

PLAYSPACE

strategy



Darebin Playspace Strategy 2010-2020



July 2010



Darebin Playspace Strategy 2010-2020

ADOPTED BY DAREBIN CITY COUNCIL ON 5th July 2010

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Executive Summary

Play is the way we learn about our world and our role in it.

The value of rich play opportunities to the acquisition of skills, knowledge and self-awareness are immeasurable. Playspaces provide the opportunity for structured and unstructured play and are integral elements to public spaces, places where neighbours interact, places where children often are first allowed to venture out on their own. These spaces are neighbourhood spaces, community spaces. Contemporary issues such as busy life styles and increasing pressure upon public open space through increasing urban density, means Local Government has an important role to play in the provision of play opportunities for children and youth.

The Darebin Playspace Strategy 2010 discusses different types of play and puts forward a balanced, equitable model for playspace planning in Darebin for the next ten years. providing quality opportunities for play and a sense of freedom in play within easy access of local homes. 'Quality opportunity' meaning a diverse range of play experiences that cross over the 4 types of play, Physical, Cognitive, Creative & Imaginative/Social.

Council's previous Playground Strategy 1998 guided the planning and design of playgrounds and shaped the capital works program by prioritising upgrades or improvements to playspaces. The previous strategy achieved many of it's priorities and after 11 years, was ready for review.

The development of the Playspace Strategy 2010 included a review of the previous Playground Strategy, a playspace audit, the production of a Position Paper and a Literature Review and was developed in consultation with the community and stakeholders. The Playspace Strategy 2010 guides the planning and design of the municipality's 120 playspaces in public parks, children's services centres and neighbourhood houses.

Vision (Open Space Strategy)

The Playspace Strategy Vision has been adopted from the Open Space Strategy,

"A well connected network of accessible open spaces that meet the diverse needs of the community and provide a range of social and environmental benefits."

Playspace Strategy Principles

Four key principles were developed from extensive community consultation, research and expert industry recommendations to guide the development of Playspace Strategy and future directions for council playspaces.

- Darebin's playspaces will provide an environment where children, youth, older people and people of all abilities and backgrounds are welcome
- Council will endeavour to provide for play within 500 metres of every home
- Council will create sustainable and safe playspaces that are evolving, dynamic and challenging
- Darebin's playspaces will be developed with and for the community reflecting the diversity of local neighbourhood communities

The Playground Strategy 1998 only considered playspaces in public parks. This Playspace Strategy 2010 includes all of council owned and managed playspaces, including those in public parks, children's services centres and neighbourhood houses. This approach ensures that council develops consistent principles and practices related to all Council playspaces.

During 2004 new Australian Standards for the design and installation of playgrounds (AS 4685: Parts 1-6) were adopted and this strategy reflects those changes.

The process of reviewing the previous strategy and developing a new Playspace Strategy has allowed Council to look at the relevance of the existing council policy in-line with local, national and global thinking on playspaces. Council has also been able to re-examine current maintenance practices and standards in line with community expectation and plan a new work program for the next 10-15 years for Darebin playspaces.

Community Engagement

Extensive consultation was undertaken to involve the Darebin community in the development of this strategy. A combination of consultation techniques were employed by Council over an 18 month period including surveys, listening posts, workshops and presentations to engage members of the general community, young people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, disability representatives, schools, children's services centres and neighbourhood houses.

The recommendations put forward by this report are outcomes of both research and this consultation and are discussed further in the section *Key Issues and Community Needs* of this report.

Key Strategy Recommendations

The following are the key recommendations emerging from the Playspace Strategy:

- Provision of play within 500m of every Darebin residence, be that access to a council or non-council playspace
- Development of diverse playspaces throughout Darebin that cater for a range of ages, communities and abilities
- Commitment to more effective consultation with the community on playspace projects, with particular attention given to the inclusion of young people, people with a disability and culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Upgrades to develop the broader playspace area, including equipment, paths, furniture and landscaping
- Establishment of a broader range of promotional material and methods of providing information for Darebin's playspaces, with particular attention paid to the inclusion of young people, people with a disability and culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Playspace Service Provision in Darebin

A key recommendation of this strategy is that the community should have access to play or a playspace within 500m of their home. Some gaps in playspace provision have been identified where no parks exist and no provision opportunities are possible at this time. Some of these areas are supported by Conservation Bushland play opportunities, or are located within an industrial area where no additional playspace facilities are required.

A number of areas were identified where there was a playspace deficiency and open space existed to accommodate the development of a new playspace. Some of these sites have some existing facilities, others are currently undeveloped. During the development of the Open Space Strategy submissions were received from the community requesting new playspaces in some of the areas. New playspaces recommended for the municipality will be created in the following open space sites:

Reservoir West Precinct

- B.T. Connor Reserve
- Gellibrand Reserve

Reservoir East Precinct

- San Leandro Park

Kingsbury/Bundoora Precinct

- Sugargum Park

Preston West Precinct

- Ray Braham Gardens

Preston East Precinct

- Greenbelt Reserve
- G.H. Mott Reserve
- Preston Library Forecourt
- T.W. Blake Reserve

Thornbury Precinct

- John Cain Memorial Park
- Hayes Park

Fairfield/Alphington Precinct

- Broomfield Reserve
- Fairfield Station Reserve
- Wingrove Reserve

Summary of Recommendations

Playspace Inventory & Hierarchy		Responsibility
Hierarchy & Classification of Playspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide play opportunities within 500m of every resident Introduce two new levels of playspace at Major District and Major Neighbourhood level Introduce two new categories of playspace – Urban Playspace and Conservation Parkland Playspace 	Leisure & Open Space

Context		Responsibility
Playgrounds or Playspaces?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce the term 'playspace' in reference to all its council owned and managed play environments 	Playspace Strategy
Play Provision Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop all playspaces with a range of physical, cognitive, social and imaginative play experiences 	Leisure & Open Space

Strategic Directions		Responsibility
Childhood Obesity & Physical Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide access to playspaces within 500mtrs. to encourage more active use of parks. Encourage interest and use through the development of quality playspaces for the whole community 	Leisure & Open Space
Use of Sustainable Materials in Playspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use sustainable design and materials where possible when upgrading or developing new playspaces 	Leisure & Open Space / Darebin Parks
Art in Playspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate funding opportunities for artwork projects in District and Regional playspaces Seek to incorporate artwork in playspaces under council's existing public art maintenance program 	Leisure & Open Space / Arts & Culture

Playspaces in Public Parks		Responsibility
Young People in Public Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for an increased range of recreational and social opportunities for young people in public parks 	Leisure & Open Space / Youth Services
Playspaces for Toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for toddler play through landscape elements at district and regional playspaces Investigate the opportunity for developing 'toddler playspaces' in the north and south of Darebin 	Leisure & Open Space
Site Location & Fencing in Playspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for considered siting, sealed paths and consolidated location for ease of public access 	Leisure & Open Space

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set playgrounds back from the road and only include fencing after considered planning and community consultation 	
Shade and Shelter in Playspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop long-term natural shade in parks through well considered tree planting 	Leisure & Open Space / Darebin Parks

Strategic Planning - Neighbourhood Houses & Children's Services Centres		Responsibility
Capital Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Playspace Renewal / Upgrade program to prioritise planning for funding submissions and fund raising for Neighbourhood House and Childrens' Service Centres. Planning will consider inclusion in Council's Annual Capital Works Budget if Council funds are required 	Early Years Unit / Family, Youth & Community Support / Asset Strategy / Facilities Maintenance / Darebin Parks
Neighbourhood House Playspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include Neighbourhood House playspaces in the bi-annual maintenance assessments 	Darebin Parks / Youth & Community Support / Leisure & Open Space
Children's Services Centre Playspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ongoing advice and support to staff and centre committees in the development of programming for out door playspaces Provide ongoing advice and support in the effective management of outdoor playspaces 	Early Years Unit / Leisure & Open Space

Strategic Planning - Public Park Playspaces		Responsibility
Public Park Playspaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide playspaces where possible within 500m of each residence Improve and upgrade a range of amenity as part of developing the 'whole playspace' Strategically plan for a diversity of playspaces across local neighbourhoods Develop a Playspace Renewal program for consideration in Council's Annual Capital Works Budget which aims for 15year renewal of existing playspaces and the creation of new playspaces in Darebin 	Leisure & Open Space

Access All Abilities		Responsibility
Development Standards for Disability Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve path access associated with playspaces when developing or upgrading playspaces Provide a broader range of accessible design to and within Major District and Regional 'All Abilities Playspaces' Improve access and inclusion to playspaces in line with the playspace strategy development standards for the level of playspace within the playspace hierarchy 	Leisure & Open Space / Community Access Health & Safety

Community Involvement		Responsibility
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) in Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broaden the range of consultation methods to engage a cross-section of both Established and Emerging Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Utilise multi-lingual translations when distributing public promotional material and information through venues such as local schools Continue to develop Councils relationship with the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) for support, facilitation and advice 	Leisure & Open Space / Social Inclusion & Diversity
Consulting Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a broader range of consultation techniques for engaging young people 'Advocate' for the right of young people to use open space 	Leisure & Open Space / Youth Services
Access for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve local disability groups and/or special schools in consultation at the planning and design concept stages of park and playspace projects with a high level of disability access. Investigate opportunities to increase promotional opportunities to provide information on disability access in playspaces 	Leisure & Open Space / Community Access, Health & Safety
Ownership through participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage community participation through involvement in consultation for public park and playspace upgrades and development projects 	Leisure & Open Space
Quiet Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw out and use 'local knowledge' when consulting with the community in public park and playspace projects 	Leisure & Open Space
Consultation Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ a range of different consultation techniques to maximise community engagement Annually evaluate consultation and community satisfaction on playspace projects 	Leisure & Open Space
Ownership Through Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate community celebration of a major public park playspace projects by organising a park opening or event 	Leisure & Open Space

Promoting Play & Playspaces in Darebin		Responsibility
Marketing & Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and evaluate more effective ways to promote playspaces in Darebin 	Leisure & Open Space / Communications
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the 'Darebin Parks Alive' web pages to include more detailed information about playspaces Annually update accessibility and facility information in the community portal and Parks Alive web pages 	Leisure & Open Space / Communications

Printed Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Darebin playspace promotional material focusing on location, facilities and children's information • Distribute promotional material on playspaces at Darebin events, through customer service centres, local libraries and Bundoora Park Visitor's Centre. 	Leisure & Open Space / Communications
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Playspace Management		Responsibility
Service Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing Playspace Maintenance Service Levels to extend beyond Play Equipment to the broader 'Playspace Environment' and agreed Graffiti management • Review service levels and playspace management in Children's Services Centres and Neighbourhood House Playspaces • Further develop the data collection, reporting and use of the bi-annual playspace maintenance assessments 	Leisure & Open Space / Darebin Parks
Maintenance Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review playspace maintenance audit processes and market test on a regular basis 	Leisure & Open Space / Darebin Parks
Graffiti Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a graffiti management plan for playspaces in line with current Council programs and policy on graffiti management 	Leisure & Open Space / Darebin Parks / Community Access Health & Safety

Darebin City Council Capital Works Program

Recent benchmarking with other local government authorities has indicated that the standard renewal / replacement period for playspaces is 10-15 years. Currently the renewal of playspaces in the City of Darebin varies from 15-30 years and often does not meet community expectations of service standards.

Darebin Parks

Council is committed to improving the quality of playspaces and this Strategy includes a prioritised Action Plan for playspaces within Darebin Parks which includes operational and capital actions, refer *Action Plan for Playspaces in Parks*. The Action Plan recommends the development of a detailed 15 year Capital Works Plan that will work towards a 15 year playspace renewal plan for consideration in the Council Budget and the creation of new playspaces.

Neighbourhood Houses & Children's Services Centres

Playspaces within these facilities are made up of a combination of flexible and fixed equipment, refer *Playspaces in Children's Services Centres & Neighbourhood Houses* and as a result require different planning for renewal than Playspaces within Parks. This Strategy includes a recommendation to develop an appropriate program to prioritise planning for funding submissions, fund raising and Council contribution should this be required for Playspace renewal/upgrade within Neighbourhood House and Childrens' Service Centres.

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Contributors

Open Space Planning at the Darebin City Council would like to acknowledge the following contributors to the development of this strategy:

Project Steering Group:

- Allan Wicks (Manager, Open Space Planning)
- Susan Hecker (Acting Manager, Leisure Services)
- Liz Cummins (Open Space Planning)
- Cheryl Hermence (Manager, Early Years & Children's Services)
- Rod Brazier (Manager, Facilities Management)
- Phillip Price (Manager, Darebin Parks)

Other Contributors:

- Geoff Glynn (Director, Infrastructure)
- Leisure and Open Space Team
- Nik Filips (Youth Services Co-ordinator)
- Jane Carmichael (Early Childhood Co-ordinator)
- Dean Griggs (Manager Family, Youth and Community Support)
- Louise D'Alfonso (Co-ordinator Darebin Maternal & Child Health Services)
- Lyn Harris (Facilities Administration)
- Michael Cliff (Horticulture Co-ordinator, Darebin Parks)
- Keith Bradshaw (Team Leader – Playground Maintenance)
- Jim Barrett (Business Improvement Unit)
- Jeremy Liyangage (Cultural Diversity Co-ordinator)
- Katherine Wotiznsky (Social Research & Service Planning)
- Barney Wilson (Youth Services Youth Worker)
- Roberto Malara (Community Grants Co-ordinator)
- Jorge Torrico DECC (Darebin Ethnic Communities Council)
- Tennille Bradley (Co-ordinator Community Health & Access)
- Natalie McGlone (Disability Access/Community Safety Project Officer)
- Paul Papadatos (Northland Youth Centre)
- Georgia Trapalis (Northland Youth Centre)
- Christine Mulholland (Metro-Access Project Officer)
- Sarah Edwardes (Streets Ahead Program)
- Jane Redfern (Best Start Program)
- Nerina di Lorenzo (Project Steering Group 2009)
- Mary Jeavons Landscape Architects
- Barbara Champion, PRAV (Playground & Recreation Association Victoria)

Introduction

Playspaces are valuable and diverse community assets. Darebin has 120 council owned and managed playspaces in public parks, children's services centres and neighbourhood houses.

The Darebin Playspace Strategy is a Council planning document and together with the Streetscape Strateg are guided by the Open Space Strategy (2007-2017) in the planning and development of public open space in Darebin.

Background

The Playspace Strategy Review

Darebin has 120 playspaces and relevant council policy and development standards need to be considered when planning for an entire municipality to ensure that facilities are developed to a high standard and equitably across Darebin.

The Darebin Playspace Strategy has been developed in consultation with the local community and discusses how council will continue to involve the community in planning for playspaces in the future. This strategy works with and reflects directions put forward by the recently adopted Open Space Strategy (2007-2017).

Council has an existing Playgrounds Strategy which was prepared and adopted by council in 1999. This strategy has served Darebin well over the past 10 years, resulting in many new playspace upgrades and several new playspaces. It has also been imperative in guiding council on issues related to playgrounds.

Following the review of the 1999 strategy, it is proposed to develop a more robust and comprehensive look at playspaces across Councils facilities and broaden council's opportunities to develop a greater diversity of playspaces for the future to meet the changing Darebin community's needs over the next 10-15 years.

Playgrounds or Playspaces?

One key change this strategy review promotes is the use of the term 'Playspace' rather than 'Playground'. This move is deliberate in three particular ways.

1. Firstly, the term *playspace* refers to the 'whole' play environment, not just play equipment, so often confused for a playground, including mounds, grass, seats, logs, trees etc. all of which combine together to form a rich, varied and diverse play experience. For the purpose of this strategy the size of the playspace environment will vary depending on the size of a park. (For example in a small park a playspace may be the entire park, whereas in a large park there may be several discreet playspaces).
2. Secondly, the term refers to more than just playspaces in public parks, it covers all environments managed by Darebin City Council in which 'play' currently occurs. These greatly varied playspaces include long day-care centres, kindergartens, maternal child health centres, and neighbourhood houses.
3. Thirdly, the term refers to a greater 'diversity' of opportunities for play than just playgrounds with play equipment, for example a protected bushland environment, creek corridor or urban plaza with sculptural elements may also justifiably constitute a legitimate 'playspace'.

The word 'playground' tends to restrict our thinking to environments for children only. This strategy maintains that playspaces often form the backbone of a successful 'community space' and should be considered as such (children don't usually come to the park by themselves and no park should be exclusively for use by children or carers alone).

A key direction of this strategy is to move to address the needs of young people from 13-18 years, not previously discussed in the 1999 Strategy. The term playground generally only deals with play from 0-13, as guided by the selection of play equipment available on the commercial market.

Playspace Achievements in Darebin

The 1999 Darebin Playground Strategy has been an effective planning tool which has guided the playground redevelopment program. The strategy dealt with 86 playspaces provided in parks and reserves. Generally three playspaces per year have been replaced or upgraded using the playgrounds capital works budget and during this time 45 playspaces were upgraded. Of the prioritised list of upgrades all the priority one and two, most of priority three and some of priority four were implemented.

