- City of Greater Geelong Community Consultation Policy and Consultation Management Procedure.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

2.32 Utilising Environmentally Sustainable Design Features

Rationale:

The use of Environmentally Sustainable Design features in play spaces helps to reduce the impact of the play space on the environment both in its construction and its operation. The amount of potable water used to irrigate trees, plants and lawn will be reduced and the energy required to construct play equipment will be lessened. Environmentally Sustainable Designed play spaces can also act as a demonstration model to the broader community of ways in which households can reduce their environmental footprint.



Figure 56: Water tank at a play space
Photo Courtesy of Ray Hutchison

Planning Considerations:

Consider utilising the following in play spaces:

1. Recycled materials for play equipment, loose materials, signage and play space furniture.
2. Warm season grasses on lawn to reduce the amount of water required.
3. Drought tolerant, indigenous trees and plants in mulched garden beds.
4. Planting of edible gardens, particularly in centre-based play spaces.
5. Storm water harvesting from car parks.
6. Use of water tanks where there is a large surface area nearby to capture water for watering of trees and plants, to flush toilets or to be used in water features.
7. Use of low flow taps and dual flush cisterns in public toilets, connected to recycled water / rain water.
8. Solar lights.
9. Recycling bins.

Relevant Standards:

Including, but not limited to:

- Australian Standards AS 3500.4.2 – 1997 National Plumbing and Drainage – Hot water supply systems – Acceptable solutions.
- Australian Standards AS 4777.1 – 2005 Grid connection of energy systems via inverters – installation requirements.

2.0 Planning and Design Guidelines for Play Opportunities

References:

Including, but not limited to:

- City of Greater Geelong (2010), *Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure Development Guidelines*:
<http://www.geelongaustralia.com.au/common/Public/Documents/8cd43d63c2939a8-Geelong%20Infrastructure%20Guidelines%20October%202010.pdf>
- Geelong Environment Management Strategy (currently under review)



Figure 57: Community Garden, Brecon, Wales



Figure 58: Water tank at Woodend Playground



3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

3.1 Management of Play Spaces

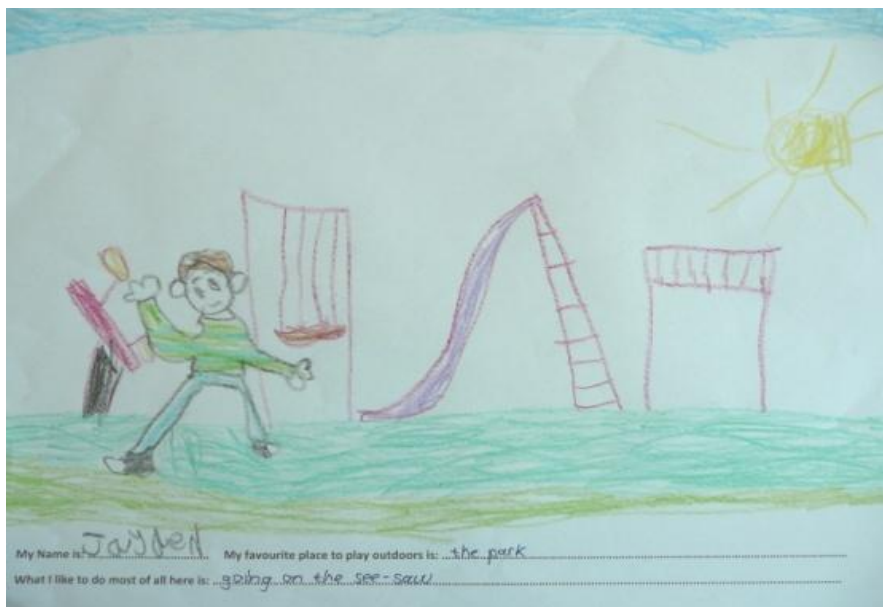


Figure 59: Children's drawing: enjoying playing on the see-saw

Traditionally community play spaces have been installed by Local Government Authorities, service clubs, sporting groups and other community based groups on public land, or on land within a new housing estate by developers. Centre-based play spaces have been installed by

Local Government Authorities, kindergarten committees, church groups, neighbourhood house committees and businesses. How well these assets have been managed over the years has varied from place to place and from organisation to organisation.

Management of play spaces involves:

1. Monitoring capital works and maintenance budgets.
2. Programming of routine safety and maintenance inspections.
3. Ensuring that any faults are repaired.
4. Ensuring that equipment is replaced at the end of its lifespan.
5. Liaising with developers and other community based groups regarding potential new developments.
6. Marketing responsibilities (e.g. ensuring information about play spaces is available through Council publications and signage).
7. Identifying areas where new play spaces are required.
8. Seeking grants and sponsorship to assist in play space development.
9. Ensuring services running programs in centre-based play spaces are clear on their roles and responsibilities.

3.1.1 Management by City of Greater Geelong

In the City of Greater Geelong, management responsibilities for play spaces are undertaken by staff from the following departments:

- Recreation and Open Space.
- Parks.
- Statutory Planning.
- Capital Projects Department.

