



Driving Stronger Communities:

An action map for Australian Local Government to grow equitable community access to Play Streets

A 1000 Play Street research initiative delivered in partnership by:



LA TROBE
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CENTRE FOR
SPORT AND
SOCIAL IMPACT



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Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

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Australian Government
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1000 Play Streets is a movement championed by Play Australia,
powered by Australian Sports Commission,
inspired by Playing Out,
delivered by Australian Local Government.
PlayAustralia.org.au

Thank you to our many and varied Australian Local Governments
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Our road to get here

In 2022, Play Australia, La Trobe University's Centre for Social Impact and University of Geneva, with funding from the Australian Sports Commission, set out to deliver a 12 month Play Streets Research Project.

The aim was to gather evidence and inform clear recommendations for Local Government Authorities (LGAs) on supporting Play Streets within communities who experience disadvantage, to ultimately drive stronger Australian communities.

A Play Street is a simple concept where neighbours, with the support of their LGA, restrict car access to their quiet residential street for a couple of hours so they can use the space to connect and play. Neighbours report increased feelings of safety, connection, and play because of the Play Street, and although a Play Street can have a positive impact on all types of communities; **they are particularly impactful in improving the social connection and outdoor play in communities who experience disadvantage.**

Coordinating Play Streets within communities who experience disadvantage requires significantly more resources and commitment from LGAs than coordinating a Play Street within more affluent communities, who often have higher levels of **connection, confidence, capacity, and commitment.**

This resource has been developed, with the input of LGAs across Australia, to identify action areas that support Play Streets within communities who experience disadvantage. Each action area includes real-life examples of how LGAs have overcome challenges coupled with advice on how to move forward.

The purpose of this publication is to inspire and support LGA action to initiate more Play Streets for our communities with the greatest need.



Action Map

5 steps for Australian Local Government Authorities to support Play Streets within communities who experience disadvantage

These action areas have been developed by Local Governments across Australia to better reach our communities with greatest need.



What actions do you need to focus on within your Local Government?

Action Area 1

Demonstrate value of play

to provide evidence that Play Streets is a worthwhile investment to achieve positive community outcomes and garner support from Local Government leadership.



Focus Areas

1.1 SHARE evidence to build understanding about the value of Play Streets

1.2 GROW evidence by evaluating and measuring impacts

IMPORTANT

Recommended Actions:

Internal support is important to secure resources and commitment for Play Streets and is usually the first step in getting Play Streets up and running for communities who experience disadvantage in your LGA.

To generate internal support

- Invite LGA staff along to experience a Play Street themselves
...there is nothing more powerful!
- Report community benefits of Play Streets with a clear rationale to your Executive (ideally using mixed media, like video or infographics). This should link with your broader strategic focus - for example: community connection, active living and/or neighbourhood safety agendas, and/or;
- Find a champion on your Executive Team who can share the benefits of Play Streets on your behalf and act as your sponsor to help tackle road blocks as they arise.

Develop a clear and achievable evaluation plan articulating WHY you are coordinating community Play Streets and HOW you will measure impact to capture benefits (ideally short and long-term) for your communities experiencing disadvantage.



Stories from the street

To better educate Local Government staff and Councillors on the value of play and Play Streets, a number of LGAs have organised **media events** to profile Play Streets in local newspapers. This approach has seen Mayors, Councillors and CEOs in attendance, who have been interviewed by local Journalists, alongside participating residents.

This is a great way to not only ensure LGA decision-makers are briefed and buy-in to the Play Streets initiative, but it also helps convert them to become your internal advocates who support Play Streets as a part of LGA strategy.

The best way to educate people about Play Streets is to invite them along and allow them to experience it for themselves.

IMPORTANT

Remember these are ideally resident-led gatherings that seek to connect people where they live, so be careful with how many other people you invite, you don't want to get the balance wrong and compromise the purpose of the Play Street.

Action Area 1

Demonstrate value of play



Did you know

Play Australia has developed a bank of Play Streets evidence through project work and our tertiary partnership with La Trobe University – including:

- [1000 Play Streets: national pilot outcomes and findings report;](#)
- [Evidence review on how Play Streets supports the development of physical literacy in children, and;](#)
- [1000 Play Streets: South Australia Community Impact Report.](#)

Plus, there is also a Play Streets evaluation guide available for Play Australia's 1000 Play Streets Local Government partners with further advice on how to measure outcomes.