An additional seven new playspaces have been created at reserves where there were previously no playspaces through park master plans implementation works and in new developments such as Springthorpe and Lancaster Gate. Three new playspaces have been built at All Nations Park, including a new All Abilities Playspace and All Abilities Youth Activity Area. An additional playground has also been built in the western area of Edwardes Lake Park known as the Outlook Barbecue Area and play facilities were also included as part of the creation of Wilson Boulevard Reserve in Reservoir.

Playgrounds in Regional or District Parks established following the principles set out in the strategy have varied across the municipality, new or refurbished playspaces at Regional or District Park level aim to have unique designs, accommodate people of all abilities and are designed with facilities to accommodate long stays in those parks.

Other playgrounds in neighbourhood parks and smaller reserves reflect the size of the parks and the amount of visitation expected for those parks. When installing play equipment a variety of manufacturers are used in order to provide a variety of experiences for users.

Strategic Framework

Council Plan

The City of Darebin Council Plan (2009-2013) outlines six key goals, and details a range of strategies that will enable Council to achieve its promise to the Darebin community which is stated as follows:

“As a democratic and accountable local government, we will strive in all we do to achieve fairness, through innovative and progressive leadership that respects and reflects our diverse community.”

The six goals of the City of Darebin Council Plan:

- *Leadership and engagement*
- *Liveability and regeneration*
- *Celebration and participation*
- *Environmental sustainability*
- *Prudence and prosperity*
- *Community wellbeing*

The Council Plan specifies a number of strategies which are particular to the Playspace Strategy (2010-2020):

- We will involve the community in our decision making, through consultation, public participation, community engagement and representation.
- We will undertake frequent and effective communication with the Darebin community using both language and methods that are accessible and relevant to their needs.
- We will strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the community we serve and work together to identify and respond to wellbeing needs.
- We will research and better understand all the different dimensions of disadvantage in our community, and work to remove or minimise the barriers to community participation and access.
- We will continue to manage our existing asset base, ensuring that the city’s public spaces, facilities and infrastructure are maintained to a high standard.
- We will deliver recreation and leisure facilities that provide a range of different experiences and opportunities to residents and respond to their diverse needs.
- We will harness Darebin’s diversity, and continue to celebrate the vibrancy and vitality that it bring to our neighbourhoods.
- We will foster a safe environment that encourages residents to participate in community activities and events and endeavour to strengthen a sense of place and improved neighbourhood connections throughout the municipality.
- We will continue the process of asset renewal and rejuvenation to ensure that our large and varied asset base is improved so it can continue to meet the community’s needs.
- We will undertake robust long term financial planning to ensure our investment and budget decisions are responsible and position Council to continue the provision of quality programs and services.

Darebin's Community Health & Wellbeing Plan & Strategic Resource Plan

Council has two further key framework documents that provide vision and guidance for addressing the needs of both health and well-being in Darebin and financial sustainability when meeting Council's service and infrastructure standards. These frameworks providing broader direction for both the Open Space Strategy and Playspace Strategy are the Darebin Community Health & Wellbeing Plan (2009-2013) and the Darebin Strategic Resource Plan (2009-2013).

The Darebin Community Health and Wellbeing Plan (2009-2013) is designed to assist all members of the community to enjoy greater mental and physical health and social well-being. Local governments are responsible for public health and wellbeing under legislation outlined in the 'Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008'. Social determinants of health and wellbeing are outlined in the plan as being across 4 environment areas; social, natural economic and built/physical environments. Council has set out in its plan 3 broad priority areas to provide the framework for this plan.

- Priority One – Promoting mental health and social wellbeing
- Priority Two – Improving physical health
- Priority Three – Creating safe, supportive and sustainable environments

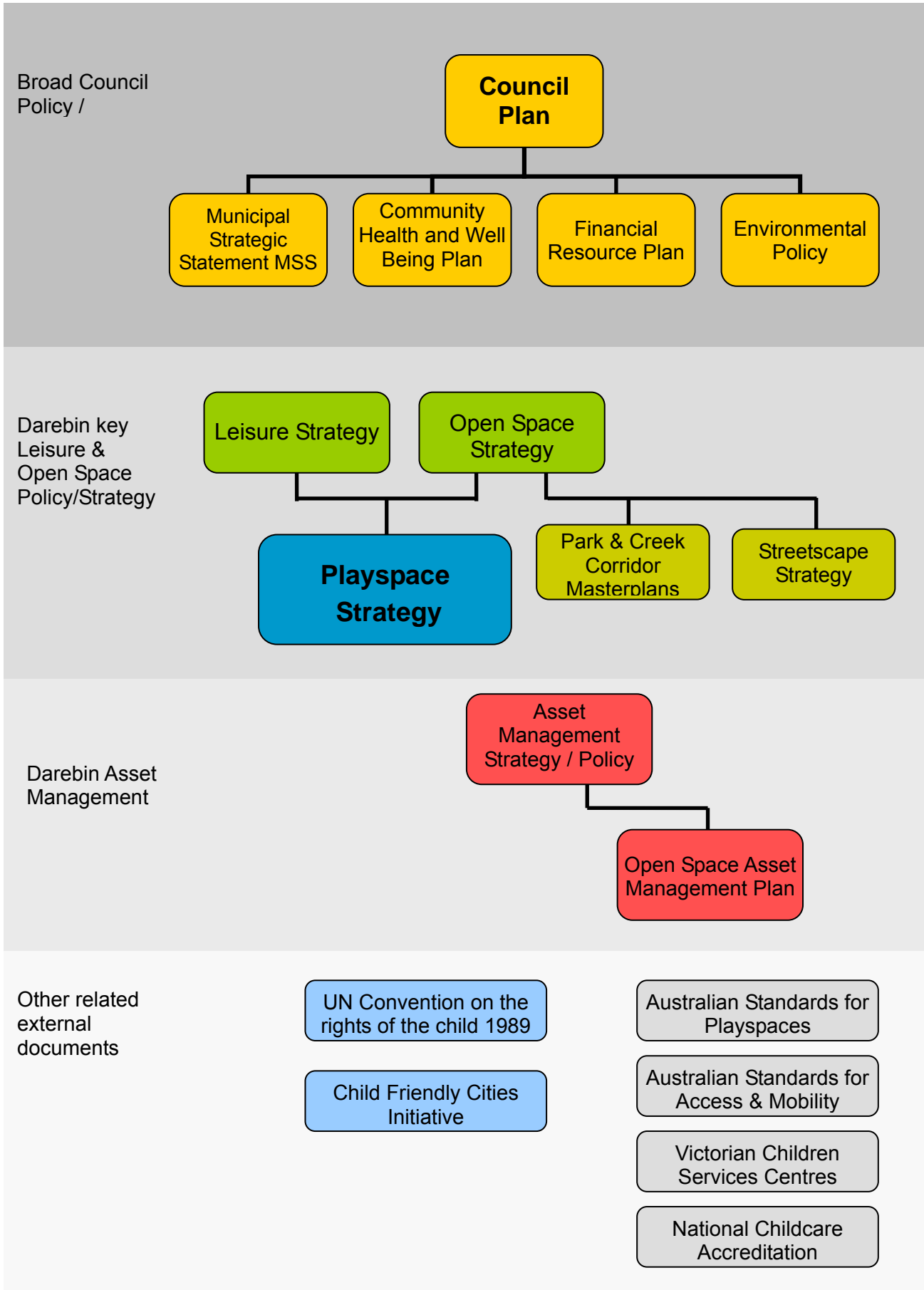
The Community Health & Wellbeing Plan also outlines the many important partnerships across Council required to influence health and wellbeing across the 4 environment areas. These include the essential role both the Open Space Strategy and Playspace Strategy play in addressing these priorities through the ongoing development and renewal of Darebin's open space system.

The Darebin Strategic Resource Plan (2009-2013) supports Council in achieving it's goals within a framework of financial sustainability. The 'Local Government Act 1989' requires Council to prepare this plan to outline both the financial and non-financial resources required to achieve the strategic objectives outlined in the Council Plan. Financial sustainability means that planned long-term service and infrastructure levels and standards are met without unplanned increases in rates or disruptive cuts to services. Four key objectives are outlined in this plan are

- Service levels
- Asset renewal
- Operating performance
- Cash & liquidity

The Open Space Strategy, together with the Playspace Strategy and the Open Space Asset Management Plan (OSAMP) outline long-term capital works planning for new and the renewal of existing assets in Darebin's open space system, as guided by the Strategic Resource Plan.

Strategic Framework for Playspace Planning



Darebin Open Space Strategy (2007 – 2017)

Darebin's Open Space Strategy (2007-2017) is a key planning document providing the policy framework for the Playspace Strategy and the Greenstreets Strategy (1995). Completed in 2007 the Open Space Strategy guides the planning and development of Darebin's open space and was developed in consultation with key stakeholders and the community.

The Open Space Strategy provides key direction for the Playspace Strategy in the following areas:

- Implementing the priorities of the 1999 Playground Strategy
- Development standards for the relevant open space categories to guide the design of playspaces and the level of development
- All Abilities Playspaces to be provided at District and Regional Level
- Playspaces with accessible paths of travel to be provided at Neighbourhood Level
- Wherever possible, playspaces are to be integrated into the park setting with minimal barriers
- Natural shade will be provided in all parks in the vicinity of playspaces
- A diversity of play experiences will be provided within playspaces for people of a range of ages, abilities and interests
- Partnerships with schools may be considered and where appropriate joint-use agreements will be entered into or community access will be encouraged
- The development of a new Playspace Strategy in 2009

Related Council Plans, Policies and Strategies

Other plans, strategies and guidelines that interlink with the City of Darebin Playspace Strategy (2010-2020) are discussed in length in the Strategy's 'Literature Review' report (August 2009) and include:

- Disability Access & Inclusion Policy (2009)
- Darebin Disability Action & Inclusion Plan (2009-2013)
- City of Darebin, Diversity Policy (2007)
- Leisure Strategy (2010-2020 – Currently Under Review)
- Darebin Climate Change Action Plan (2008)
- Young People in Darebin Parks Research Project (2005)
- Early Years Plan (2006)
- Darebin Community Consultation Guidelines & Policy (2008)
- Improving Perceptions of Safety in Darebin (2005)
- Beyond Fido – Public Art in Darebin Strategy (2007)
- Darebin Graffiti Management Strategy (2008)

- Darebin Environmental Purchasing Code (2005)
- Darebin Playgrounds Strategy Review (1999)

Other Related Documents

Australian Standards for Playspaces

The Australian Standards are guidelines or 'best practice' benchmarks for Playspace Design and Installation. They assure a high quality of workmanship and finish in built playspaces and protect against unnecessary risk or hazard when designing, constructing or upgrading playspaces.

The Australian Standards Playground Equipment AS 4685 (Parts 1-6) was introduced in 2004 to replace the superseded AS 1924 Parts 1 & 2 (1981). As the existing Playground Strategy was completed in 1999, prior to the introduction of the new standards, and whilst it is not retrospective it is important that this Playspace Strategy Review bring Darebin's playspace design, construction and maintenance in to line with these more recently adopted standards. These standards will be referred to during the course of this document.

Australian Standards / NZ Standards for Playground Undersurfacing AS/NZS 4422/96 and AS/NZS 4486.1 1997 are still currently relevant to Playspace Design and Installation and may be referred to in this document.

Australian Standards for Access & Mobility

The Australian Standards for Access & Mobility AS 1428 are the recognized standards for the design, construction and maintenance of building and infrastructure for access and inclusion. As such they should be considered in parallel with AS 4685 (Parts1-6), AS/NZS 4422/96 and AS/NZS 4486.1 1997 in relation to playspaces and referred to throughout this document.

Victorian Children's Services Centres Regulations

The Victorian Children's Services Act regulates the operation of children's services in Victoria. The Victorian Children's Services Regulations specify the minimum standards that a children's service must meet in its day-to-day operation and with the exception of 'restricted children's services' are common across all centres in Victoria.

The regulations describe the requirements for records, provision and display of information, staffing, children's programs, health and welfare of children, facilities and complaints.

These parts all work together to protect children enrolled in these services, ensure health, safety and wellbeing, promote consistency in the standard of service delivery, and raise community and parent confidence in children's services.

Of particular importance to the Playspace Strategy are the regulations and standards governing facilities. They are referred to in the Strategy document and a summary is contained in the Appendices Section of this strategy

Licenses to all Victorian Children's Services Centres are granted when compliance with these regulations is deemed to be met. There are significant penalties applied if a licensed Children's Service is found to be guilty of not complying with them.

National Childcare Accreditation - QIAS

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) was established in 1993 to facilitate and support continuous improvement to the quality of child care provided for children in Australia. All long day care centres in receipt of Child Care Benefit Funding are required to register with NCAC to participate in the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS).

Part of NCAC's support involves the implementation of a QIAS for all national long day care services, occasional care services and family day care services. The QIAS encourages these services to work together with its families to develop and review the services, philosophy, policies and procedures. The QIAS also provides a framework by which quality is measured, through its seven quality areas and thirty-three principles and five steps that each centre must pass through to achieve accreditation.

Once registered, accredited centres must submit 'self-study' reports evaluating the quality of practice of the centre every 2.5 years and the centre is then visited by a NCAC Validator and observed before final moderation and accreditation is given or renewed.

Of particular importance to the Playspace Strategy are 'Quality Areas four & five' which examine 'children's experiences and learning' and 'children's protective care and safety'. This will be referred to in the strategy document.

From 2010 onwards kindergartens and occasional care centres will also be included under the Quality Assurance System.

Darebin Playspace Inventory & Hierarchy

Inventory of Darebin Playspaces:

Neighbourhood House Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
Alphington Neighbourhood House	2 Playspaces	Fairfield/Alphington
Jika-Jika Community Centre	1 Playspace	Northcote
Thornbury Women's Neighbourhood House	1 Playspace	Thornbury
SPAN Neighbourhood House (Clyde Street)	1 Playspace	Thornbury
Preston Neighbourhood House	1 Playspace	East Preston

Children's Services Centre Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
Alfred Nutall Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Fairfield/Alphington
Annie Dennis Kindergarten & Child Care Centre	4 Playspaces	Northcote
Batman Park Kindergarten	1 Playspace 1 Proposed Playspace	Northcote
Blake Street Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Reservoir East
Clifton Street Children's Centre	3 Playspaces	Northcote
Clyde Street Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Thornbury
Darebin Childcare & Kindergarten: Preston	2 Playspaces	Preston East
Darebin Childcare & Kindergarten: Reservoir	2 Playspaces	Reservoir West
Gellibrand Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Reservoir West
Gower Street Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Preston East
JS Grey Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Reservoir West
Keon Park Kindergarten: Dole Campus	1 Playspace	Reservoir East
Maryborough Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Merri Community Childcare Centre & Kindergarten	2 Playspaces	Thornbury
Oakhill Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Reservoir East
Perry Street Childcare Centre	3 Playspaces	Fairfield/Alphington

Raleigh Street Children's Centre	2 Playspaces	Thornbury
Thornbury Kindergarten	1 Playspace	Thornbury

Hierarchy Classification of Playspaces in Public Parks

Darebin has a hierarchy of playspaces which is defined by different sized parks, catchment and range of facilities provided.

Regional Park Playspace

This is large and diverse, custom-designed playspace, with a high-level of accessible design to and within the playspace. This playspace co-exists with a diverse range of other facilities, including other smaller playspaces in the broader park and caters for a catchment within and outside of the Darebin Municipality (15kms +). Darebin has one proposed regional 'All Abilities' playspace to be developed at Darebin's regional park, Bundoora Park in Bundoora.

Major District Park Playspace

This is a large and diverse, custom-designed playspace, with a medium-high level of accessible design to and within the playspace. This playspace co-exists with a range of other facilities, including other smaller playspaces in the broader park and caters for a catchment across the Darebin Municipality. Darebin has two major district playspaces, two 'All Abilities' playspaces at All Nations Park in Northcote and one proposed 'All Abilities' playspace to be developed at Edwardes Lake Park in Reservoir.

District Park Playspace

This a larger, off-the-shelf equipment or custom-designed playspace with a medium level of accessible design to and within the playspace. This playspace co-exists with a range of other facilities and caters for a catchment within each precinct (2km). Darebin has two district playspaces at H.P. Zwar Reserve and Merri Park, and a further potential playspace to be developed at C.H. Sullivan Reserve in the future. Council is also looking to develop a conservation bushland playspace at its fourth district park, Darebin Parklands

Major Neighbourhood Park Playspace

A medium-sized playspace (off-the shelf equipment) with a low to medium level of accessible design to and within the playspace. This playspace has a diverse range of ancillaries (furniture, planting and shelter) and caters to a number of neighbourhoods in a local area. Refer to table following for listing of site locations.

Neighbourhood Park Playspace

A small to medium sized playspace (off-the-shelf equipment) with a low-level of accessible design to and within the playspace. This playspace has adjacent facilities and caters to a local neighbourhood (500m).

Refer to table following for listing of site locations.

Urban Playspace

This is an informal play setting provided through furniture, art and landscape elements in an urban context without using standard play equipment. Depending on the location and adjacent setting this playspace may cater just for a local neighbourhood or draw it's catchment from across the municipality. Its level of accessible design will also depend on its context.