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

- Community Development.
- Family Services.
- Environment and Natural Resources.

Other units also have a role in play space management and / or development, including:

- Arts and Culture.
- Youth services.
- Risk management.
- Aged and Disability
- Rural Access.

Representatives from these units may be invited as required.

In recent years there has been a much stronger emphasis by Local Government in general on managing the assets within their municipality, not only to ensure that risks will be minimised, but also to ensure that sufficient funds are able to be directed to management and maintenance of assets so that they can be replaced if or when required.

Council officers responsible for assets (i.e. the Asset Owner) must develop an Asset Management Plan for all assets (such as play spaces). The Asset Management Plan generally consists of:

- A description of the asset.
- The purpose of the asset.
- Service levels required to maintain the asset in good order.
- The lifecycle of the asset.

- Financial details of the asset.
- A program to improve the asset.
- Key performance measures.
- A review process.

As part of the Asset Management Plan, there are three distinct roles that can be taken on by Council staff:

Service manager – responsibilities include: developing funding proposals; planning for the acquisition, creation, modification and disposal of assets; establishing service delivery levels, determining asset utilisation; and recording or supplying relevant data about the use of the asset.

Maintainer – responsibilities include: maintaining the asset to the agreed standard; advising ways to improve the efficiency of the asset and any issues related to its performance; and recording or supplying data about the maintenance of the asset.

Asset owner – responsibilities include: developing and implementing the asset management plan; establishing service levels for the asset; recording or supplying data for the inventory, valuation and condition; monitoring and reporting on specific assets; and establishing the level of maintenance required to keep the asset at an acceptable standard.

In relation to play spaces, there are a number of different Council departments with some form of involvement, as detailed in the following table:

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

Category	Service Manager	Maintainer	Asset Owner
Active Recreation Land PPRZ zoned	Manager Sport and Recreation	Parks and Support	Manager Sport and Recreation
Passive Recreation Land	Manager Sport and Recreation	Parks and Support	Manager Sport and Recreation
Childcare Centres / Pre-Schools	Manager Family Services	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property
Neighbourhood Houses / Community Centres	Manager Community Development	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property
Leisure Buildings, e.g. swimming pools	Manager Leisure Services	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property
Public Toilets	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property	Operations	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property
Shelters and Rotundas	Manager Parks and Support Services	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property	Manager Corporate Strategy and Property
Footpath / Bike path (on road)	Engineering Services	Operations	Engineering Services
Bike Path / Shared Path (off road)	Sport and Recreation	Operations	Sport and Recreation
Car parks (in recreation reserves)	Sport and Recreation	Operations	Sport and Recreation
Artefacts, statues, etc	Arts and Culture	Arts and Culture	Arts and Culture
Basketball, Tennis and Netball Courts (outdoors)	Sport and Recreation	Parks / Clubs	Sport and Recreation
Basketball / Netball Rings	Sport and Recreation	Parks and Support	Sport and Recreation
Skate Parks	Sport and Recreation	Parks	Sport and Recreation
Recreational Fencing	Sport and Recreation / Environment	Parks and Support	Sport and Recreation
Park Furniture	As per Land asset owner	Parks and Support	As per Land asset owner
Park Lighting	Sport and Recreation	Engineering Services	Sport and Recreation
Park Signage	Sport and Recreation	Parks	Sport and Recreation / Marketing
Centre-based Playground Equipment	Community Development	Community Development	Community Development
Recreation Playground Equipment	Sport and Recreation	Parks and Support	Sport and Recreation

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

To further improve management of play spaces, it may be worth considering the development of an internal working group that meets two times per year to discuss play developments. This group would be responsible for overseeing and updating the Play Strategy (including development of capital works budgets); discussing any current issues (e.g. risk benefits, developer contributions, sponsorship / grant opportunities, etc); and ensuring that any relevant policies are developed. Membership of this group should include individuals with some decision making capacity (e.g. coordinators or managers) from the units listed above.

Recommendation:

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.

The City of Greater Geelong has focused on replacing older play equipment that had reached the end of its lifespan or no longer met Australian Standards for safety in recent years. Whilst this means that most play spaces feature equipment in reasonably good condition, in the next five to fifteen years, there will be a considerable amount of equipment that may need to be replaced. Further, as the City continues to grow, the number of play spaces to be developed will also increase. Both the replacement of play assets and the development of new spaces will require a

considerable investment from the City of Greater Geelong. Where possible, opportunities should be sought to attract grants or sponsorship from other organisations to assist with play space developments, or to develop shared developments with organisations such as schools to share costs. Nevertheless, there will be a need to set aside a sufficient amount in Council's Capital Works Program for asset replacements and developments.

Recommendation:

To include an annual budget allocation in the City of Greater Geelong's Capital Works Program for play space redevelopment and development, as per the works schedule listed in the Appendix.

3.1.2 Management of Centre-based Play Spaces

Although the City of Greater Geelong owns 62 supervised centre-based play spaces (across 51 sites), in a number of cases, the responsibility to manage, maintain and upgrade these playgrounds currently lies with the Committees of Management who have leases on these facilities. Individual leases and agreements outline the roles and responsibilities relating to playgrounds.