[Please contact Play Australia for more information.](#)

Action Area 2

Establish Local Gov readiness

to build strong internal foundations and practices that enable LGAs to support community Play Streets



Focus Areas

2.1 BUILD internal leadership support and embed Play Streets within operational strategy

2.2 UNLOCK a sensible traffic management policy and community permit process

2.3 IDENTIFY suitable streets

Recommended Actions:

To build internal support and see Play Streets embedded within operational strategy, it's important you review your strategic plan, related success indicators (KPIs) and articulate how Play Streets clearly supports the agenda of the day. *Don't forget to maintain an equitable approach – this is about targeting communities who experience disadvantage.*

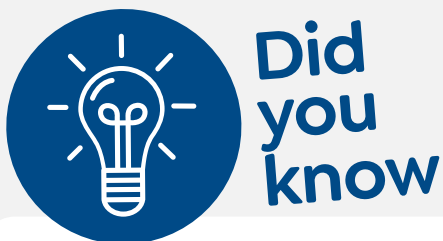
It's also worth projecting the top risks and concerns that may arise from Senior Management and have case studies or evidence ready to tackle these objections. *You may also have a Play Street risk benefit assessment process in place that can alleviate concerns.*

Following on, it's a good idea to develop your Play Streets policy and process so that is accessible and easy to complete for communities by:

- Building strong internal relationships with key LGA personnel (including your Roads Management Team and Legal Team) so that they can support you to modify or create an easy Play Street process;
- Reviewing existing road closure policies to support your thinking, and;
- Connecting with other LGAs who have delivered Play Streets (ideally in the same State) to share practices.

IMPORTANT

Be clear about what kinds of quiet residential streets qualify for Play Streets, to ensure adequate space for activities and a safe environment for all.



Did
you
know



Play Australia has a free **1000 Play Streets Toolkit** – full of planning advice for Australian Local Governments who are seeking to develop their own Play Street policy. There you will find lots of ideas and examples of how LGAs have approached:

- Growing neighbour support;
- Handling traffic management and traffic control;
- Organising public liability cover;
- Establishing a risk benefit assessment; and
- Coordinating a Play Streets register.

Why not check it out today!

 PlayAustralia.org.au/1000-play-streets

Action Area 2

Establish
Local Gov
readiness



Stories
from
the street

A number of LGAs who have embraced Play Streets for the first time, have trialled new **traffic management policy** and new **community permit processes** with either LGA staff members or neighbours of staff members, before launching more broadly.

Whilst this approach isn't necessarily about targeting communities experiencing disadvantage in the first instance, it's a good way to test your assumptions about how resident Play Streets Hosts navigate your documentation and advice. For the purposes of getting honest feedback on the experience and importantly, embedding necessary policy and process updates to support continuous improvement.

Action Area 3

Grow sustainable resourcing

to ensure adequate levels of internal support for Play Streets ongoing



Focus Areas

3.1 ALLOCATE staff to drive internal collaboration, community engagement work and street closures.

3.2 ALLOCATE a defined budget and assets for traffic management plans, public liability, community engagement materials and signage/bollards.

IMPORTANT

Recommended Actions:

Identify your LGA staff member who is primarily responsible for Play Streets and ensure their position description is updated to reflect the work involved. Their role should include driving the much-needed cross-collaboration across LGA departments and community partnership development, which always takes more time than first anticipated.

Again, it's worth having an Executive Sponsor or Advocate to help clear road blocks and support bringing an internal working group together.

By piloting Play Streets policy in the first instance, it will enable you to get a stronger handle on your cost model and how much you will need to budget moving forward, particularly as you may uncover unforeseen costs.

To drive equity in Play Streets, roll out a manageable number of targeted Play Streets for communities with greatest need, instead of exhausting your budget allocation responding to expressions of interest from more affluent neighbourhood areas. *Take time to ensure you spend your dollars where they are most needed.*



Everything from having a dedicated Play Streets Officer whose job is solely about supporting community Play Streets; to seeing Play Streets feature in the work plans of multiple team members who sit across defined regions, with a primary Play Streets driver to provide subject matter expertise and support continuity.

In addition, we've seen Community Development Officers being trained in traffic control to enable them to manage temporary road closures for Play Streets. This in turn can ease resource burden on Roads Management Teams (who may be more focused on larger scale events and renewal works) and can reduce the need to outsource traffic control to a third party, helping to save costs.

Action Area 3

**Grow
sustainable
resourcing**



Did
you
know

Play Australia has play equipment for Local Government to distribute to participating communities who experience disadvantage and has re-useable Play Streets welcome signage, available to support temporary road closures.