Conservation Parkland Playspace:

This is an informal play setting that enhances the existing natural landscape environment, by subtly guiding play opportunities, without using standard play equipment. Elements and materials used will be sympathetic (rather than dominating) and allow for 'discovering' the natural environment through play. These playspaces will support other playspaces in the area providing a diversity of experience.

Regional Park Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
Bundoora Park *	Visitors Centre Playspace (All Abilities)	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Bundoora Park (Neighbourhood)	River Redgum Playspace (formerly Deakin Ave East)	
Bundoora Park (Neighbourhood)	Tunaley Square Playspace	
Bundoora Park (Neighbourhood)	Wetlands Picnic Area Playpace	
Bundoora Park (Neighbourhood)	Fairway Playspace (formerly Deakin Ave West)	
Bundoora Park (Neighbourhood)	Coopers Settlement	

Major District Park Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
All Nations Park *	Eastern Playspace	Northcote
All Nations Park (Neighbourhood)	Southern Playspace	
All Nations Park	Outdoor Exercise Area	
All Nations Park *	Skatepark & All Abilities Youth Activity Area	
Edwardes Lake Park	Griffiths Street Train Area	
Edwardes Lake Park *	Griffiths Street Playspace (All Abilities)	Reservoir West
Edwardes Lake Park	Outlook BBQ Playspace	
Edwardes Lake Park (Neighbourhood)	Edwardes Street Playspace	
Edwardes Lake Park	Leamington Street Skate & Youth Facility	

District Park Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
Darebin Parklands	Conservation Parkland	Fairfield/Alphington
HP Zwar Reserve	Playspace / Sports Facility	Preston West
Merri Park	Playspace / Sports Facility	Northcote
CH Sullivan Reserve	Playspace (future District)/ Sports Facility	Reservoir East

Major Neighbourhood Park Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
AG Davis Reserve	Playspace	Preston East
Batman Park	Playspace	Northcote
Clements Reserve	Playspace upgraded to new Major Neighbourhood Playspace	Reservoir East
Crispe Park	Playspace	Reservoir West
JC Donath Reserve (West)	Playspace & Skate Facility	Reservoir East
GE Robinson Park	Playspace / Sports Facility	Reservoir West
Henderson Park	Playspace	Thornbury
Johnson Park	Playspace	Northcote
JS Grey Reserve	Playspace	Preston West
LE Cotchin Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
Oldis Gardens	Playspace / Sports Facility	Northcote
Penders Park	Playspace & ½ Basketball Court	Thornbury
Preston City Oval (Mary Street Park)	Playspace / Sports Facility	Preston West
Springthorpe Reserve	Playspace	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Susan Walsh Reserve	Playspace	Fairfield/Alphington
TA Cochrane Reserve	Playspace	Preston East
TW Andrews Reserve	Playspace / Sports Facility and Proposed new Youth Area	Reservoir East
TW Blake Reserve	Proposed new Skate Facility & Youth Activity Area	Preston East
WH Robinson Reserve	Playspace	Preston West
WR Ruthven VC Reserve	Playspace	Preston East

Neighbourhood Park Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
Adams Reserve	Playspace	Preston East

Andrew Boyd Reserve	Playspace	Thornbury
Baden Morgan Reserve	Playspace	Northcote
Barlow Rise Reserve	Playspace	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Beenak/McMahon Reserve	Playspace to be removed and consolidated at Clements Reserve	Reservoir East
Breavington Park	Playspace	Fairfield/Alphington
Bridge Park	½ Basketball Court	Northcote
Broomfield Reserve	Potential new Playspace	Fairfield/Alphington
BT Connor Reserve	Potential new Playspace	Reservoir West
Clyde Jones Reserve	Playspace	Thornbury
Croxton Special School / Woolhouse Reserve *	Playspace	Northcote
Doug Hannan Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
DR Atkinson Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
FG Pike Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Frank AA Dunstan Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Fyfe Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Gellibrand Reserve	Potential new Playspace	Reservoir West
GH Mott Reserve	Proposed new Playspace	Preston East
Greenbelt Reserve	Potential new Playspace	Preston East
Gresswell Grange Reserve	Playspace	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Hayes Park	Potential new Playspace	Thornbury
H Swain Reserve	Playspace	Preston West
Hillcroft Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
Howard/Mendip Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
IW Dole Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
JE Moore Park	Playspace	Reservoir West
John Cain Memorial Park	Potential new Playspace / Major Sporting Facility	Preston East
Judith Scott Memorial Park	Playspace	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Kevin Larkins Reserve	Playspace	Preston West
Lahinch Reserve	Playspace	Preston East
Leslie Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Link Reserve	Playspace	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Ludeman Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
LW Williams Reserve	Playspace	Preston West
McAdam Reserve	Playspace	Northcote
McComas Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Merrilands Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
Newman Reserve	Playspace	Preston West

Nisbett Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Northcote Community Gardens	½ Basketball Court	Northcote
Peters Reserve	Playspace	Northcote
Pitcher Park	Playspace	Fairfield/Alphington
Ray Braham Gardens	Potential new Playspace	Preston West
Rubie Thompson Reserve	Playspace	Northcote
Ruthven Primary School	Playspace in school (Joint-use Agreement) – to be redeveloped	Reservoir West
San Leandro Reserve	Potential new Playspace	Reservoir East
Scott Reserve	Playspace	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Shand Goulbourne Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Spencer Street Reserve	Playspace	Thornbury
Storey Road Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Stott Reserve	Playspace	Thornbury
Sugargum Park	Potential new Playspace	Kingsbury/Bundoora
Tracey Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
Turner Reserve	Playspace	Thornbury
Whitby Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
Wilson Boulevard Park	Playspace	Reservoir West
Wingrove Reserve	Potential new Playspace	Fairfield/Alphington
Wright Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West

Neighbourhood Park Playspaces (Pocket Parks)		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
Allan Sheppard Reserve	Playspace	Thornbury
Asling Reserve	Playspace	Preston West
Derby Reserve	Playspace	Northcote
Foch Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Highview Reserve	Playspace	Preston East
Horton Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
McDonald Reserve	Playspace	Thornbury
Paywitt Reserve	Playspace	Preston West
Pearl Reserve	Playspace	Thornbury
Storey Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East
Vale Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir West
Walsh Reserve	Playspace	Preston East
Walter Reserve	Playspace	Reservoir East

Urban Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
Preston Library Forecourt	Proposed new Playspace	Preston East

Fairfield Station Reserve	Proposed new Playspace	Fairfield/Alphington
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Conservation Parkland Playspaces		
SITE	DESCRIPTION	PRECINCT
Darebin Parklands	Potential Environmental Playspace	Fairfield/Alphington

Recommendations Summary:

Hierarchy & Classification of Playspaces

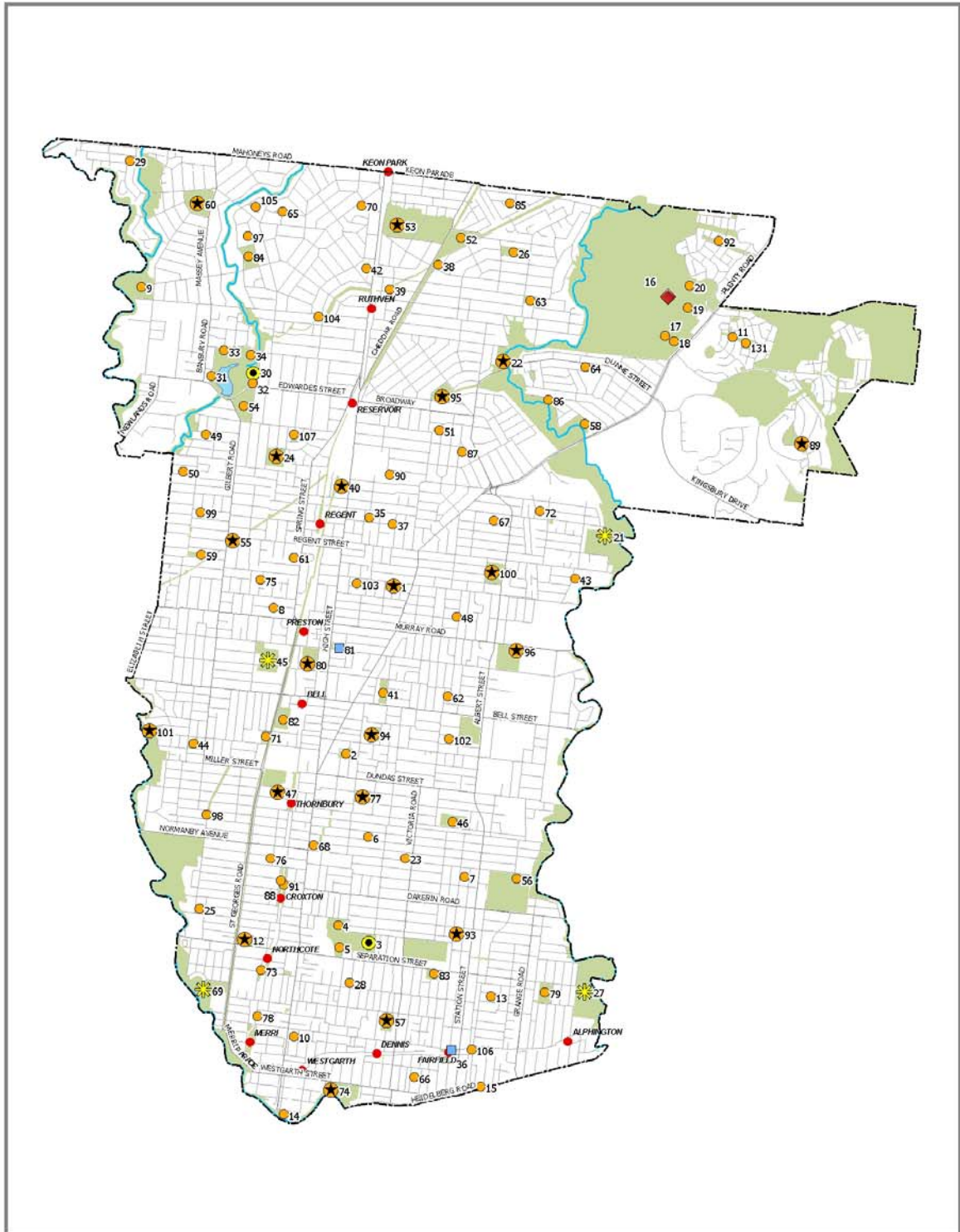
- Provide play opportunities within 500m of every resident
- Introduce two new levels of playspace at Major District and Major Neighbourhood level
- Introduce two new categories of playspace – Urban Playspace and Conservation Parkland Playspace

List of Darebin Playspaces

1	A.G. Davis Park	46	Hayes Park
2	Adams Reserve	47	Henderson Park
3	All Nations Park - All Abilities Eastern Playspace	48	Highview Reserve
4	All Nations Park - Skatepark & All Abilities Youth Activity Area	49	Hillcroft Reserve
5	All Nations Park - Southern Playspace	50	Horton Reserve
6	Allan Sheppard Reserve	51	Howard Mendip Reserve
7	Andrew Boyd Reserve	52	I.W. Dole Reserve
8	Asling Reserve	53	J.C. Donath Reserve West
9	B.T. Connor Reserve	54	J.E. Moore Park
10	Baden Morgan Reserve	55	J.S. Grey Reserve
11	Barlow Rise Reserve	56	John Cain Memorial Park
12	Batman Park	57	Johnson Park
13	Breavington Reserve	58	Judith Scott Memorial Park
14	Bridge Park	59	Kevin Larkins Reserve
15	Broomfield Reserve	60	L.E. Cotchin Reserve
16	Bundoora Park – Visitor Centre Playspace	61	L.W. Williams Reserve
17	Bundoora Park - Coopers Settlement Playspace	62	Lahinch Reserve
18	Bundoora Park – River Red Gum Playspace	63	Leslie Reserve
19	Bundoora Park - Tunaley Square Playspace	64	Link Reserve
20	Bundoora Park - Wetlands Picnic Area Playspace	65	Ludeman Reserve
21	C.H. Sullivan Memorial Park	66	McAdam Reserve
22	Clements Reserve	67	McComas Reserve
23	Clyde Jones Reserve	68	McDonald Reserve
24	Crispe Park	69	Merri Park
25	Croxton Special School / Woolhouse Reserve	70	Merrilands Park
26	D.R. Atkinson Reserve	71	Newman Reserve
27	Darebin Parklands	72	Nisbett Reserve
28	Derby Reserve	73	Northcote Community Gardens Reserve
29	Doug Hannan Reserve	74	Oldis Gardens
30	Edwardes Lake Park – Griffiths Street Playspace	75	Paywitt Reserve
31	Edwardes Lake Park - Edwardes Street Playspace	76	Pearl Reserve
32	Edwardes Lake Park - Griffiths Street, Train Area	77	Penders Park
33	Edwardes Lake Park - Leamington Street Skate & Youth Facility	78	Peters Reserve
34	Edwardes Lake Park - Outlook BBQ Playspace	79	Pitcher Park
35	F.G. Pike Reserve	80	Preston City Oval - Mary Street Park
36	Fairfield Station Reserve	81	Preston Library Forecourt
37	Foch Reserve	82	Ray Bramham Gardens
38	Frank A.A. Dunstan Reserve	83	Rubie Thomson Reserve
39	Fyfe Reserve	84	Ruthven Primary School
40	G.E. Robinson Park	85	San Leandro Reserve
41	G.H. Mott Reserve	86	Scott Reserve
42	Gellibrand Reserve	87	Shand Reserve
43	Greenbelt Reserve	88	Spencer Reserve
44	H. Swain Reserve		
45	H.P. Zwar Reserve		

- 89 Springthorpe Village Common
- 90 Storey Reserve
- 91 Stott Reserve
- 92 Sugargum Park
- 93 Susan Walsh Resrve
- 94 T.A. Cochrane Reserve
- 95 T.W. Andrews Reserve
- 96 T.W. Blake Park
- 97 Tracey Reserve
- 98 Turner Reserve
- 99 Vale Reserve
- 100 W. Ruthven Reserve
- 101 W.H. Robinson Reserve
- 102 Walsh Reserve
- 103 Walter Reserve
- 104 Whitby Reserve
- 105 Wilson Boulevard Park
- 106 Wingrove Reserve
- 107 Wright Reserve
- 108 Alfred Nutall Kindergarten
- 109 Alphington Community Centre
- 110 Annie Dennis Children's Centre
- 111 Batman Park Kindergarten
- 112 Blake Street Kindergarten
- 113 Clifton Street Children's Centre
- 114 Clyde Street Kindergarten
- 115 Darebin Childcare & Kindergarten Inc - Preston
- 116 Darebin Childcare & Kindergarten Inc - Reservoir
- 117 Gellibrand Crescent Kindergarten
- 118 Gower Street Kindergarten
- 119 J.S. Grey Kindergarten
- 120 Jika Jika Community Centre
- 121 Keon Park Kindergarten - Dole Campus
- 122 Maryborough Kindergarten
- 123 Merri Community Child Care Centre & Kindergarten
- 124 Oakhill Kindergarten
- 125 Perry Street Child Care Centre
- 126 Preston Neighbourhood House
- 127 Raleigh Street Childrens Centre
- 128 SPAN Community House
- 129 Thornbury Kindergarten
- 130 Thornbury Womens Neighbourhood House
- 131 Gresswell Grange Reserve

Map F2. Darebin Playspace Hierachy Map



Playspace Hierarchy

- ◆ Regional Park Playspace
- ★ District Park Playspace
- Major District Park Playspace
- ★ Major Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Darebin Council Boundary
- Open Space

**FIGURE 2
DAREBIN PLAYSACE HIERARCHY**

DATUM: GDA 1984
PROJECTION: MGA ZONE 56

0 250 500
Metres

**City of
DAREBIN**

Figure
F2

Strategy Context

Play in Darebin

Play has an important role to play in our local, national and international communities and therefore establishes a basis for council providing play opportunities. This Playspace Strategy discusses different types of play and puts forward a balanced, equitable model for playspace planning in Darebin.

The importance of play

Play is the way we learn about our world and our role in it. To the adult eye play may seem frivolous, disorganised, inane or even meaningless. The value of rich play opportunities (particularly in early childhood) to the acquisition of skills, knowledge and self-awareness are immeasurable. Play is the opportunity to explore, test boundaries and as a result develop confidence in our own ability to accommodate new information and master new skills. Play however is currently at risk.

In our increasingly busy, complex world, children and young people's lives are being constrained to time frames and constant adult supervision. Our houses are becoming bigger and our backyards smaller. Children have restricted mobility around their local neighbourhoods as perceptions of unsafe 'stranger danger' pervade our lives. As our lives become more internalized within the family home or institutional unit and we shuffle by car from one place of organised and supervised routine to another. Autonomy for children and young people within and around their local communities, as well as the freedom to enjoy opportunities for unstructured play is restricted.