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

Centre staff and Committees of Management have a duty of care in line with their license to deliver their program at the sites, to ensure daily checks of the play spaces are undertaken to ensure they are providing a safe environment.

The City of Greater Geelong coordinates an external contractor to audit all supervised centre-based play spaces on an annual basis. Results are provided to the Committees and staff. Council provides support to Committees and staff on maintenance requirements.

Recommendation:

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 WorkCover legislation.

Recommendation:

With a view to ensuring high standard centre-based play spaces and to minimise risk, Council to assume responsibility for maintenance of fixed play equipment and paths of travel within play spaces to ensure regulatory compliance.

Recommendation:

To provide all committees of management charged with responsibility for developing, managing and maintaining play spaces with a copy of the guidelines produced as part of the Play Strategy, along with information about the roles and responsibilities of all parties (to be detailed in their lease / agreement).

3.2 Marketing of Play Spaces

A key aspect in determining how well a play space is utilised is related to how well it is marketed. If the community is not aware of a particular space, they will not use it. Hence awareness of the play opportunities that are available in the community is important to maximise usage and for the community to achieve the benefits of play. There are several ways in which play spaces can be promoted. These include:

Brochures – printed brochures for the whole municipality or specific sections of the municipality such as north, south or east zones could be developed to list the location of play spaces and describe (either in writing or in symbol format) the key features there such as BBQs, toilets, etc. These brochures could be made

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

available at Council offices, libraries, visitor information centres, maternal and child health centres, pre-schools, childcare centres, play groups, etc. Brochures may need to be printed in community languages. Positives: can easily distribute information to key target groups and visitors to the area. Negatives: costly to produce, become quickly outdated as new play spaces are developed and are not accessible for people with vision impairments or low literacy skills.

Maps – printed maps for the whole municipality or specific sections of the municipality such as north, south or east zones could be developed to visually show the location of play spaces and describe in symbol format the key features there such as BBQs, toilets, etc. These maps could be made available at Council offices, libraries, visitor information centres, maternal and child health centres, pre-schools, childcare centres, play groups, etc. Positives: can easily distribute information to key target groups and visitors to the area and can be understood by people with low literacy skills or limited English. Negatives: costly to produce, become quickly outdated as new play spaces are developed and are not accessible for people with vision impairments.

Signage – many play spaces throughout the municipality do not have any signage directing people to the site, at the site or within the site. Signage in nearby streets can inform people that there is a play space in a particular area and signage at a play space can help to create a sense of arrival, help people to feel welcome and also create a sense of place. Positives: signage is visible to people travelling around in the local area and is not reliant on people receiving or reading brochures or maps that may only be sent to

households once. Negatives: signage can be damaged / vandalised, does not display the same amount of information as printed material and relies on people already being in the local area in order to see and read signs.

Guidebooks – guidebooks such as *Kids Out and About – Geelong and District Children's Information Guide* and even map books such as *Melway* can be sources of information on play opportunities within a municipality. Positives: books are more likely to be stored in a place where they can be easily retrieved, such as a bookcase or glove box. Negatives: books can be costly to purchase and print and therefore may not be accessible to all; and information contained within books can become outdated quickly due to the sometimes lengthy turnaround from research to publishing and sales.

Websites – websites can convey a significant amount of information to the target audience about play opportunities in the City of Greater Geelong. A link could be developed to Council's website or links could be provided to other websites such as Playground Finder (www.playgroundfinder.com) and Melbourne Playgrounds (www.melbourneplaygrounds.com.au). Websites can be designed in such a way so that people can do a search by inserting the name of a suburb or their postcode or search for a particular requirement such as access for people with disabilities, and receive a list of all relevant play spaces. Positives: a large amount of information can be provided; tapping into an existing website is inexpensive; information can be provided in different community languages and in formats suitable for people with vision impairments or those who are hard of hearing; information can be

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

easily updated; web access is available for free at community facilities such as libraries, community Neighbourhood Houses and some shopping centres. Negatives: not everyone has access to the internet and someone needs to be given responsibility for updating the website on a regular basis.

Mobile Phone Applications – mobile phones, particularly ‘smart mobile phones’ are used by an increasing number of people to access information through specific applications (apps). There is potential to develop or link into existing apps that provide information about the location of play spaces. An American example of such an application is MomMaps, which provides information on the location of playgrounds: <http://kidsplayguide.com/>. Some apps are free, whilst others need to be purchased – usually only for a few dollars. Positives: this type of technology is being embraced by people as a means to access information and will become more and more common. Negatives: Not everyone has access to smart phone technology and not everyone is willing to pay for apps.

Recommendation:

To focus marketing efforts for play spaces on websites (as the highest priority), signage and printed maps in order to increase awareness of the value of play and to identify locations where people can play.

Branding - A brand is essentially a symbol, design, sign, term or phrase that can be used alone or as part of a combination, to inform the community about a particular product or service. To assist people to understand that the City of Greater Geelong is a key provider of play opportunities in the community and to help people recognise where play spaces are located, it is recommended that a brand is developed. This brand should incorporate a visual symbol that represents play, underscored with a key phrase such as “Playing 4 Geelong” or “Playful Geelong”.

