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*promoting the value of play*

## **Dogs and Playgrounds**

Play Australia believes that it is the responsibility of all dog owners to fully supervise their own animals in public open space, and in particular in playspaces located within public open space for the benefit of children and their families.

Accordingly, Play Australia believes that all dogs must be on a lead, and under the supervision of the dog owner in public playspaces and/or within 50 metres of a public playspace.

Management of dogs in public parks is a matter for council local laws and each council will have laws pertinent to each municipality.

Play Australia does not consider it reasonable or acceptable for children and families to be required to accommodate dogs in public playspaces. There is a need for councils to take steps to ensure the protection from dogs of all children and families in playspaces included in public open space in accordance with this policy.

Play Australia recognizes that dogs play an important role in the social and community infrastructure, particularly at a local level, and therefore communities are encouraged to consider ways of ensuring that the needs of all community members are accommodated in the use of community facilities, but dogs have no place in playspaces in public parks.

The provision of fencing does not necessarily ensure protection for children from dogs. Councils are not encouraged to erect structures such as fences or gates intended to separate children from dogs. Fences are not considered adequate protection: fences can discourage supervision, and adults can bring dogs into the play area regardless of the provision or not of fences. Gates are left open, and dogs can be tied up inside fences, a practice which is considered totally unacceptable. To allocate resources for additional fencing will reduce expenditure on quality playspaces for children, which is not in the interests of children and families in general.

Play Australia supports experience which suggests that children who enjoy quality play environments in the company of their parents or adult carers will experience significantly less injury than those who play in isolation from supportive adults.

Barbara Champion  
Executive Director