Hence, the local park environment, children's services or neighbourhood house centre playspace are becoming more and more important to our growing urban neighbourhoods for providing quality opportunities for play and a sense of freedom in play within easy access of local homes. 'Quality opportunity' meaning a diverse range of play experiences that cross over the 4 types of play (discussed further in this section), that are vibrant community hubs, where cultural or linguistic diversity, disability or age should not be a barrier either to active participation. These opportunities should also occur both within individual playspace settings (micro-level) and across local neighbourhoods (macro-level).

UN Convention on the Rights of The Child (1989)

Australia is a signatory to this document. Darebin City Council therefore recognizes the following articles to be of relevance to this Playspace Strategy:

Article 23:

Recognises that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

Article 29:

Recognises that education should foster the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Article 31:

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

Respects and promotes the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities.

Child Friendly Cities

A direct consequence of the UN Convention has been the 'Child Friendly Cities Initiative' (CFCI) launched in 1996 after Habitat II, the second UN Conference on Human Settlements with its resolution to make cities livable places for all and in UNICEF terms, for 'children first'.

The initiative defines a Child Friendly City (CFC) as:

"a city or any local system of governance, committed to fulfilling children's rights. It is a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions. It is, as a result, a city that is fit for all."

The process aims to make Child Friendly Cities synonymous with the implementation of the convention in a local governance setting and incorporates a large number of characteristics that put children at the front and centre of policy, planning and implementation.

There are a number of participant cities internationally currently listed on the CFC Database of which Darebin City Council has recently become a member of the CFC Asia Pacific Network.

In practice the movement aims to encourage young citizens to take part in municipal decision-making and help planners design the "city they want" with child-sensitive quality indicators developed to measure progress against child-oriented goals. Outcomes from this project that reflect CFC principles are as follows:

Types of Play – Physical / Cognitive / Creative & Imaginative / Social

Play tends to fall into four main types all of which may cross-over with each other and within the experiences available in any one playspace.

Physical Play

Physical Play involves the practice, development and mastery of physical skills. This type of play is most obviously recognisable to adults and includes two distinct types; gross-motor and fine-motor. Examples of gross-motor activity in play will include; running, jumping, swinging, sliding, climbing, hanging, balancing, throwing, kicking, catching and hopping etc. It involves larger muscle movement control and perceptive judgement, as adults these skills are essential for operating in the physical world.

Examples of fine-motor activity in play will include; manipulative tasks such as operating play panels or toys, collecting and organizing loose materials, writing and drawing, painting, threading, block or model building etc. It involves the much finer muscle control in our hands (usually known as dexterity) and perceptive judgement (usually known as hand-eye co-ordination), as adults these skills are essential for our working and domestic lives.

Cognitive Play

Cognitive Play involves the practice, development and mastery of cognitive (or thinking) skills. The rudiments of this type of play cross over into all aspects of academic or intellectual life.

For example play involving the collection, sorting and ordering or classifying of objects form the basis of skills in mathematics, experience and questioning of the growth or state of the natural world form the basis of skills in science, construction of models or structures in play form the basis of skills and knowledge in technology. As children this type of play helps us learn to question and to test, as adults these skills are imperative to a world where knowledge and continuous critique of our understanding of things are paramount.

Creative & Imaginative Play

This type of play is really one aspect of cognitive play, but develops or masters 'lateral thinking' as well as some fine and gross motor skills.

Play activities such as pretend games help children 'play out' adult roles or fantasy play expanding their thinking about social connections in the world. Other creative play activities such as drawing, painting, model construction, music and dance also practice and develop 'abstract' thinking, beyond the physical world. As adults this kind of play experience in childhood helps us to be 'innovative' (or think outside the box) and also teaches us to 'problem solve', a highly important skill to effective autonomy in the world as adults.

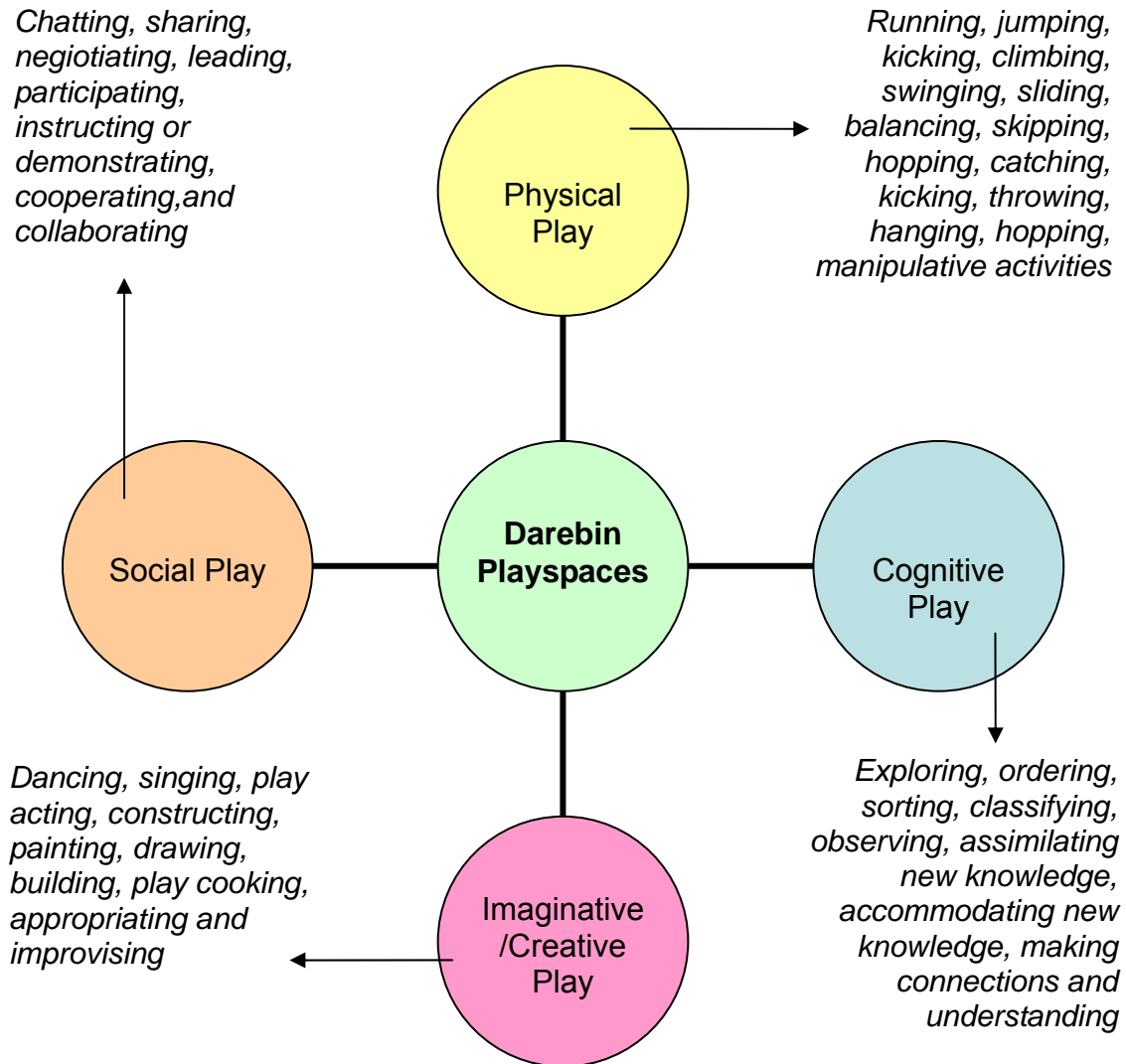
Social Play

Social Play involves the practice, development and mastery of skills that enable us to interact successfully with others. In some way it crosses over into all of the three previous types of play, but certain play experiences requiring co-operation, negotiation, sharing, participation and leadership practice these skills more than others.

Imaginative role play (such as playing 'house' or 'school') is one type of play experience where all of the aforementioned skills might be practiced in one situation quite overtly. An activity however such as 'sliding' on a play slide might also involve incidental negotiation and participation. As adults mastery of these skills are among the most important for successful relations in our domestic and working lives.

Play Provision Model for Darebin

Opportunities for all of the types of play in a playspace are essential to the well-being and future development of children and young people in Darebin. The model below outlines the standard opportunities for play to be provided in all Darebin playspaces .



Recommendations Summary:

Playgrounds or Playspaces?

- Introduce the term 'playspace' in reference to all it's council owned and managed play environments

Play Provision Model

- Develop all playspaces with a range of physical, cognitive, social and imaginative play experiences

Key Issues and Community Needs

Extensive consultation and research has been undertaken in the development of the Playspace Strategy and has included the following:

- Preparation of Issues Paper & Literature Review
- Dedicated webpage
- Mailing List with sixty Interested community members listed
- 4 x Listening Posts throughout the community in Reservoir, Preston, Northcote & Fairfield
- User Needs Surveys completed by three hundred and sixty-seven people online, through centres and at listening posts
- Presentation to Community Access, Health & Safety
- Presentation to Best Start Forum
- Meetings with other council staff regarding playspace issues
- Position Paper available for public comment
- Literature Review available for public comment
- Draft Strategy available for public comment
- Internal Council Officer Workshop Session
- 2 x Public Workshop Session
- 2 x Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Established Communities Workshop
- 1 x Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Emerging Communities Workshop
- 2 x workshops with Northland Youth Centre
- 25 Surveys completed by young people facilitated by council's Yute Crew
- Workshop for Special Schools and Disability Groups and North and South of Darebin
- 55 Surveys undertaken as part of the Darebin Community Kite Festival
- 2 x Presentations of Draft Strategy to council staff
- 1 x Public Presentation of Draft Strategy to Darebin Community

The following provides a summary of community priorities that have been addressed through the development of this strategy.

Better Community Playspaces:

- Local community involvement in the planning / design process more to create a sense of ownership in local playspaces
- The provision of more adaptable or flexible, multi-purpose spaces that cater for a range of community needs

Risk & Challenge in Playspaces:

- The recognition of the difference between 'perceived' and 'actual' risk in playspaces and remove actual risk through regular and effective maintenance and effective planning and design
- The provision of stimulating and challenging experiences for a range of age groups within

a local neighbourhood

- The provision of a graduating challenge for a range of ages within each playspace
- Effective use of landscape elements to define and enhance opportunities for play in playspaces

Better Sustainable Amenity in Playspaces:

- The investigation of ways to reduce the amount of maintenance required in Playspaces
- The consideration of multi-use equipment and furniture when planning for new or upgrading existing playspaces
- Planning for the 'long-term' particularly in relation to the landscape for a playspace
- The consideration of the choice of materials in playspaces in regards to environmental impact and durability

Access for All in Playspaces:

- Better provision of 'Access for All' to playspaces for people (children, young people and carers) of all abilities

Environment:

- A high value placed on trees, shrubs and garden beds in parks and playspaces, particularly in regards to providing shade and local pride and ownership

Diversity in Playspaces:

- Planning that ensures that playspaces are different from one local area to another
- Awareness of local community groups and processes to define their specific needs when planning for parks and playspaces by consultation

Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities in Darebin Parks:

- The provision of better multi-lingual information from council about facilities, so that these communities will be able to better engage with local parks and playspaces
- Investigating the best way to circulate information through key services in the local community (such as schools) that CALD communities have access to
- Investigating public art projects in playspaces, particularly where there is a unique opportunity to involve diverse communities and give them a sense of local ownership in parks and playspaces
- Involving local CALD communities more in future planning consultation for parks and playspaces, through posting out information, events (festivals) or using the local media

(such as radio or newspapers)

Young People in Darebin Parks:

- Acknowledging that young people prefer to use parks close to their home and planning for them to mostly walk or cycle to get to these parks
- Acknowledging the importance of facilities for skating, BMX and sport and trees for shade and shelter to young people using parks
- Acknowledging that young people like to go to parks and hang out with their friends and a range of furniture needs to be provided for different groups in parks
- Planning for more challenging equipment in playspaces, in particular equipment or facilities that young people can use with their friends or family
- Involving young people more in future planning consultation for parks and playspaces, through the internet (website), youth events and going out to schools for workshops

Vision and Principles

The Playspace Strategy Vision and Principles have been adopted from the Open Space Strategy, with four principles developed specifically for playspaces.

Vision

“A well connected network of accessible open spaces that meet the diverse needs of the community and provide a range of social and environmental benefits.”

Principles

- Darebin’s playspaces will provide an environment where children, youth, older people and people of all abilities and backgrounds are welcome
- Council will endeavour to provide for play within 500 metres of every home
- Council will create sustainable and safe playspaces that are evolving, dynamic and challenging
- Darebin’s playspaces will be developed with and for the community reflecting the diversity of local neighbourhood communities

Strategic Directions

Darebin Playspaces

The strategic directions for council when planning, designing and maintaining playspaces in Darebin cover a range of current local and general issues related to playspaces and puts forward Darebin's policy regarding those issues.

Structured v Unstructured Play

Play experience generally falls into two categories, structured and unstructured.

For the purpose of this strategy 'structured play' refers to activities that occur within a programmed setting. This could mean anything from sports activities run through a local club to outdoor play in an early childhood setting such as a kindergarten. What defines it as structured is the timeframe and notion of 'adult-directed' or programmed activity.

'Unstructured play' in this document refers to play that occurs incidentally within an environment and is generally 'child-directed' and may have any length of time-frame, depending on the participant's interest and engagement. It is possible that this play may occur as physical activity on play equipment or within a natural environment where the participant is able to use that environment to suit their particular purpose in play.

Both kinds of play are important to the well being and development of children and young people and Darebin recognizes that a diverse range of opportunities for both types of play should be provided for equitably across the municipality.

Age-appropriate Play

One of the challenges for Darebin is providing enough diversity of play experience to cater for the age range of children and young people who use play spaces. This is discussed in more specific detail in *Play Design in Darebin* in this strategy.

Toddler (Under 3 Years)

- Developing skills in balance, mobility, physical control and strength, agility, toilet training and learning to interact and communicate with adults and others
- Generally interested in sleep, food, colour, movement, textures, noise, stimulating the senses (taste in particular), repetitive tasks, simple action/response games with adults
- Activities include rolling, crawling, walking (toddling), stepping, low-level climbing, wheeling toys around, repetitive activities, sensory manipulation (ie sandplay), solitary or parallel play. Interaction with adults essential to activities.

Kindergarten (3-5 Years)

- Developing skills in fine motor control (ie. holding a pen), gross-motor control (ie. balancing on a log) and hand-eye co-ordination (ie. catching a ball), self-help skills (such as putting on own clothes, toileting), as well as social skills such as sharing, turn-taking, following routine, listening and participating in a group.
- Generally interested in stories, music, dance, cooking, physical activity, talking, doing things for themselves, helping adults, make-believe, creating, building and manipulation found objects or loose materials

- Activities include walking, running, balancing, agility, swinging, sliding, spinning, climbing, hiding and seeking, digging, social play with friends, construction, imaginative and dramatic play. Interaction with adults is generally welcomed.

Junior (5-8 Years)

- Developing skills in reading, writing, mathematics, science, group interaction and working independent of an adult, working collaboratively with friends, completing formal tasks within a timeframe, learning about the world.
- Generally interested in stories, music dance, more complex physical activity, sports, playing with friends, growing independence from adults, cycling or skating, computers, games and TV
- Activities include most of the above, plus fine motor activities such manipulation of computers and hand-held games, writing, drawing and reading, more complex physical challenge, more complex games and activities involving groups, formal sports activities and much more complex construction ability. Interaction with adults not so imperative.

Senior (8-13 Years)

- Developing more complex skills in academic areas, learning skills of presenting and public advocacy, strategy and skill for sports and games, more complex knowledge about the world including current affairs, politics etc.
- Generally interested in hanging-out with friends, music, TV, computers (in particular email or games), games involving strategy, communicating on mobile phones (texting friends), formal sport, further independence from adults, cycling and skating
- Activities include some of the above with a much greater degree of challenge in physical activities (higher, longer and faster), more strategic games, more formal sports, membership of clubs, opportunities to socialise and hang-out with peers. Usually autonomous in play and often mobile in local neighbourhood.

Young People (13-18 years)

- Developing skills in developing mutual relationships, leadership, financial independence, self-motivation, driving a car, managing study and social commitments
- Generally interested in the members of the opposite sex, hanging out with friends, going out socially, music, TV and movies, computers (in particular email or games), communicating on mobile phones, appearance and fashion, illicit or aberrant activities.
- Activities include most of the above, with less of a focus on clubs and more of a focus on working part-time, being at events or volunteering time or skills. Usually completely mobile beyond local neighbourhood.

Graduated Challenge

Graduated challenge refers to a wide range of physical play experience across a playspace that allows for continuous development or 'challenge' as a child ages. Playspaces that are 'too-easy' or 'too-difficult' can pose issues of bad risk whereby children will either not have the physical skills to undertake the activity by themselves or they find little stimulation in the activity and will attempt to seek something more challenging to do in an inappropriate or dangerous manner.

Within the established development guidelines (refer *Development Standards*) playspaces should provide a range of graduated challenge in the choice of activities provided in any one playspace. If this is not possible because of the limited scale of the playspace, strategic planning in the local neighbourhood should provide for a different, but complimentary range of play experience at

another playspace within an accessible distance.