Recommendation:

]To develop a brand to assist people to understand that the City of Greater Geelong is a key provider of play opportunities in the community and to help people recognise where play spaces are located.

Internal Marketing in City of Greater Geelong

Given that play can occur in all types of places including parks, centre-based play spaces, streets, shopping centres, urban areas, community facilities, bushland, beaches, etc, responsibility for creation of spaces that encourage play by children and adults alike rests with many different departments within Council. However, not all departments recognise the important role that they can play in ensuring that Geelong is a great place to play. Therefore it will be necessary for the lead agencies involved in the development of

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

this Play Strategy to provide copies of the Strategy to relevant departments and ensure that the Strategy is available on the intranet. It will also be useful for these lead agencies to provide an information session and written material to these departments explaining the value of the Play Strategy and how the tools contained within the strategy (such as the guidelines) can be used. Such actions will help to encourage the development of playful places throughout the City whereby residents and visitors to the area can engage in informal, spontaneous play.

Recommendation:

To provide information to relevant Council departments to articulate the vision of the Play Strategy and to encourage the adoption of planning principles and use of the guidelines by these departments in their facilities, programs or services.

3.3 Maintenance of Play Spaces

Regular maintenance of play spaces is critical to ensure that equipment, infrastructure and other items in the play area are functioning according to their design and do not pose a danger to people using them. To ensure equipment and infrastructure is regularly checked and any repairs noted and completed, it is important to develop appropriate documentation such as a maintenance register.

The maintenance register, which is part of the maintenance strategy, should include information such as:

1. Master plans / concept plans / working drawings detailing the existing lay-out of the site and explaining why certain elements have been included.
2. Copy or original certification of area measurement for outdoor space.
3. Assets and features contained within the play space, including installation dates of any equipment.
4. Details of the maintenance schedule.
5. Audit reports including details of any repairs or maintenance that has been carried out.
6. Information about the impact absorbing surfaces at the site, e.g. type of material, depth of material, details on when it was last replenished, suppliers of material, maintenance and inspection procedures, certificate of compliance with Australian Standards, etc.
7. Site plans to scale updated every 3-5 years (or when major upgrades are undertaken).

3.3.1 Resources Designated to Public Play Space Maintenance

The City of Greater Geelong has designated the play space maintenance responsibilities to the Parks Department. The municipality is divided into three zones (North, South and East) and each zone has a Maintenance Officer and Supervisors who are responsible for overseeing the maintenance of play spaces and open space reserves within their particular area of the municipality.

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

Maintenance tasks include regular inspections of play spaces to remove debris and rubbish, repair any damage to equipment, top up of under surfacing, mowing of lawn areas and maintenance of garden beds. These works are carried out by Parks and Gardens Field Crews who are delegated works by the Supervisors within each zone. The regular inspections and repairs are documented and records kept both electronically and in hard copy. All play spaces which contain play equipment are visited on a weekly basis as a minimum with regional and some sub regional play spaces requiring daily visitation. Annual audits of play spaces are carried out by an independent contractor.

Benchmarking with a number of other similar municipalities shows that the City of Greater Shepparton is far better resourced than both the City of Greater Geelong and the City of Greater Bendigo in

terms of staff to manage and maintain play spaces. Discussions with representatives of the City of Greater Bendigo indicate that additional maintenance staff are required to effectively look after play spaces within that municipality.

As the City of Greater Geelong continues to grow and if it is to reach its goal of one play space located within 400 metres of all urban households, the number of play spaces in the municipality will also grow. This will create more pressure on staff to maintain more play spaces in less time. Additional resources (both budgetary and staff) will be required to enable a suitable standard of maintenance to be undertaken.

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

Details	Geelong	Bendigo	Shepparton
Population	221,635	104,192	59,972
Area	1,245 sq km	3,000 sq km	2,422 sq km
Total No. of Public Play Spaces	280	115	70
No. of Local Play Spaces	223	99	53
No. of District Play Spaces	53	11	15
No. of Regional Play Spaces	3	5	2
No. of State / National Play Spaces	1	0	0
No. of EFT Staff	3	1	2 EFT for Kidstown and 1.5 for all other play spaces
Maintenance / Renewal Budget	\$224,262 for equipment maintenance	\$70-100K	\$200K annual play space budget.
Capital Works Budget	\$391K plus additional funds for new play spaces	\$400K p.a. plus additional funds for regional or new play spaces	Included in above amount.

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

3.3.2 Maintenance Plan for Public Play Spaces

In order to ensure that play spaces are well maintained both now and into the future, and maintained to the satisfaction of Council's risk managers, Council's insurers and according to the Australian Standards, an agreed maintenance plan is required.