 [Check out the full details here.](#)



Action Area 4

Run targeted community development

to grow quality connections and support communities who experience disadvantage



Focus Areas

4.1 COORDINATE targeted community engagement to connect with volunteer Play Street Hosts and communities who experience disadvantage

4.2 PROVIDE support by sharing timely guidance whilst always managing community expectations.

Recommended Actions:

To support a targeted Play Street approach, LGAs should:

- Be strategic and assess the best available data to identify communities who experience disadvantage and would benefit from Play Streets;
- Leverage other local community engagement initiatives to build connections with potential Play Street Hosts;
- Connect with local community partners who ideally have established relationships with target neighbourhoods, to support outreach and identify Play Street Hosts, and;
- Consider the best ways to build communication and trust with communities – *door-knocking has proven to be an invaluable approach to help connect with Play Street Hosts and communities.*

IMPORTANT

This is a gathering for all neighbours, not just children and families, so please ensure you consider how you best approach older adults and adults without children.

To build support for residents involved, LGAs should:

- Secure more than one Play Street Host for each gathering. A small group of Play Street Hosts (3 – 5 per Play Street) improves the capacity of local organisers and grows their confidence through social connection;
- Allocate one LGA staff member who is easily contactable for Play Street Hosts, so they can respond to any queries/concerns in a timely manner and with a personal touch;
- Ensure that same LGA staff member is available to provide face-to-face mentor support and guidance throughout the Play Street planning and delivery processes, particularly if there are difficult conversations to be had, and;
- Break organising responsibilities up into manageable chunks for Play Street Hosts to help reduce any feelings of worry or burden.

IMPORTANT

Always manage your communities' expectations by establishing what LGA supports are available and not available in future (post-Play Street gathering).



Stories from the street

Though Play Street pilots, it's been evident that when LGAs seek to connect with communities experiencing disadvantage, the time it takes for quality outreach can add up pretty quickly. For example, some Community Development Teams within LGAs have needed to allocate 5-10 days to support door-knocking and local conversations to help source and support Play Street Hosts and their communities.

To reduce time-burden on LGA staff members, it's important to build strong partnerships with local community groups (for example: Children & Family Services or Neighbourhood Houses) who are seeking the same outcomes as you.

Participating community groups have been essential to the success of targeted Play Streets, to support outreach, grow trust and build greater levels of support for participating residents.

Action Area 4

Run targeted community development



Did you know

Play Australia has a range of community engagement assets for 1000 Play Streets LGA Partners– including flyers and posters that can be tailored to include your own key messages, pictures representative of your target communities and your Local Government logo.



Read our about Play Australia's LGA partnership offer here.



Action Area 5

Foster community sustainability

to ensure longer-term benefit for participating communities who experience disadvantage



Focus Areas

5.1 SEEK to develop connection and confidence amongst Play Street Hosts and communities to grow benefit after the Play Street

Recommended Actions:

It's important LGAs communicate to participating communities that Play Streets are a catalyst for good in local neighbourhoods ...what that "good" looks like is up to the communities themselves.

Pilot evidence demonstrates that communities informally connect and play after the organised Play Street or gathering is over.

Some examples include:

- children riding their bikes together and playing around the street;
- parents taking children to play in the local parks with neighbours;
- the establishment of walking groups;
- community worm farms and plant exchanges, or;
- simply more neighbours talking to one another in their street and front yards.

The best way to foster longer-term benefits for participating communities who experience disadvantage is to capitalise on the opportunity that Play Streets provides, to connect neighbours and grow their confidence to continue to connect after the Play Street.

Alongside Play Street Hosts, make sure you clearly identify and implement your strategies to build neighbour connection and confidence during Play Streets.

IMPORTANT

Check in with your communities post-Play Street to see how they are going and help grow the good.



Did you know

Play Australia has a **Community Connect & Play Guide** to better equip Play Street Hosts with ideas on how to grow connection and play on streets between neighbours. PLUS it provides a heap of ideas about how communities can continue to connect after their gathering.

[Download now](#)



Action Area 5

Foster community sustainability



Stories from the street

Food has been a common theme amongst many Play Streets, particularly within our multicultural communities, and has proven to be a stand-out strategy to help bring people together and share culture.

By setting up a table and inviting residents to bring a plate, we've seen neighbours taking strong ownership over Play Streets which is a driver of confidence ...*the more resident-led, the better!*

We've also seen Play Street Hosts and representatives from supporting Community Groups take on the role of "Welcome Officer" to help participating residents feel comfortable when they arrive; to introduce them to other residents; and invite residents to eat, drink or play.

There are lots of ways to bring people together during Play Streets, it just takes some prior planning.



To drive equitable community access to Play Streets, Australian Local Governments should roll out a manageable number of targeted gatherings for communities with greatest need, instead of exhausting limited resources on servicing requests from more affluent neighbourhood areas.

Take time to ensure you spend your dollars where they are most needed.





For more information contact
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