Beyond Physical Play....Community Sustainability

The role of playspaces in this strategy is discussed at length in the *Background* section and promotes the importance of play being more than 'just' physical activity undertaken on play equipment.

The quality of the 'whole' playspace environment should always be considered in any planning and design and opportunities for the inclusion of landscape elements, furniture or artwork considered to broaden play experiences to accommodate social / imaginative / creative and cognitive experiences. Consideration of surfaces in playspaces should also be well considered to maximise safety, access and play value as well. Playspaces that are static and prescriptive have very little long-term benefit, whereas the ability to be able to manipulate or interpret a playspace differently over time holds great potential for 'community sustainability'.

Childhood Obesity & Physical Exercise

Childhood obesity and Type 2 Diabetes are becoming more prevalent in our communities and pose serious long-term implications for our population's longevity and health into adulthood. Although these conditions are a result of several contributing factors, most research has identified a reduction in physical exercise and an increasingly sedentary lifestyle with activities such as TV viewing, video games and computer use as a key factor. This strategy seeks to address this issue in two specific ways:

- To increase the quality and diversity of playspaces across the municipality over the next 10-15 years, to encourage more active use of playspaces by the local community
- To engage the local Darebin Community more in 'local playspaces' by increasing the promotion of and access to information regarding play and playspace facilities to the community (refer *Promoting Play & Playspaces in Darebin*)

Safety In Playspaces

Darebin City Council is committed to providing playspaces that are well designed, built and maintained on a regular basis to remove any obvious hazards and that they are kept clean and free of graffiti to improve public perception. Darebin playspaces are installed according to current Australian Standards and are maintained by council on a regular basis.

Safety in playspaces is important and many terms such as 'risk' and 'hazard' are often used in reference to safety in playspaces. Council recognises that the safety concerns of the community may range from the setting of a playspace (ie. too close to a busy road), to the range of activities provided (ie. age appropriate activities that are not too challenging), to undersurfacing (ie. trip hazards or hazards in loose materials), to maintenance of play equipment (ie. loose fixings etc.), to the appearance of the playspace (ie. equipment covered in graffiti or dirt).

It is also important to recognise that 'risk' or 'calculated challenge' where children and young people learn to master new skills is an important part of learning through play and therefore sees appropriate adult supervision as also essential to a well-functioning playspace. Supervision for playspaces in public parks is discussed further in the section *Strategic Directions in Playspaces: Playspaces and Public Parks* and supervision in children's services centres and neighbourhood houses is discussed further in the section *Strategic Planning in Playspaces: Neighbourhood Houses & Children's Services Centres*

Distribution of Playspaces

Provision and quality of open space in Darebin is categorized by a number of criteria as identified by the Open Space Strategy (2007-17). Distribution, one of these criteria states that open space is to be provided within 500m of every residence in the municipality.

Consideration is therefore to be given to easy local access to playspaces and parks, including well located path access from the street to the playspace or a primary path to the playspace. Disabled users and also older carers, and those with prams and children / young people with bicycles are then better able to access parks and playspaces when these paths are provided.

Darebin has both a Transport Strategy (*Going Places – Darebin Transport Strategy 2007-2017*) and Walking Strategy that identify council's vision and strategies for developing pedestrian 'friendly' local neighbourhoods to assist the community to safely access. Actions for reducing road danger and prioritizing walking are also outlined in these strategies and identified in the Action

Access to public transport and car parking for our larger district and regional playspaces, should also be considered as the catchment users for these parks often travel across or from outside of the municipality.

The Role of the Natural Environment in Playspaces

A good quality playspace utilises its landscape context for play, recognising that only limited play value will be derived from play equipment alone. Naturally found or established materials and elements such as trees, shrubs, ground-covers, grassed mounds, open grassed areas, rocks, logs and waterways provide and create a diverse range of open-ended opportunities for play. Natural elements are not necessarily 'prescriptive' in their role in play (ie. a log on the ground could be for balancing, sitting and socialising and become a bus or rocket ship for imaginative play, providing a great deal more play benefit than a play panel on a piece of equipment will provide).

It is important to note that many living natural materials also have the benefit of seasonal change and the sensory delight derived through texture, colour, smell, and sound greatly enriches the quality of play experience.

The Value of Loose Materials in Playspaces

Loose materials such as sand, soft-fall mulch and pea-gravel provide considerable benefit to children's play. These loose materials comprise what is often termed the 'currency' of play. Play equipment, structures or elements form the stage for the theatre known as 'play' – the loose materials are the 'props' that give meaning for the participants to play.

For example a shop front counter in a play structure has limited use in a public playspace if the undersurfacing is entirely rubberized and as such children will tend to pass it by and focus only on the physical opportunities for play which they may offer limited challenge and interest over time. The same play element in a setting of soft-fall mulch however, with the addition of shrubs or trees providing leaves or gumnuts can be transformed into a very engaging experience. A flexible experience in a regularly visited playspace, where the participants can add their own changing interests and therefore provide sustainable interest over a much longer timeframe.

Use of Sustainable Materials in Playspaces

Darebin City Council is committed to improved sustainable design and the purchasing of environmentally responsible products. Sustainability is reflected in the ongoing design and upgrade

of Council's playspaces by reducing waste (through re-use and recycling) and consumption of valuable natural resources (through more efficient manufacturing and local purchasing where appropriate). Consideration of durability and the design's longevity when planning is critical to a successful outcome. It also provides a forum to educate children, young people and the community about sustainable design practice in their local neighbourhood.

The following are to be considered when designing or upgrading a playspace:

- The selection of plants should always include proven drought-tolerant species with known recent local success
- Provision of a 12 month maintenance period for all plants should be included after the project is established
- Where appropriate the application of WSUD (Water Sensitive Urban Design) principles should be applied to any landscaped areas in playspaces to capture site water run-off
- The selection of materials or products should consider 'local' suppliers where appropriate, however it is understood that the quality of product is also critical in influencing choice
- Where appropriate the use of recycled materials or content in products should be considered
- Where appropriate the selection of materials with low embodied energy use in manufacturing should be considered

Art in Playspaces

The value of art in public spaces is significant in terms of the engagement and meaning that it brings to a local context and community. No more is this so than in a playspace, where the opportunity for the community to interact and engage moves far beyond simple need or function. Any art in a playspace should be well considered as an integral part of the design process, so that it adds value to the experience, rather than acting as an add on.

Darebin City Council has an extensive public art program in place guided by 'Beyond Fido' Darebin's public art strategy. The strategy clearly defines processes for the community involvement in the development of public art, processes for selection of sites, and requirements for artists in terms of their quality and workmanship.

Where possible opportunities for additional funding sources or grants for public art inclusion in new playspaces should be considered.

Important art elements that may be considered for play are as follows:

- Musical elements
- Specific treatments of play elements or furniture in a playspace
- Individual sculptural elements
- Murals
- Temporary exhibitions
- Performance art / events

Darebin City Council has a database of all its public artworks and an ongoing maintenance program for the upkeep, refurbishment or decommissioning of work. It is also recommended as part of this strategy that a database of existing public artwork in playspaces be created. An appropriate maintenance program could then be developed in line with Council's current public art program.

The importance of other amenities to Playspaces

Playspaces are not used exclusively by children and young people, but by the whole community. As discussed earlier in this strategy these whole community spaces are very important to local neighbourhoods, particularly in relation to the other types of social and recreational opportunities they provide.

Careful consideration in the design or upgrading of playspaces needs to be given to the role, location and range of other amenities such as; seating, tables, paths, shade, barbecue's, drinking fountains, bins, signage, toilets etc. which all contribute to the effective function of a playspace. Amenities may vary depending upon their location and this is discussed more specifically in the section *Development Standards*.

Recommendation Summary:

Childhood Obesity & Physical Exercise

- Provide access to playspaces within 500mtrs. to encourage more active use of parks.
- Encourage interest and use through the development of quality playspaces for the whole community

Use of Sustainable Materials in Playspaces

- Use sustainable design and materials where possible when upgrading or developing new playspaces

Art in Playspaces

- Investigate funding opportunities for artwork projects in District and Regional playspaces
- Seek to incorporate artwork in playspaces under council's existing public art maintenance program

Playspaces in Children's Services Centres & Neighbourhood Houses

Flexible Playspaces

Given the regular ongoing use of play areas in Children's Services Centres and Neighbourhood Houses a greater degree of flexibility is required within these playspaces to provide for ongoing changes in the centre program. Fixed equipment is not encouraged in Darebin Centres as it tends to limit opportunities to change spaces and activities around. If fixed structures are to be included these should be open-ended in their use and provide the opportunity to attach and remove other items of equipment. All structures should comply with Australian Standards AS:4684-Part 1 2004 and the Victorian Children's Services Centre Regulations.

Fencing in Children's Services Centres & Neighbourhood Houses

Children's Services Centres and Neighbourhood Houses are not fully accessible to the public 24 hours a day and therefore have different fencing requirements for their outdoor playspaces than a playspace in a public park.

Fencing in these centres should comply with both the Victorian Children's Services Centre Regulations and the Australian Standards AS:4684-Part 1 2004 (refer *Background*) Fences should be a minimum 1500mm high above the adjacent horizontal surface, non-climbable with no accessible horizontal members, and avoid any finger entrapments as outlined in the Australian Standards.

Supervision & Care in Children's Services Centres and Neighbourhood Houses

Children's Services Centres and Neighbourhood Houses run programs where activity in outdoor playspaces is programmed and managed on a daily basis. These settings are required by law to provide approved ratios of adult carers to children and as such adequate supervision is provided.

Centres do however need to consider the design, layout and set-up of their outdoor playspaces on a daily basis to ensure that activities are developmentally appropriate and clear vision of all activity in the playspace is available to adult carers at all times.

Undersurfacing in Children's Services Centres & Neighbourhood Houses

As with public playspaces soft-fall mulch is generally the undersurfacing of choice for Darebin City Council in Children's Services Centres and Neighbourhood Houses as it is a natural material and relatively cost-effective. As discussed in the section *Strategic Directions; Darebin Playspaces* the use of a loose material such as soft-fall mulch is important to provide currency for play and should be considered when designing or upgrading playspaces.

This is not to say that it is an entirely suitable surface when it comes to access within playspaces and the Darebin City Council supports the combined strategic use of impact absorbing rubber surfacing and soft-fall mulch suitable for achieving better access and play value at the same time

Outside the play equipment fall zone areas, a further range of different surfaces should also be provided in centres. This is especially important where programs offer a range of different types of outdoor activity, such as ball games, chalk drawing, outdoor construction or block building which

rely on different surfaces such as concrete, grass or granitic gravel to work effectively.

Shade & Shelter in Children's Services Centres & Neighbourhood Houses

In Children's Services Centres or Neighbourhood Houses it is recognized that children play for longer periods of outdoors much more regularly, and therefore where appropriate fixed structures such as shade sails and verandahs are recommended. This also considers that a centre is a secured site with limited public access and therefore access to and the durability of fixed structures in particular shade sails can be monitored much more effectively, therefore reducing public risk.

Playspaces in Public Parks

Provision for Young People in Public Parks

This strategy was identified as an opportunity to begin to address this existing gap in Council planning and consultation for the development of open space and recreational opportunities for young people (aged 13-18 years), which will be more thoroughly addressed in the Leisure Strategy 2010-2020) currently being reviewed by council.

The Young People in Darebin Parks Research Project (2005) developed a set of youth participation principles which are to be incorporated into this strategy, of most importance is the need to include young people in public consultation for open space projects to ensure equity in community representation. The section *Community Involvement in Playspaces* talks about opportunities for other kinds of consultation with young people when planning and designing open space and playspaces, as recommended by the 5 Year Integrated Youth Strategy.

It is recognised that planning for young people can often focus solely on facilities and formal sports missing other opportunities including the value of multiple-use, flexible spaces. These spaces are critical for young people for meeting friends, socialising or just hanging-out. This can be reflected in organisation or design of specific facilities such as skate-parks or basketball courts, but can also be found in adjacent amenities such as seating, drinking fountains and environmental features. In future these so called 'slack-spaces' should be considered when designing with young people in mind.

One of the major recognised barriers to youth in public open space and playspaces is the perception of 'legitimate use' or their 'right to be there'. Young people have made it very clear that involving them in design or planning has a significant and positive outcome on their use of public open space and benefits their physical and social welfare and development.

Provision for Other Playspaces

Toddler Playspaces

The 0-3 age group, often less physically mobile than older children and young people are either not catered for at all or well catered for in public playspaces which tend to focus on aged 3 and upwards. Age-appropriate activities for toddlers (refer section *Provision for Other Playspaces*) mostly involve the mastery of physical skills such as crawling, walking, stepping, rolling and balance etc. and a developing understanding of the world around them through observation, touch, sound and taste. Provision of some landscape elements such as level change, different surfaces (that are safe for unsteady toddlers), sensory planting and the inclusion of music or art elements in public playspaces will increase the diversity of age that can access the playspace.

Play for Adults

The section *Background: Playgrounds or Playspaces?* discusses the role of the playspace for the whole community, by the provision of landscaping, furniture and access paths.

As this strategy is specifically aimed at the 0-18 age group, active play or recreation opportunities for adults are not discussed. These may include fitness circuit equipment, shared trails and other informal recreational opportunities used by community programs, recreational groups or other members of the local community.

Whilst it is not considered appropriate to integrate this type of facility with a children's playspace, location, planning and development should be well considered by Council in collaboration with the

local community. The Leisure Strategy Review (2010-2020) will discuss the role of these facilities within Darebin's open space system further.

Playspaces for People with a Disability

Darebin City Council promotes inclusion and access in all playspaces (refer section *Access All Abilities*). While Council endeavours to incorporate relevant access and inclusion principles and standards in all playground upgrades and new playground developments, there may be specific opportunities to focus on activities for children or young people with specific disabilities. Council will consider this when designing and consulting with the community. This would be particularly appropriate where playspaces are located close to schools or other services for people with disabilities.

The importance of Open Space within Parks

Public open space is a term we refer to when we talk about the network or system of public parks, streetscapes and civic spaces we have in the City of Darebin. However there is also a 'micro' or 'site' level of open space whose importance needs to be considered when planning or designing in playspaces.

Open areas within parks for running, chasey, kicking and catching balls, as well as playing formal sports such as football, soccer, cricket, basketball, netball etc. are invaluable, particularly given the ever decreasing outdoor spaces children and young people experience at home. The surface treatment of these can be anything from grass, to concrete to asphalt, the critical element is the space – clear of vertical elements and able to be used for a diverse range of activities.

Site Location & Fencing in Public Playspaces

One extremely critical aspect of the successful planning and design of playspaces is the location of a playspace on site. Sites vary in size and in some cases with larger district and regional parks might have multiple playspaces on one site.

When designing or upgrading playspaces careful consideration is given to the location of the playspace. In some cases opportunities to set the playspace back into the site is not possible etc. and in these cases the strategic use of planting and landscape elements to provide informal barriers should be incorporated where possible into the design.

In situations where site constraints impede a safe distance being created between a playspace and a busy road, opportunities for fencing to the park edge should be investigated. Council prefers not to fence playspaces entirely, as this makes the playspace less publically accessible. If fencing is to be included it should be a visually open barrier style or with style with vertical balustrading (so it not climbable) and should avoid finger entrapments as outlined in the Australian Standards AS:4684-Part 1 2004 (refer section *Background: Australian Standards for Playspaces*). If the fence is enclosed it should also be advertised on the City of Darebin website.

Supervision & Care in Public Playspaces

Safety should be well considered when designing, upgrading or maintaining playspaces without compromising the quality of play or public access provided to the playspace. Darebin City Council maintains that supervision of children at all times in public playspaces is the role of the adult carer and that fences or barriers are not substitutes for carer supervision and therefore is only provided in certain circumstances (refer section *Strategic Directions: Playspaces in Public Parks*).

Shade and Shelter in Public Playspaces

In Australia skin cancer is the most prevalent form of cancer. The Anti-Cancer Council of Australia advocates a number of different methods for protection from harmful UV present in the sun's rays, particularly for young children who are seen as the most vulnerable. These methods include sunscreen (with a high protection factor) and hat protection, staying out of the sun in summer during the hottest part of the day (generally acknowledged to be between 3 and 5pm) and adequate shade provision in public places.

In public parks the establishment of long-term natural shade, in particular by the strategic planting of open-canopied trees to the northern side of a play structures or seats and tables is considered the best form of sustainable shade provision. In larger parks and playspaces it is acknowledged that the community may spend longer periods of time at the park, therefore a picnic shelter over barbecue's, tables or seating might also be provided in addition to natural shade.

The City of Darebin recognises that shade provision in playspaces also needs to be cost effective and durable to provide the best overall outcome when designing or upgrading playspaces.

Whilst shade sails are used in Children's Services Centres where the site is managed and secured, they are not considered the most sustainable form of shade protection in public parks and effective use of the capital works budget for playspaces. The initial costs, ongoing maintenance and risk management are all issues associated with shade sails that limit funding being spent on the developing quality play experiences.