Issue	Details
Objective of the Maintenance Plan	To ensure that the City of Greater Geelong's play spaces are maintained in accordance with Australian Safety Standards and within the resource capacity of the City.
Relevant Legislation and Guidelines	AS/NZS 4422 : 1996 Playground Surfacing - Specification's requirements & test method AS/NZS 4486 : 1997 Playground Equipment - Development, installation inspection maintenance & operation AS 1924 Part 2 : 1981 Design & Construction - Safety Aspects AS 4685-1 - 2004 General Safety Requirements & test methods AS 4685-2 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for swings AS 4685-3 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for slides AS 4685-4 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for runways AS 4685-5 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for carousels AS 4685-6 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for rocking equipment Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004) Play Australia Guidelines Play Strategy
Procedure for Maintenance of Play Spaces	<p>Daily: undertake an inspection of regional, state and national play spaces. Check playground equipment, natural features, open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure. Remove any rubbish / debris from the site and undertake any other general maintenance tasks as required such as topping up soft fall, mowing, gardening, graffiti removal, etc. An inspection checklist is to be used for this purpose.</p> <p>Weekly: undertake routine inspection of the playground equipment, natural features, open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure. Remove any rubbish / debris from the site and undertake any other general maintenance tasks as required such as topping up soft fall, mowing, gardening, graffiti removal, etc. An inspection checklist is to be used for this purpose.</p> <p>Annually: independent audit of all play spaces to occur once per year and recorded on appropriate checklists and on City of Greater Geelong's electronic works system. Audit to include an update to Council's play space inventory and an assessment of all items within</p>

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

Issue	Details
	play spaces against Australian Standards. Audit to provide information to update Council's Asset Management System (currently Hansen)
Responsibility for Maintenance	Responsibility for the implementation of the Maintenance Plan sits with the Manager of Parks. Regular liaison with the Recreation and Open Space. Zone Supervisors will coordinate maintenance tasks with their crews.
Maintenance Priorities	Under the maintenance plan, any issues of non-compliance with Australian Standards / other relevant legislation and any safety issues will be given the highest priority.
Notification of Works Required	Works will be identified via site inspections by Parks crews through the weekly audit or via telephone calls / emails to customer services.
Timeline for Maintenance Works	Emergency repairs will be undertaken within 24 hours of notification. All other repairs will be undertaken within seven days or less.
Maintenance Training	All staff with responsibility for maintenance must be suitably trained to undertake the tasks required. Regular updates may be required as Australian Standards or other relevant guidelines change. A safety assessment should be undertaken prior to conducting works to ensure that staff will not be exposed to hazards whilst carrying out maintenance tasks. Play equipment should be designed to minimise the need to use complex or potentially risky maintenance procedures.
Maintenance Budget	An annual meeting will be held between the Manager of Parks and the Manager of Recreation and Open Space (or delegated officers) to prioritise play space developments and maintenance issues with the view to preparing an Annual Play Space Works Schedule, using the Play Space Strategy, annual audit information and monthly checklists. From this plan, a budget bid will be submitted to Council for consideration.

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

3.3.3 Maintenance Plan for Centre-based Play Spaces

In order to ensure centre-based play spaces are well maintained both now and into the future, and maintained to the satisfaction of Council's risk managers, Council's insurers and according to the *Children's Services Act 1996* and Australian Standards, an agreed maintenance plan is required.

Issue	Details
Objective of the Maintenance Plan	To ensure that centre-based play spaces owned by the City of Greater Geelong and at times maintained by committees of management with a lease on the facility are maintained in accordance with the Children's Services Act 1996, Children's Services Regulations and the Australian Safety Standards.
Relevant Legislation and Guidelines	AS/NZS 4422 : 1996 Playground Surfacing - Specification's requirements & test method AS/NZS 4486 : 1997 Playground Equipment - Development, installation inspection maintenance & operation AS 1924 Part 2 : 1981 Design & Construction - Safety Aspects AS 4685-1 - 2004 General Safety Requirements & test methods AS 4685-2 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for swings AS 4685-3 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for slides AS 4685-4 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for runways AS 4685-5 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for carousels AS 4685-6 - 2004 Particular safety requirements & test methods for rocking equipment Children's Services Act 1996 Children's Services Regulations 2009 Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004) Play Australia Guidelines Play Strategy
Procedure for Maintenance of Play Spaces	<p>Daily: check gates / fences and remove any rubbish / debris from the site and undertake any other general maintenance tasks as required such as mowing, gardening, raking sand pit, tilling soft fall, etc.</p> <p>Weekly: inspect play spaces to remove any rubbish / debris from the site and undertake any other general maintenance tasks as required such as topping up soft fall, mowing, gardening, etc.</p> <p>Monthly: undertake an audit of all play spaces to check equipment, natural features, open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure. An inspection checklist is to be used for this purpose. All works identified and carried out to be recorded on a maintenance register.</p> <p>Annually: independent audit of all play spaces to occur once per year and recorded on the maintenance register. Audit to include an</p>

3.0 Management, Marketing and Maintenance of Play Spaces

Issue	Details
	update to the centre's play space inventory and an assessment of all items against Australian Standards.
Responsibility for Maintenance	Responsibility for the implementation of the Maintenance Plan is identified in individual leases and agreements.
Maintenance Priorities	Under the maintenance plan, any issues of non-compliance with Australian Standards, Children's Services Regulations or other relevant legislation and any safety issues will be given the highest priority.
Notification of Works Required	Works to be undertaken will be identified via inspections undertaken by the responsible party identified in the lease/agreement.
Timeline for Maintenance Works	When a maintenance issue is identified the site will be made safe immediately. Emergency repairs will be undertaken within 24 hours of identification. All other repairs will be added to the maintenance schedule and addressed in a timely manner.
Maintenance Training	All Committee members and staff with responsibility for maintenance must be suitably trained to undertake the tasks required. Regular updates may be required as Australian Standards or other relevant guidelines change.
Maintenance Budget	<p>Leases and agreements will identify whose responsibility, and in turn budget, should be used to cover maintenance issues.</p> <p>An annual meeting between the Manager of Parks, the Manager of Community Development and the Manager of Family Services (or delegated officers) to prioritise play space developments and maintenance issues will be held. An Annual Play Space Works Schedule, using the Play Space Strategy, annual audit information and monthly checklists will be developed. From this plan, a budget bid will be submitted to Council for consideration.</p>



4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies

4.0 Centre –Based Play Centre Case Studies

4.1 Gowrie Centre, North Carlton

Gowrie Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation, managed by a Board. It was established in 1939 for research and demonstration purposes. It is a 69 place service offering long day care and a funded 4 year old kindergarten program between 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday. There are three children's rooms on site and three separate gardens for each of the age groups (0-3 years; 3-4 years and 4-5 years), so that each room has its own garden. The whole centre is located on almost 1 hectare, with the garden occupying about 70% of that space. Given that the site was developed over 70 years ago, the garden is well established.

The centre offers a flexible indoor/outdoor program, which enables children to immerse themselves in the garden for many hours of the day, should they choose to do so.

Key features of the outdoor play space –

1. Natural features. e.g. trees, rocks, plants, etc.
2. Landscaping (trees, garden beds, worm farms, grass, etc).
3. Art work (e.g. sculptures, mosaics, etc).
4. Fixed play equipment (e.g. climbing frames, swings, etc).
5. Moveable play equipment (planks, tricycles, etc).
6. Storage.
7. Different surface types (e.g. timber decking, paving, rubber, tan bark, turf grass, artificial grass, granitic sand, etc).
8. Natural and Recycled materials
9. A variety of textures (grass, tan bark, rocks, sand).

10. Tan Bark areas for climbing equipment - which is not-fixed - allows for varied set-ups and different challenges. The equipment is the metal framed and timber type i.e., not coloured plastic.
11. Sandpits (with varying edges) and with water available.
12. Mud patch.
13. Grassed areas.
14. Areas where puddles form after rain.
15. Rock play area.
16. Mixture of indigenous and non-indigenous plants - seasonal changes.
17. Swings, with flexible and varied attachments.
18. Bike paths
19. Timber Platforms/Stage areas for dramatic and imaginative play.
20. Timber constructed storage shed in each yard.
21. Vegetable and herb gardens.
22. Butterfly attracting plants & plants to attract bees, for pollination in the vegetable gardens.
23. Trees - some have been around for many years and some of them are climbed by children.
24. 50,000 litre water tank to support the maintenance and growth of the garden. The abundant water supply now allows water play in the sand pits and on the lawn (under sprinklers).
25. Smaller water tanks are also found in various places in the garden to support sensory play.
26. There are many 'nooks' for children to retreat to!
27. Animals - chooks, rabbits, guinea pigs, ducks, worms (in worm farms) and a resident possum.
28. Lots of bugs - snails, slaters, slugs, garden spiders and insects. Also, have birds nesting in the garden.

4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies

29. Lots of loose materials - different leaves and flowers (different shapes, textures, and scents), twigs, sticks, rocks, bark, gravel, etc.

Overall, the garden has a very natural look and feel about it. The age of the centre has allowed an established framework of trees and shrubs to establish a 'home' garden feel about it. The trees and shrubs provide natural shade areas. Each room's garden is separated from the others by plant screening. The site offers screening from the street but also has spaces where children can look out.

One of the most positive aspects of the play space at Gowrie Centre is the contact with and an immersion in nature, which gives children the opportunity to connect with, learn about and value/respect the natural environments. Another positive aspect is the opportunity to teach children about sustainability and indigenous culture via the indigenous plantings. The garden provides open-ended (not prescriptive) play and allows children to make choices. Choices are extended by the different spaces, allowing group or solitary play.

The garden has benefits in moderating the climatic environment. Providing lawn and plantings moderates hot ambient temperatures in summer, in contrast with hard and artificial surfaces that raise the ambient temperature. There are sunny, sheltered spaces in winter and cool, shady spaces in summer.

Overcoming perceptions of an outdoor play-based program, as not being equal in value to the indoor program is one of the challenges of the play space. The garden, whilst allowing open play, is also a valuable resource for programming. It requires as much effort (if not more) to set up

experiences outside that are as inviting and enriching as inside. Additionally, providing and maintaining equipment that enhances those experiences requires as much input as does the equipment inside (hence this needs to be budgeted for).