Undersurfacing in Public Playspaces

The undersurfacing of choice for the Darebin City Council is generally soft-fall mulch. Soft-fall mulch is a natural material and relatively cost-effective. The use of soft-fall mulch is important to provide the 'currency' for play (refer section *Strategic Directions: Darebin Playspaces*) and should be considered when designing or upgrading playspaces. This is not to say that it is an entirely suitable surface when it comes to access within playspaces and Darebin City Council supports the combined strategic use of impact absorbing rubber surfacing and soft-fall mulch suitable for achieving better access and play value at the same time. Outside the play equipment fall zone areas, a further range of different surfaces should also be provided to promote different types of activity, such as ball games, cycling or skating.

Dogs and Playspaces

Under State legislation and Council policy dogs must be on lead in a public open space except in designated off-leash areas. Dogs and cats are also not permitted in designated environmentally sensitive areas, within 5 metres of any playspace, barbecue, shared trails or within sporting areas during times of organised play.

Darebin City Council has an Animal Management Strategy that is reviewed annually designating off-lead areas and guiding Council and the community in responsible pet management in public open space. Council also provides assistance through basic dog obedience classes, to encourage dog owners to better manage their pets in public open spaces.

Public Toilets & Playspaces

Council's public toilet policy has guided decision making about provision and management of public toilets over recent years. Approximately one-third of all public toilets in Darebin are located in parks and it is important that toilet facilities are safe, accessible and encourage people to use open space and playspaces for longer periods of time.

It is therefore important that the location, opening hours, maintenance and cleanliness of toilets considers community needs, perceptions and expectations.

In line with the Development Standards put forward by the Open Space Strategy. The section *Development Standards* suggests that public toilets should be provided in Regional and District Parks and could be provided in Major Neighbourhood Parks where there is clear justification and community support for their installation. It is considered that smaller neighbourhood parks are usually only for short stays and within walking distance from home, therefore public toilets are not required.

Public toilets in open space should be accessible for all, open during all daylight hours and meet relevant Australian Standards.

Lighting in Playspaces

The Open Space Strategy (2007-2017) states that lighting in open space in Darebin is to focus on entrances, buildings and paths in situations where they provide a major thoroughfare through a park. Darebin's Lighting Policy and Climate Change Action Plan provide guidance for the design and management of lights in open space, so that when installed lighting will be of best practice environmental efficiency.

It is not considered appropriate to light playspaces in public open space at night time as these facilities should not be in use after daylight hours.

Litter Management in Playspaces

Bins or litter receptacles for general waste are provided in many public parks with playspaces. In particular, parks where picnic facilities and barbecue's are located as it is anticipated that the community use these facilities more frequently, for longer periods of time. These bins are contracted by council's Collection Services Branch to be emptied on a rota. Any unnecessary additional dumping of rubbish in public parks should be immediately reported to council's Customer Service Centre.

The Darebin City Council does not provide recycling bins in its parks, as control of the contamination of recycled waste is difficult to achieve in public open space. Any contaminated recycled waste cannot be recycled.

Recommendations Summary:

Young People in Public Parks

- Plan for an increased range of recreational and social opportunities for young people in public parks

Playspaces for Toddlers

- Provide opportunities for toddler play through landscape elements at district and regional playspaces
- Investigate the opportunity for developing 'toddler playspaces' in the north and south of Darebin

Site Location & Fencing in Playspaces

- Plan for considered siting, sealed paths and consolidated location for ease of public access
- Set playgrounds back from the road and only include fencing after considered planning and community consultation

Shade and Shelter in Playspaces

- Develop long-term natural shade in parks through well considered tree planting

Strategic Planning in Playspaces

Neighbourhood Houses

Background and Context

The City of Darebin is currently responsible for the maintenance of playspaces in 5 Neighbourhood Houses. The playspaces located at each of these were assessed as part of this strategy.

The aim of the assessment for Neighbourhood Houses was to provide Council with some guidance for the future development and design of the outdoor areas and playspaces. In addition to adult programs, the children's services offered at each centre varies slightly, with some offering formal 3-year-old programs, playgroups (including a special needs group) and occasional care programs.

Methodology

A site assessment checklist was formulated in consultation with Darebin City Council. Site visits were conducted by Mary Jeavons Landscape Architects in October 2009, each site was photographed and site assessment sheets were filled in. The site assessment addressed the following areas:

- Program and Spatial Design
- Playspace
- Access and Circulation
- Health, Safety and Amenity
- Environment
- Recommendations

Site Assessments Summary

Specific recommendations put forward by the Neighbourhood House Playspace audits talked about undertaking further assessment of several playspaces for compliance with Australian Standards and Victorian Children's Services Centre Regulations. It was also recommended that further planning be undertaken in the future to improve the centre landscape environments and integrate centre activities more effectively in terms of function and access.

Children's Services Centres

Background and Context

The City of Darebin has 23 Council owned and maintained Children's Services Centres. These include playspaces in kindergartens and child care centres. The playspaces at each of these centres were assessed as part of this strategy.

The aim of the assessment for the Children's Services Centres was to provide Council with some guidance for the future development and design of the outdoor areas and playspaces, as well as identify areas where professional support is required.

Methodology

In order to assess the outdoor playspaces in these centres a number of principles were developed by Mary Jeavons Landscape Architects in consultation with Darebin City Council. These principles are discussed further below. A checklist was formed from these principles which were used to assess centres across the following areas:

- Variety and Choice in Playspaces
- Characteristics and Qualities of Outdoor Playspaces
- Functional Elements of the Space and How it Supports the Play Program
- Health, Safety and Amenity
- Programming and Management

Best Practice Principles

The Best Practice Principles were developed collaboratively with a cross-council team and consultant. These have been set up to provide a framework by which centres can develop the outdoor playspaces to a high standard, while also reflecting the requirements of both the Australian Standards and Victorian Children's Services Centre Regulations. As committees of management change from year to year, some consistency of approach is achieved through these principles to guide planning and development in outdoor play areas for these centres.

Approval of Works

The Approval of Works has been developed by council to provide centres with clear guidance on the process for undertaking capital works projects in Children's Services Centres in Darebin. Submission of landscape concept plans for any proposed works and sign-off approval by Council is required by Children's Service Centres in Darebin before any onsite works can commence.

Ongoing Support

Council recognizes that ongoing support is required by Children's Services Centres to not only develop, but program, manage and maintain high quality play environments in centres. It is therefore recommended by Council that staff in Darebin Children's Services Centres undertake professional development training when offered to not only support them in providing high quality outdoor programs, but also assist them with management and maintenance of these environments.

Site Assessments Summary

The Children's Services Centre site assessments put forward a range of recommendations that dealt with ongoing professional development and support for staff and centres, opportunities to develop collaborative relationships with other areas of council, and considerations for the design of new or upgraded playspaces in centres.

Recommendations Summary:

Neighbourhood House Playspaces

- Include Neighbourhood House playspaces in the bi-annual maintenance assessments

Children's Services Centre Playspaces

- Provide ongoing advice and support to staff and centre committees in the development of programming for outdoor playspaces
- Provide ongoing advice and support in the effective management of outdoor playspaces

Public Parks

Background and Context

The Playspace Strategy is one of Darebin City Council's key leisure strategic documents. Sitting under the Open Space Strategy and the Leisure Strategy it guides the planning, development and design of Darebin's playspaces. This section of the strategy focuses on playspaces within parks and reserves. As the Playspace Strategy sits under the Open Space Planning Strategy it is important to understand this broader planning framework.

The City of Darebin has an Open Space System of over 800ha. Of this 530 ha is Council managed parks and reserves. Darebin City Council is responsible for 92 existing Playspaces within Darebin's parks. Information included in this section is a combination of recommendations from the Darebin Open Space Strategy and individual site audits which were undertaken for the preparation of this strategy.

Open Space Strategy 2007 – 2017

The Open Space Strategy identified that the Darebin open space system generally has good quantity and quality, represented by diverse character and is well distributed throughout the municipality. It does however acknowledge that further improvements need to be made and Council in partnership with key agencies and the community will continue to work on enhancements of the whole open space system. The strategy also has set a Vision for open space in the City of Darebin for the next ten years:

A well connected network of accessible open spaces that meets the diverse needs of the community and provides a range of social and environmental benefits.

The Open Space Strategy Vision will be achieved through Twelve (12) principles:

- The enhancement of the open space network will achieve a range of social, environmental and community aspirations.
- Distribution of parks will ensure that residents have access within their local neighborhood.
- Across the open space system, accessibility for a range of abilities and disabilities will be achieved
- A diverse range of open spaces throughout the City of Darebin will offer outdoor recreation opportunities for all sectors of the community.
- The community values open space that is appropriately maintained in accordance with its category and its associated uses.
- It is important that open space meets the changing needs of communities as population grows and trends change.
- Linkages and linear parks enhance the open space network and provide valuable connections.
- Management and maintenance practices for open space will respond to the issues arising from climate change and the need for alternate water sources.
- High level of public awareness and involvement will maximise use and engagement by the community in the open space network.
- Restoration and rehabilitation of the creek corridors will ensure that environmental values are

preserved for future generations.

- Council is committed to high standards of master planning, landscape outcomes, conservation of natural and cultural heritage and presentation of open space.
- Affordable and achievable maintenance will ensure that the provision of open space is sustainable into the future.

Policy and recommendations in the Open Space Strategy include Development Guidelines, extensive Strategic Directions and a detailed Work Program. The following are some of the key recommendations emerging from the Open Space Strategy:

- Development and implementation of Master Plans, Site Development Plans and Management Plans for key open space sites
- Acquisition of private land in strategic locations to improve access to and provision of open space
- Establishment of improved open space opportunities in partnership with relevant state government agencies
- Upgrade of play spaces throughout the City of Darebin
- Seeking partnership opportunities to improve the open space system
- Disposal of identified land that is surplus to the needs of a quality open space system

Open Space Strategy Methodology

A number of criteria have been used to assess the provision and quality of open space across Darebin. The Open Space Strategy lists five criteria listed below are considered together to provide a quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of open space. It is acknowledged that the City of Darebin is a well developed Urban Municipality and criteria such as the size of Open Space has been established historically therefore providing a benchmark for any future developments.

Quantity

- The amount of open space that is provided across the City of Darebin and within each of the precinct areas - The standard that is being used for Darebin is two to four ha per 1000 people.

Distribution

- Open space being provided within 500m of every residence in the municipality, giving consideration to barriers that prevent access to open space

Size of Open Space

- This criteria covers primarily the area and dimensions of open spaces that will depend on the open space type (eg. Neighbourhood vs district, parkland vs linkage).

Quality of Open Space

- This analysis includes consideration of the quality of presentation of open space, including the infrastructure that has been provided within each park.

Opportunities / Community Needs

- This criteria considers the opportunities and activities provided for in open space and responsiveness of open space to cater for current and future community needs is also considered.

Acquisition and/or disposal of Open Space

- As part of the review of the open space system, recommendations may include the need to acquire open space or sell open space that doesn't meet designated criteria and is not meeting community needs. (Further information about the process of rationalisation of open space can be found in Section 7 of Open Space Strategy – Strategic Directions).

This section of the Playspace Strategy focuses on an analysis of existing playspaces and provides recommendations on quality and distribution to ensure fair and equitable access to playspaces for all the community. The full criteria are covered elsewhere in the strategy and are discussed in the Open Space Strategy. The Open Space Strategy has identified gaps in the provision of Open Space and this has been supported by the Playspace Strategy analysis and audit.

Park Playspaces Municipal Wide

Quality

The overall playspace opportunities within the City of Darebin are good with some examples of high quality playspaces. The community has access to a combination of fenced and custom designed accessible playspaces, different types of playspaces in parks and extensive conservation sites along the Merri and Darebin Creeks.

Analysis of the Darebin's playspaces has identified the quality of playspaces does vary across the municipality. In some areas the community has access to parks and high quality playspaces where in other areas the local community does not have access to a playspace within 500 metres. Some playspaces were past the preferred replacement timeline but all were in safe working order. The design, quality and rate of replacement of the more recent playspaces reflects the in-house expertise and additional funding that has been allocated to playspace development by Darebin Council, the State Government and the Federal Government more recently. Council will continue to explore opportunities for grants to assist in increasing the upgrade rates of Darebin's playspaces.

The need for a Regional Level All Abilities Playspace for the Darebin community has been identified and Bundoora Park has been chosen as the site for this exciting playspace. Bundoora Park as a Regional Park has the facilities and space to accommodate large numbers of visitors and to provide the additional level of management that a playspace of this type will require. This custom design playspace was developed in consultation with the Friends of Bundoora Park, community and stakeholders and provide a unique playspace opportunity different to other playspaces within Darebin.

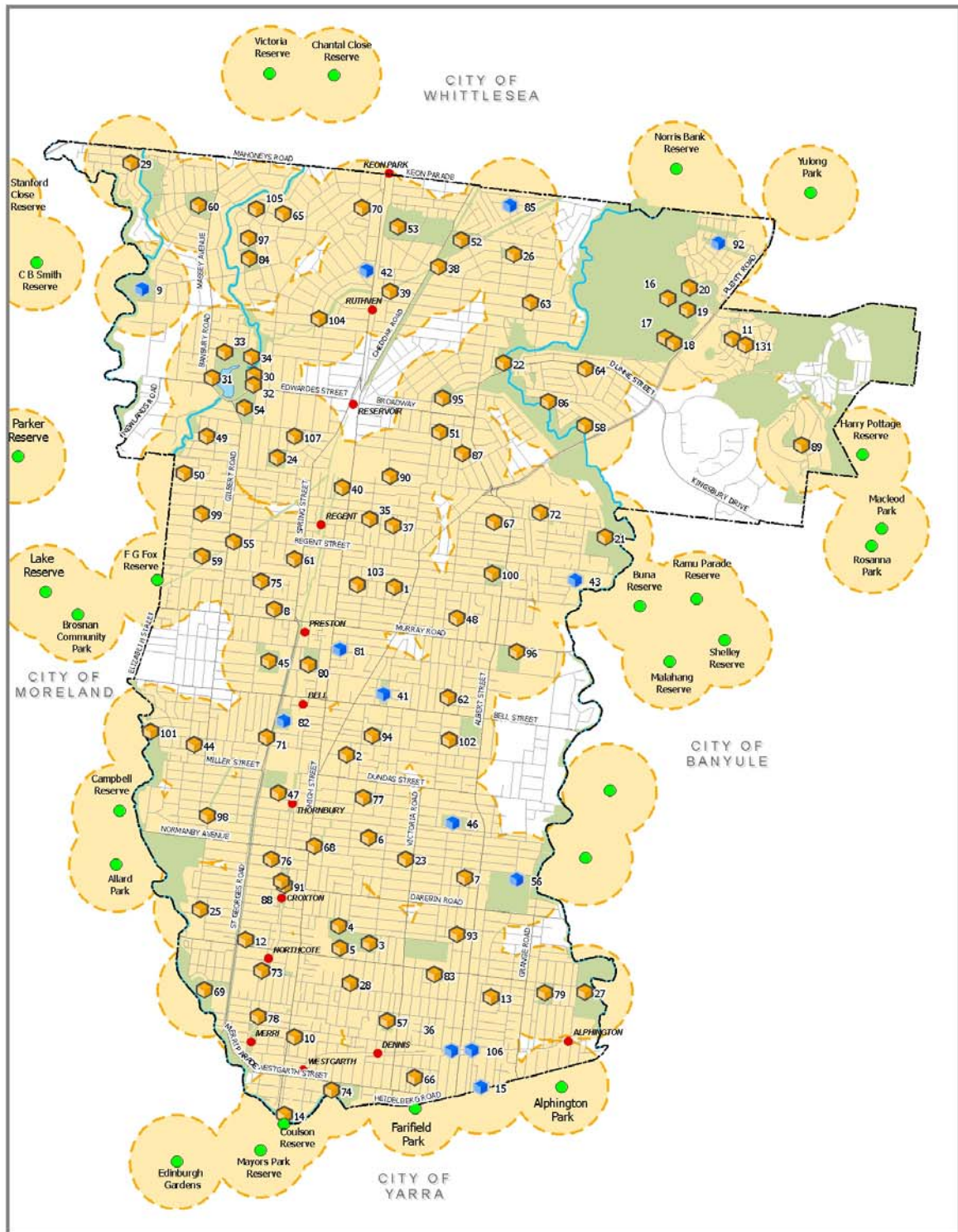
Distribution

The sections *Playspace Inventory and Hierarchy* and *Strategic Planning: Public Parks*, discuss that the community should have access to at least One (1) Playspace within 500 metres of their home.

Some gaps in playspace provision have been identified where no parks exist and no provision opportunities are possible. These areas are supported by Conservation Bushland play opportunities or are located in an industrial area where no additional playspace facilities are required.

In a number of areas a playspace deficiency was identified where there was existing open space to accommodate the development of a playspace. Some of these sites have some existing facilities, others are currently undeveloped and are discussed in the Precincts section.