Supervision/staff ratios for quality interaction is seen as a challenge, particularly for the largest room if one person is supervising children outside.

Overcoming the ideas of - if it's cold/wet; stay inside is another challenge that applies to families, children and some staff. The philosophy of the centre is that providing children are dressed in appropriate clothing, they should be able to play outside.

Gowrie Centre is continually focussed on enhancing the learning and experiences offered in the garden. Providing different food plants, more indigenous plants for food and fibre, increasing the shade areas (climate change factors), re-instating lawn areas lost to drought and re-rejuvenating areas that have been 'worn-out' are all key priorities in the future.

In addition to the North Carlton centre, Gowrie Victoria opened a second centre in the Docklands in 2009. This centre has established its gardens on the first floor of a building.

4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies

4.2 Dame Nellie Melba Preschool, Richmond

There is a large outdoor play space at Dame Nellie Melba Preschool divided into two sections – one for four year olds and one for three year olds. This play space has a focus on the natural environment and features garden beds, vegetable gardens, sand pits, a compost system, large trees, old tractor tyres (digging areas), benches for woodworking, large wooden building blocks, tan bark surface and a mini creek in which children can modify the water flow. Fixed equipment includes a swing, monkey bars and climbing frames. None of the fixed equipment is made of plastic; instead it is all constructed of wood and metal. Children can help themselves to equipment from the storage shed. Due to high traffic flow and water restrictions in recent years, there is no natural grass at the site. The facility is managed by a parent-based Committee of Management. This group has been instrumental in securing grants to improve the environmental components of the site. The best aspects of the site, according to staff, are the natural feel, the old trees, the garden beds, the tan bark and the focus on environmental sustainability. Aspects that could be improved include the shape of the site; the current L-shape of the site makes staff supervision difficult (staff believe that this could be improved by placing mirrors on trees). Further, there is a lack of space for ball games and running at the site.

4.3 Isabel Henderson Kindergarten, Fitzroy North



Figure 60: Play area at Isabel Henderson Kindergarten

This childcare centre operates Monday to Friday and currently receives funding for 130 places. The large play space at the centre features a large tiled gathering space bordered by lavender, a sand pit, lawn area, several vegetable patches, worm farm, compost bin, fruit trees, herb garden, planter boxes, 6 water tanks, open space areas, a bridge, several hidden nooks and crannies, shelters, sculptures, large rocks, paths and a variety of surfaces such as wooden planks, stones, small strips of fake grass, tiles, dirt and gravel. Fixed equipment includes a frame for two swings and a climbing frame. The best aspects of the site according to staff include the wide range of play opportunities; the ability to move things around; and the type of equipment on site that can help to achieve a diversity of play experience. Improvements suggested by staff include the need for additional storage sheds (there are already four).



Figure 61: Garden at Isabel Henderson Kindergarten

4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies

4.4 Coburg Children's Centre, Coburg



Figure 62: Outdoor play space at Coburg Children's Centre.
Photo courtesy of Coburg Children's Centre

This not-for-profit 62 place centre offers childcare, long day care and a kindergarten program. It operates from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and is managed by a Board of Management. Moreland City Council owns the land and the building. There are two separate play spaces – one for young children and one for older children. Key natural features of this play space include: water tanks (which are used for flushing of toilets), a chicken coop and a scarecrow.

According to staff, the best aspects of this play space are the connections that children are able to make with nature; the fresh air; the sensory experiences available to children; and the ability for children to learn about lifecycles in the environment. In terms of improvements, staff would like to direct resources to improved maintenance and the replacement of artificial grass.



Figure 63: Artwork at Coburg Children's Centre.
Photo courtesy of Coburg Children's Centre

4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies



Figure 64: Outdoor play space at Coburg Children's Centre.
Photo courtesy of Coburg Children's Centre

4.5 Boroondara Pre-School, North Balwyn

Although this preschool is registered for 30 children, it never takes more than 25. It provides a kindergarten program for 3 and 4 year olds from 8.30am to 4.15pm each day and is managed by a parent-run Committee of Management. Council owns the land and buildings.

The outdoor play space features:

1. Quiet and busy areas.
2. 2 sand pits divided with sleeper paths and edged with rocks and garden beds.
3. Small grassed area for ball games and other activities.
4. Digging patch with rocks around it.
5. Vegetable and herb garden.
6. Butterfly garden.
7. Picking garden (with flowers and plants).
8. Garden beds containing camellias on one side and native grasses, correas and silver birches on the other side.
9. Lots of gum trees and low level shrubs.
10. Sectioned off areas of yard, divided by plantings, but still easy to supervise.
11. Paths made from a variety of different surfaces, e.g. granitic sand, tan bark, concrete, paving, etc.
12. Large storage shed and several smaller sheds.
13. Large stones and rocks in landscaped garden.
14. River bed which sometimes has water in it.
15. Open sided cubby house.
16. Climbing frame.
17. No fixed equipment.

4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies

- 18. Shade provided by high vegetation and one sail over the digging patch.
- 19. Worm farm and compost.
- 20. 2 large water tanks.
- 21. Animals – rabbits, guinea pigs, stick insects and fish.

Staff at the pre-school are constantly adding and changing things and would like to incorporate more musical elements into the play space, like the chime bars they currently have hanging from a tree.



Figure 65: Vegetable and herb garden at Boroondara Pre-School.
Photo courtesy of Boroondara Pre-School



Figure 66: Outdoor Play Space at Boroondara Pre-School. Photo courtesy of Boroondara Pre-School

4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies



Figure 67: Landscaping at Boroondara Pre-School. Photo Courtesy of Boroondara Pre-School



Figure 68: Digging Area at Boroondara Pre-School. Photo Courtesy of Boroondara Pre-School

4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies

4.6 ArtPlay - Melbourne

ArtPlay¹⁵ is a studio based in Birrarung Marr next to the ArtPlay Playground, behind Federation Square in Melbourne. Children up to 13 years of age and their families can enjoy working together on artistic, interactive and creative projects. ArtPlay also employs professional artists to run workshops with children and their families to improve educational and artistic opportunities for young people. More than 300 workshops, events and performances are offered annually at ArtPlay, ranging from simple and short creative workshops for young children through to extended and in-depth creative experiences for older children and their parents / carers.



Figure 69: Images of ArtPlay

The ArtPlay building is comprised of three separate spaces:

- Sidney Myer Space (large open space on ground level) 21,640mm x 8,770mm

¹⁵ ArtPlay website:
<http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/artplay/Pages/ArtPlayHome.aspx>

- Gallery (smallest space downstairs which can be boxed in using stage curtains; used as a gallery or performance space) 1,1125mm x 6,360mm
- Mezzanine (situated upstairs overlooking the multi-purpose space) 21,640mm x 6,420mm

Activities at Artplay are either free or low cost. They include weekend programs, school holiday activities, weekday school and pre-school programs and special programs run in conjunction with Melbourne events and festivals.

The programs produced by ArtPlay are usually large and multi-dimensional. Children can focus on one different aspects of one art form, or may return each week to contribute to long-term projects.



Figure 70: Images of ArtPlay

Adjoining the ArtPlay area is a playground which features walkways, slides, sand areas and a wheelchair swing. Children often get the opportunity to decorate the playground using materials that they have developed as part of a workshop.

Artplay is funded by the City of Melbourne and several funding partners / philanthropic trusts.

4.0 Centre – Based Play Centre Case Studies

4.7 Adventure Playgrounds – St Kilda and South Melbourne

Adventure playgrounds were established primarily to offer young people in high rise public housing a ‘back yard’ in which to play, based upon a concept that was initially developed in Denmark in 1943. However for many families “the playgrounds are much more than just a ‘backyard’ – they are a support network, a place to learn new skills, somewhere to ‘escape’, a link to the wider community, and a safe place to have fun”¹⁶.



Figure 71: Images of St Kilda Adventure Playground

Within an adventure park, young people have the opportunity to engage with other young people; explore risk in a supervised environment and to take part in a broad range of free unstructured activities such as:

- constructing items from wood, using hammers and nails;
- planting and tending to vegetable gardens;
- learning how to care for animals such as chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs, turtles, birds, fish and goats;
- building fires;

¹⁶ City of Port Phillip website:
http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/adventure_playgrounds.htm#St_Kilda_Adventure_Playground

- playing with water;
- constructing cubby houses and other structures;
- playing on trampolines and climbing structures;
- painting murals;
- creating works of art;
- finding a quiet spot to read;
- sitting around and talking to other young people; or
- taking part in a variety of programs that are offered at the site.

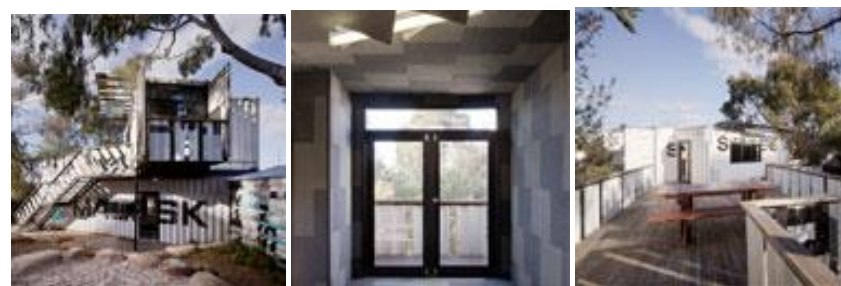


Figure 72: Images of Skinner's Adventure Playground, South Melbourne

Adventure playgrounds are primarily designed for children between 5 and 12 years of age. They are free to use and are open after school, usually from 3.30pm to 5.30pm or 6.00pm as well as on weekends, usually from 11.00am to 5.00pm. St Kilda Adventure Playground is also available for birthday party bookings, which gives participants access to an undercover area with table, BBQ and kitchen facilities.

There are currently over 80 adventure playgrounds within the City of London alone and five in Australia.