Map F3. Darebin Playspace 500m Access Map



Playspace Access

- Parks with Playspaces
- New Playspaces in Public Parks
- Playspace outside Darebin boundary
- 500 metre access from Playspace
- Darebin Council Boundary
- Open Space

**FIGURE 3
DAREBIN PLAYSPACE ACCESS**

DATUM: GDA 1984
PROJECTION: MGA ZONE 56

Metres

**City of
DAREBIN**

Figure
F3

Park Playspaces by Precincts

The City of Darebin is divided into eight precincts based on Council's planning framework. These precincts have been used for analysis of open space provision and the discussion of opportunities and to improve playspace provision in each of the communities within Darebin.

- Reservoir West
- Reservoir East
- Kingsbury/Bundoora
- Preston West
- Preston East
- Thornbury
- Northcote
- Fairfield/Alphington

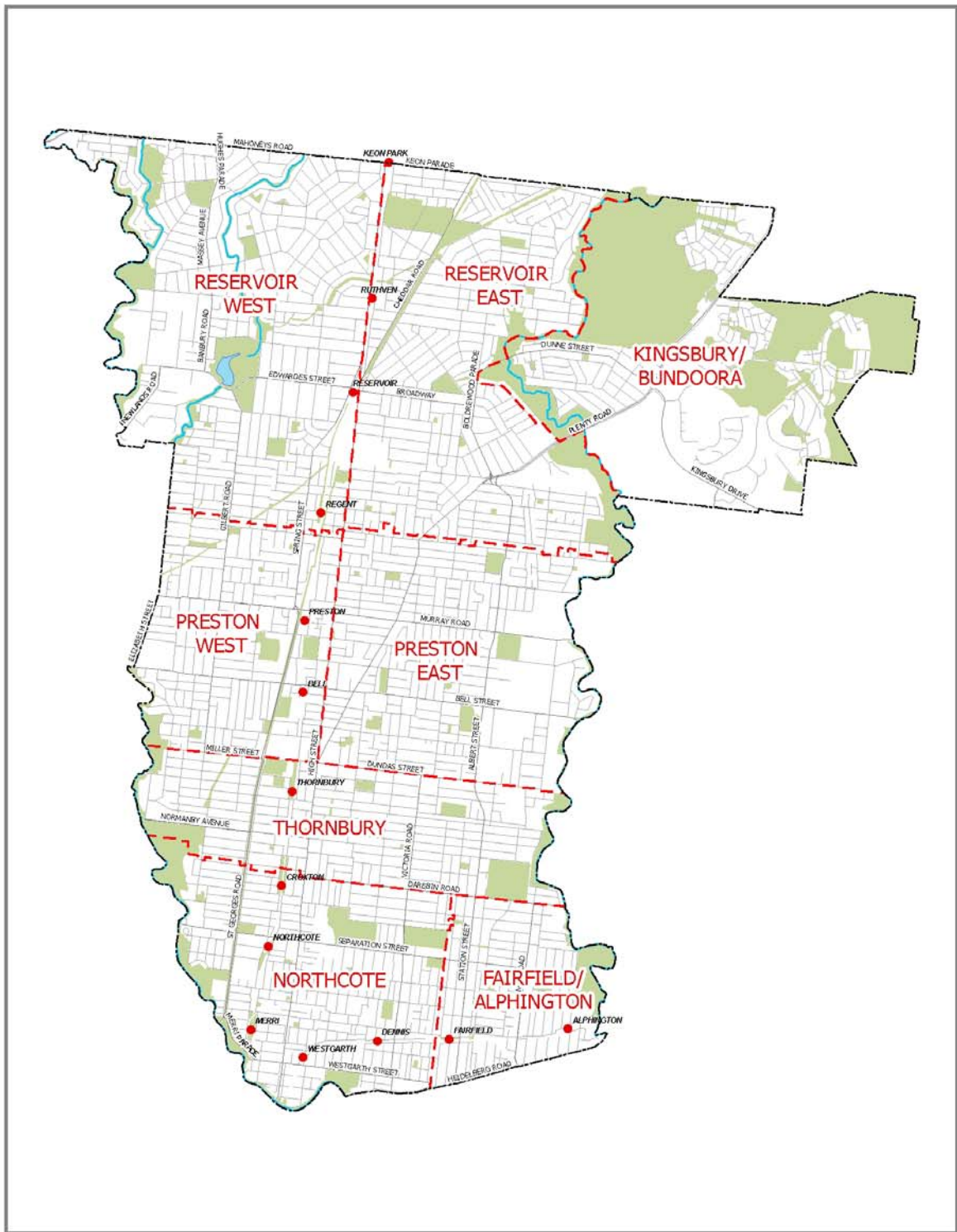
Audits of all playspaces were undertaken for the development of this Strategy. This audit was undertaken prior to the 2008/09 playspace upgrades. This strategy makes recommendations for high priority playspace upgrades which may include playspaces which have recently been upgraded. Playspace upgrades referred to in the precinct section and in the section *Work Program in Public Parks* include upgrades of varying levels dependent upon the works recommended in the analysis report.

Recommendations Summary:

Public Park Playspaces

- Provide playspaces where possible within 500m of each residence
- Improve and upgrade a range of amenity as part of developing the 'whole playspace'
- Strategically plan for a diversity of playspaces across local neighbourhoods

Map F4. Darebin Precinct Map



Precincts

- Darebin Council Boundary
- Precinct Boundary
- Open Space

**FIGURE 4
DAREBIN PLAYSPACE PRECINCTS**

DATUM: GDA 1984
PROJECTION: MGA ZONE 56

0 250 500 Metres

CITY OF
DAREBIN

Figure
F4

Reservoir West

Reservoir West has a generous quantity of parks, 3.16ha per 1000 people, several are large in size but many are of poor quality or underdeveloped. The amenity of parks in this precinct can be improved with significant tree planting alone. There are parks of high quality such as Edwardes Lake Park a 22ha District Park provides many different playspace opportunities for the community including the Lemington Street Youth Space. The precinct adjoins the Merri Creek corridor and includes the Edgars Creek corridor providing many additional playspace opportunities.

Playspace deficiencies in this precinct exist in several locations and it is recommended that facilities be established at B.T. Connor Sporting Reserve and at Gellibrand Reserve to assist in meeting 500mtr. accessibility. Gellibrand Reserve is an internal undeveloped Greenfield site identified for development in the Open Space Strategy. The development of this park is of high priority given the lack of any facilities in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

A small deficiency exists in the Reservoir Village area, which is unable to be provided for at this stage. The Reservoir Structure Plan should consider this deficiency and consider the possible opportunities for an Urban Park in the area.

Playspace Upgrades

The Edwardes Lake Park Masterplan recommends the development of an All Abilities Playspace to accommodate the large number of visitors that this District Park attracts.

Playspace upgrades identified as being a priority for this precinct are;

- Edwardes Lake Park – Seaver Grove
- G.E. Robinson Park
- Hillcroft Reserve
- J.E. Moore Reserve
- Ruthven Primary School
- Tracey Reserve
- Whitby Reserve

Map F5. Reservoir West Precinct Map



Playspace Access

- Regional Park Playspace
- District Park Playspace
- Major District Park Playspace
- Major Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Urban Playspace
- Playspace outside Darebin boundary
- 1500 metre access from Playspace
- Darebin Council Boundary
- Precinct Boundary
- Open Space



FIGURE 5 - DAREBIN PLAYSACE RESERVOIR WEST PRECINCT MAP

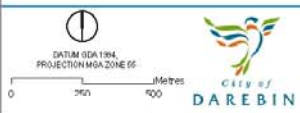


Figure
F5

Reservoir East

Reservoir East, like Reservoir West has a very generous portion of open space, 4.17ha per 1000 people, but not well distributed and some is of poor quality. With many large parks in this precinct, tree planting is of particular importance here to provide structure and interest and to encourage community use. The community has access to Bundoora Park in the next precinct and several large sporting reserves.

A playspace deficiency exists in the Cheddar Road area, which could be met by utilising the central median Yan Yean Pipe Track. This complex site is not ideal and would require significant traffic calming, amenity improvements and approval by Melbourne Water. Therefore the provision and quality of other neighbourhood playspaces in the area is of increased importance. This includes Frank Allen Arthur Dunstan Reserve, Fyfe Reserve and TW Andrews Reserve.

A playspace deficiency has been also identified in the north of the precinct that can be filled by the development of the undeveloped Council land site on the corner of San Leandro Drive and Roff Street as a neighbourhood park. The neighbourhood surrounding Dalglen Reserve is provided for by access to I.W. Dole Reserve and the development of San Leandro Reserve. Dalglen is currently undeveloped and the neighbourhood community would benefit from the provision of tree planting and seating at this reserve.

The Open Space Strategy recommends C.H. Sullivan and C.T. Barling Reserves linked by the Darebin Creek for development to District Park level. The existing playspace at C.H. Sullivan Reserve requires upgrading and this should be undertaken after a Masterplanning process had been conducted for the new District Park.

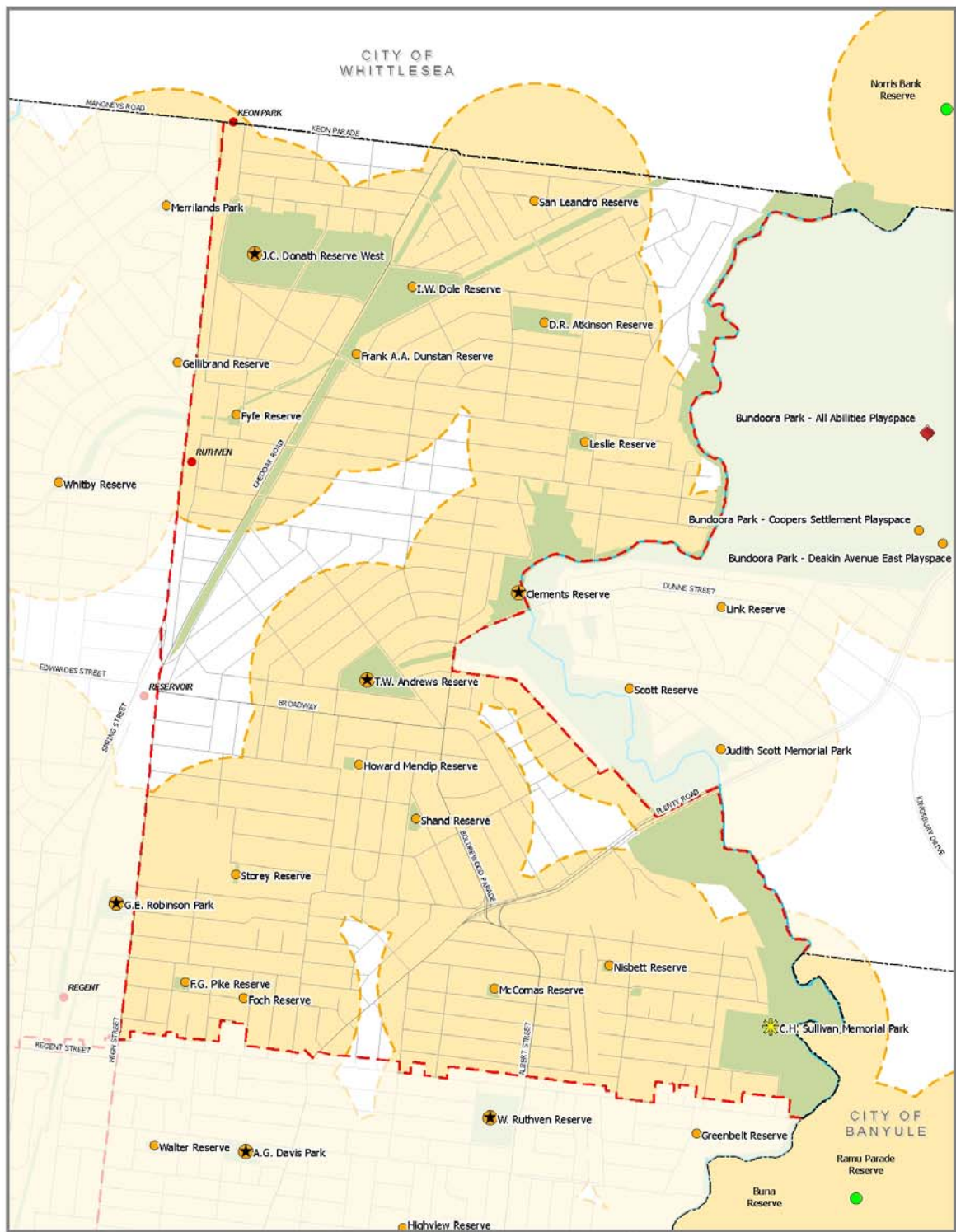
An Open Space Masterplan has been prepared for the East Reservoir Neighbourhood Renewal area and includes areas of Kingsbury connected by the open space system. The East Reservoir Open Space Masterplan has made recommendations for the upgrade of playspaces in line with the Open Space Strategy. The Masterplan also recommends the removal of Beenak McMahon playspace when upgrading Clements playspaces as the playspaces are effectively in the same space within 140metres of each other.

The need for a Youth area in the Northern half of the municipality was identified and a working group established. The working group including Darebin youth identified T.W. Blake Reserve as the location for this facility. This site has been chosen for its high visibility, proximity to public transport, Northland Shopping Centre and available space at the reserve. The design for the Youth facility has been developed in consultation with the working group and the community and has been referred to Councils Capital Works program for implementation.

Playspace upgrades identified as being a priority for this precinct are;

- Clements Reserve
- Frank Allen Arthur Dunstan Reserve
- Fyffe Reserve
- I.W. Dole Reserve
- Leslie Reserve
- McComas Reserve
- Nisbett Reserve
- T.W. Andrews Reserve

Map F6. Reservoir East Precinct Map



Playspace Access

- Regional Park Playspace
- District Park Playspace
- Major District Park Playspace
- Major Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Urban Playspace
- Playspace outside Darebin boundary
- 1500 metre access from Playspace
- Darebin Council Boundary
- Precinct Boundary
- Open Space



FIGURE 6 - DAREBIN PLAYSACE RESERVOIR EAST PRECINCT MAP

DATUM GDA 1984
PROJECTION MGA ZONE 55

Figure **F6**

Kingsbury/Bundoora

Over the past ten years the Kingsbury/Bundoora precinct has seen the development of several new housing estates, which have included new parks and playspaces. This precinct has a significantly large amount of public open space, 23.14ha per 1000 people. The open space is well distributed, of good quality and size. There is a deficiency of playspaces in the east of the precinct. This deficiency is far outweighed by the generous provision of open space sites including large areas of Conservation Bushland. The majority of this land is owned and managed by Latrobe University.

This precinct includes Darebin's 180ha Regional Park. Bundoora Park does not currently have any high quality play equipment, but does provide many other opportunities for family excursions and interaction with native and domestic farm animals. Plans for an all abilities adventure playground utilising the natural environment are underway. A Masterplan for Bundoora Park is recommended and will provide additional direction for the redevelopment of the smaller playspaces within the park when due for renewal.

The development of the Mount Cooper Estate, the precinct's oldest estate, includes two separate parks and access to Bundoora Park Oval sporting reserve. Sugargum Park remains an undeveloped site as playspace facilities were not included at the time of the estate development. Playspace deficiencies exist within this area and it is recommended that Sugargum Park be developed as a Neighbourhood Park with playspace facilities.

The East Reservoir Open Space Masterplan covers areas of this precinct and includes recommendations for playspace upgrades.

Playspace upgrades identified as being a priority for this precinct are;

- Bundoora Park (South-West)
- Bundoora Park (North)
- Bundoora Park (Tunaley Square)
- Bundoora Park (South-East)
- Judith Scott Reserve
- Link Reserve
- Scott Reserve

Preston West

The quantity of open space in the Preston West precinct is lower than other areas due to a lack of neighbourhood parks in the far west of the precinct providing 1.93ha per 1000 people. The community does have access to F. Cox Reserve, De Chene Reserve and the Merri Creek Corridor across Elizabeth Street in the City of Moreland.

The recently upgraded H.P. Zwar Park a 5.32ha Sporting District Park provides playspace opportunities in the area through the provision of large open spaces for casual or formal use and picnic facilities and playspace. Preston City Oval located within the Preston Central Retail Precinct also provides alternative playspace opportunities for local residents with a youth space in Bruce Street.

A deficiency in playspaces has been identified towards the south of the precinct, which cannot be met by other parks in the area due to the major barriers of High Street, St Georges Road and Bell Street. It is a recommendation of this strategy that Ray Braham Gardens adjoining the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre be upgraded to include playspace facilities and that the rear gate of the park be reopened to provide local access to the park.

Playspace upgrades identified as being a priority for this precinct are;

- Asling Reserve
- H.P. Zwar Reserve
- K.R. Larkins Reserve
- Newman Reserve
- A.H. Capp & W.H. Robinson Reserve

Map F8. Preston West Precinct Map



- Playspace Access**
- Regional Park Playspace
 - District Park Playspace
 - Major District Park Playspace
 - Major Neighbourhood Park Playspace
 - Neighbourhood Park Playspace
 - Urban Playspace
 - Playspace outside Darebin boundary
 - 1500 metre access from Playspace
 - Darebin Council Boundary
 - Precinct Boundary
 - Open Space



FIGURE 8 - DAREBIN PLAYSACE PRESTON WEST PRECINCT MAP

DATUM GDA 1984
PROJECTION MGA ZONE 55

0 500 1000 Metres

Figure **F8**

Preston East

The Preston East precinct contains a diverse mix of parks varying in size. This precinct has a total of 1.73ha of open space per 1000 people, which is the lowest in the municipality. The Open Space Strategy has recognised that this precinct has overall a particularly low quality of open space.

This precinct includes C.H. Sullivan Reserve. The Open Space Strategy recommends to develop to District Park level which would also include C.T. Barling Reserve and the connecting section of the Darebin Creek Corridor. The development of a playspace to District Playspace level at C.H. Sullivan will include accessible features increasing accessible playspace opportunities for the precinct. Greenbelt Reserve is currently an undeveloped Council site, which is recommended for development as a neighbourhood park. The priority for this playspace is lower due to the close proximity of C.H. Sullivan Reserve.

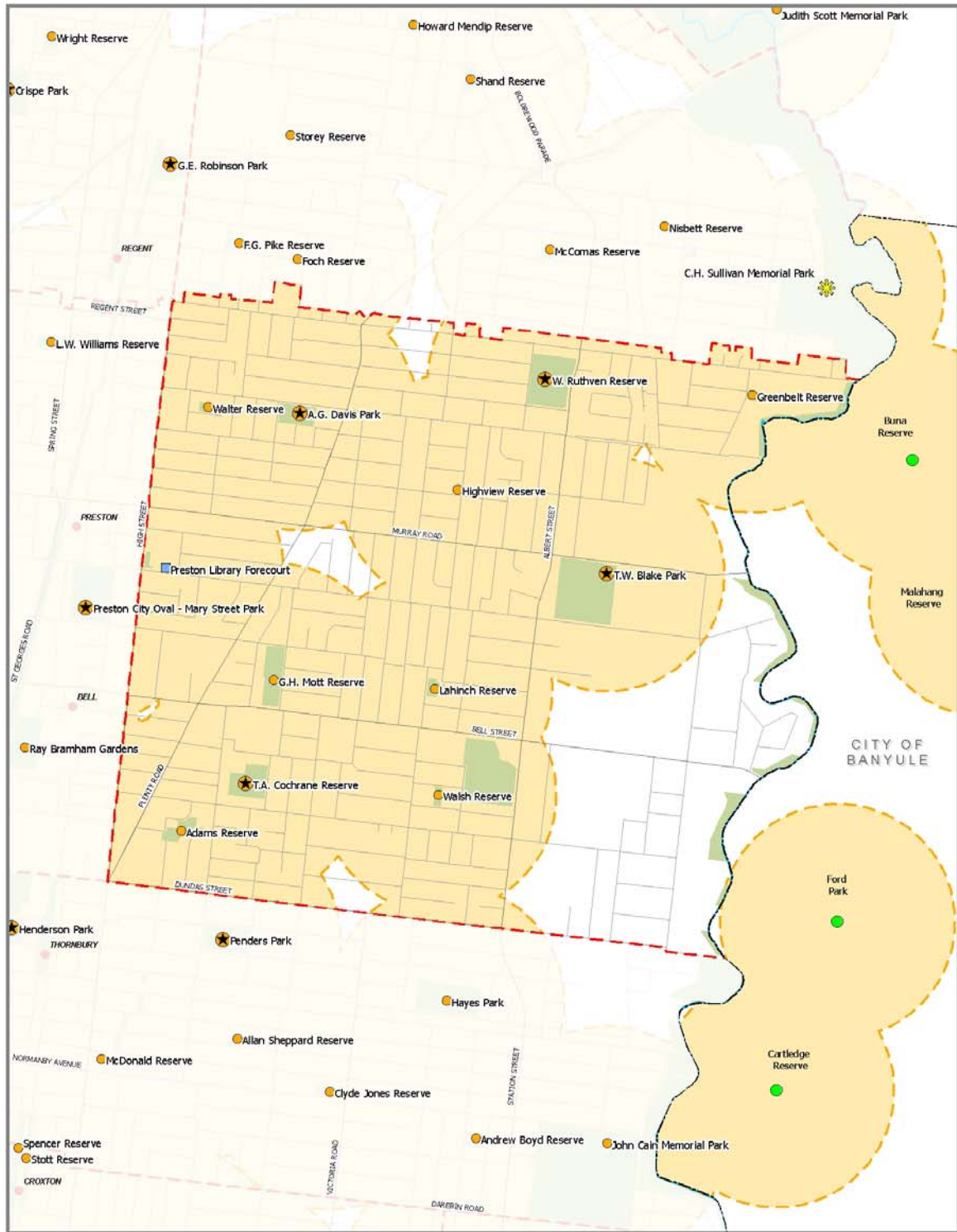
Playspace deficiencies have been identified in several areas including in the area of Highview Street, Preston. This neighbourhood currently relies on a small playspace behind the Maternal and Child Health Centre. Three playspace deficiencies exist which can be filled by including playspace facilities at Preston Library, T.W. Blake Reserve and G.H. Mott Reserves.

The Open Space Strategy recommends options for this area to address playspace and openspace deficiencies. The development of the Preston Library Forecourt as an Urban Playspace is one recommendation which will address some of this deficiency. This Urban Playspace will provide opportunities to link with Library activities and will provide an improved meeting space for local residents within a high use retail precinct. A Youth Space has been designed for T.W. Blake Park in consultation with youth and other stakeholders. The Open Space Strategy has also recommended a Masterplan be developed for T.W. Blake Park to guide the design and future park use and development.

Playspace upgrades identified as being a priority for this precinct are;

- Adams Reserve
- A.G. Davis Reserve
- Highview Reserve (rear of Maternal Child Health Centre)
- Lahinch Reserve
- Walter Reserve

Map F9. Preston East Precinct Map



Playspace Access

- Regional Park Playspace
- District Park Playspace
- Major District Park Playspace
- Major Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Urban Playspace
- Playspace outside Darebin boundary
- 1500 metre access from Playspace
- Darebin Council Boundary
- Precinct Boundary
- Open Space



FIGURE 9 - DAREBIN PLAYSACE PRESTON EAST PRECINCT MAP

DATUM GDA 1984
PROJECTION MGA ZONE 55

0 500 1000 Metres

Figure
F9

Thornbury

The Thornbury precinct is a well-established urban area, which has a good balance of well-distributed, diverse parks of good quality and various sizes, 2.99 ha of open space per 100 people. The precinct spans the entire middle section of the municipality from the Merri Creek Corridor in the West to the Darebin Creek Corridor in the East.

The precinct includes John Cain Memorial Park, the home of Darebin International Sports Centre the home of the State Soccer, State Lawn Bowls and the State Cycling Centre. A deficiency of playspace opportunities has been identified in this area and the John Cain Memorial Park Masterplan includes provision for a Neighbourhood playspace in the north-eastern corner adjacent to the Darebin Creek corridor.

A second deficiency with the precinct exists within boundaries of Dundas, Albert, Victoria and Flinders Street and a new playspace is recommended for Hayes Park.

Playspace upgrades identified as being a priority for this precinct are;

- Allan Shepherd Reserve
- Andrew Boyd Reserve (upgrade to Major Neighbourhood Park)
- Penders Park

Northcote

The Northcote Precinct has a distribution of good-sized, diverse open space that is generally of good quality, providing 2.61ha per 1000 people. The precinct adjoins the Merri Creek Corridor and includes large conservation areas including Strettle and Merri Park Wetlands suitable for supervised educative exploration.

This precinct has two District Parks of quite different character, the 12.19ha All Nations Park including a Major District Playspace and full youth area including skate area. Also in this precinct the 12.24ha Merri Park on the Merri Creek which includes a timber adventure style District Playspace as well as sports and bushland areas for play.

Playspace upgrades identified as being a priority for this precinct are;

- Merri Park
- Batman Park
- Oldis Gardens
- Northcote Community Gardens
- Peters Reserve
- Rubie Thomson Reserve
- Spencer Reserve
- Stott Reserve
- Woolhouse Reserve / Croxton School (Maintenance)

Map F11. Northcote Precinct Map



Playspace Access

- Regional Park Playspace
- District Park Playspace
- Major District Park Playspace
- Major Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Urban Playspace
- Playspace outside Darebin boundary
- 1500 metre access from Playspace
- Darebin Council Boundary
- Precinct Boundary
- Open Space



FIGURE 11 - DAREBIN PLAYSACE NORTHCOTE PRECINCT MAP

DATUM GDA 1984
PROJECTION MGA ZONE 55

City of DAREBIN

Figure
F11

Fairfield/Alphington

The Fairfield Alphington Precinct is a small precinct that has a large amount of open space 3.41ha per 1000 people due to the 19.95ha District Park at Darebin Parklands.

This precinct has several deficiencies in the provision of playspace opportunities. One area to the North East includes a large Industrial area and therefore the demand for playspaces is reduced. Two areas can be addressed by the inclusion of playspace facilities in existing open space. Broomfield Reserve includes several large mature trees located on busy Heidelberg Road. Although not an ideal location, this park provides the only opportunity to provide playspace facilities in the area and considered design including fencing would make this a successful space for short visits filling a gap for this community.

A playspace deficiency also exists in the southern area of the Fairfield Shopping Centre on Station Street. This street is a major barrier to residents accessing open space with young children. In lieu of available open space that meets the minimum size criteria, it is recommended that both Wingrove Reserve and Fairfield Station Reserve be upgraded to include playspace opportunities. Fairfield Reserve is categorised as an Urban Park and innovative design and playspace opportunities, which vary from the traditional playspace, will cater for the transient nature of the site.

The Playspace priorities for this precinct are in developing the new playspaces for the communities that do not currently have a playspace. The existing playspaces are currently meeting requirements and are prioritised in the Playspace Strategy in the section *Work Program in Public Parks*.

Playspace upgrades identified as being a priority for this precinct are;

- Breavington Reserve
- Pitcher Park

Map F12. Fairfield/Alphington Precinct Map



Playspace Access

- Regional Park Playspace
- District Park Playspace
- Major District Park Playspace
- Major Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Neighbourhood Park Playspace
- Urban Playspace
- Playspace outside Darebin boundary
- 1500 metre access from Playspace
- Darebin Council Boundary
- Precinct Boundary
- Open Space



FIGURE 12 - DAREBIN PLAYSACE FAIRFIELD/ALPHINGTON PRECINCT MAP

DATUM GDA 1984
PROJECTION MGA ZONE 55

0 100 200 Metres

Figure
F12

Play Design for Darebin in Public Parks

Diversity in Playspaces in Darebin

Darebin City Council recognises that not all age-ranges, community interests and needs can be catered for in every playspace. Careful strategic planning has been undertaken as part of this project to ensure that adequate and equitable provision of a diverse range of playspace settings and experiences are available at precinct and neighbourhood level.

Principles of Good Playspace Design:

Design and placement are complex issues when designing new or upgrading existing playspaces. The following issues need to be considered prior to commencing any design work:

Good Location, Layout & Access

- Is the playspace set back from the road?
- Are junior and senior structures within supervising distance of one another?
- Is there a sealed path leading to the playspace from the main entrance or main path?
- Is that path accessible by Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Australian Standards for Mobility and Access AS 1428 standards (minimum 1.5m wide)?

Diversity of experience

- Does this playspace provide a different range of play experiences to its adjacent local playspaces?
- Does it meet the desired development guidelines for its category of park?
- Does it provide a unique site character or setting, different to its adjacent local playspaces?
- Does it reflect the local community context?

Age-Appropriate Design

- Who is this playspace for?
- What age-group are the users mostly going to be?
- How will that change over the 10-15 year life-span of the playspace?
- Do the combination and complexity of activity reflect the age-group using the playspace?
- Is the layout mindful of possible conflicts and synergies that may occur between age-groups?
- Are age-groups not catered for in this playspace, catered for in adjacent local playspaces?

Providing challenge and interest

- Does this playspace provide a range of activities across the different types of play?
- Does this playspace use its landscape context for play or is play restricted to the play equipment?
- Does the play equipment make maximum use of both under and upper deck areas?
- Does this playspace provide well for developmentally appropriate graduated challenge?

Minimizing hazards

- Are there any potential conflicts between activities (for example swings or slide exits located in thoroughfares)?

Shelter / Shade

- Is natural shade provided for on the north or west facing aspect of play equipment, tables, and seats?
- Where barbecues and picnic facilities are provided is adequate shelter also provided?

Compliance with Australian Standards

- Does the playground need to be audited or the design signed-off in compliance with Australian Standards Playground Equipment AS 4685 (Parts 1-6) 2004, Australian Standards / NZ Standards for Playground Undersurfacing AS/NZS 4422/96 and Australian and New Zealand Standards for Installation and Maintenance AS/NZS 4486.1 1997?
- Has the finished installed playground been inspected by council and signed off by the playground supplier in compliance with the above Australian Standards?

Access For People With A Disability

Good accessible design benefits all members of the community, those with disabilities, pregnant and nursing carers, carers with prams, and the elderly. When playspaces are being developed or upgraded Council will seek to incorporate Australian Standards for Access & Mobility (AS 1428) into all designs. In instances where the playspace area poses restrictions for the safe inclusion of certain accessible playspace features, Council will seek alternative arrangements to provide equitable and dignified access for users. When playspaces are being upgraded, new playspaces will always be designed with improved access in mind. It is also important to consider that there are many different types of disability and therefore a wide range of physical implications that make a playspace accessible or not, some of these are discussed in more detail below.

“As a principle Council is committed to the provision of equitable and dignified access to playspaces for all Darebin residents”

Further to this section are the development standards (refer section *Development Standards*) that act as a reference point for what should and could be provided in terms of access for people with a disability at each hierarchy level of playspace. These guidelines compliment the guidelines found in the Darebin Open Space Strategy 2007-2017 and are guided by the Darebin Disability Access & Inclusion Plan (2009-2013).

Wheelchair Access

This is often the main focus of access in public spaces generally and often becomes the main focus in playspaces also. It is important to note that ramped access onto play structures or equipment is not always the most suitable way to provide access in the majority of playspaces.

The following principles should as a standard be followed in Regional, District and Major Neighbourhood playspaces for suitable wheelchair access in playspaces:

- Wide (minimum of 1.5m), sealed paths to playspaces and into activities such as swings
- In District and Regional Playspaces access paths to under deck spaces, play panels, and cubbies should also be provided as a minimum.
- Surfaces in paths that make wheeling interesting through additional colour or texture
- Places to wait and watch
- Access to different planting textures
- Paths to be no greater than 1 in 14 in grade and to provide adequate turning spaces and resting platforms for every 7 metre length of path at a 1 in 14 grade.
- Back support provided on seats, on at least one swing and in sandpits
- Accessible drinking fountains to be provided in all Regional, District and Major Neighbourhood playspaces

Ambulant Disabilities

These are children, young people or carers with independent, but limited mobility.

The following principles should as a standard be followed in Regional, District and Major Neighbourhood playspaces for suitable access for users with an ambulant disability:

- Clear changes of level in playspaces or on play structures using texture change in

surfacing

- In Regional and District playspaces a texture change in surfacing at all path intersections to clearly denote the need to stop and negotiate
- Colour change in handgrips at exits or level changes in decks on play structures to clearly denoting the need to stop and negotiate

Low or No Vision

These are visually impaired children, young people or carers with low vision or no vision.

The following principles should as a standard be followed in Regional and Major District Playspaces for suitable access for users with a vision impairment:

- Similar treatments to those listed in the section above
- In Regional and District playspaces use of sound, texture and different spatial qualities for interest to visually impaired users

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

These are children, young people of carers who are either completely deaf or having a hearing impairment where they have reduced hearing.

The following principles should be followed as a standard in Regional and Major District Playspaces for suitable access for deaf users or users with a hearing impairment:

- The inclusion of picture and text (and possibly Auslan) cues at key points within the playspace to make connections and provide information

Intellectual Disabilities

These are children, young people or carers with intellectual and cognitive disabilities such as Developmental Delay, Autism, Downs Syndrome etc.

The following principles should be followed as a standard in Regional and District playspaces for suitable access for users with an intellectual disability:

- In some cases, swings with larger seats need to be provided
- Retreat spaces need to be provided where frustrated users can have 'time-out' with dignity
- Consideration needs to be given to the provision of more concrete props for imaginative of dramatic play
- Clear boundaries to the playspace need to be provided, this may include use of planting, land form barriers, formal barriers or part-fencing (particularly when there are nearby hazards such as roads or water bodies)

Recommendations Summary:

Development Standards for Access for People with a Disability

- Improve path access associated with playspaces when developing or upgrading playspaces
- Provide a broader range of accessible design to and within Major District and Regional 'All Abilities Playspaces'
- Improve access and inclusion to playspaces in line with the playspace strategy development standards for the level of playspace within the playspace hierarchy

Development Standards

Public Park Playspaces

The Development Standards below provide a guide for design when developing Playspaces. Additional details regarding development guidelines for All Abilities Access are included in section Access All Abilities. *Note: For further information regarding the play categories listed in the development standards below refer to the Play Provision diagram in the section Strategy Context of this report.

Hierarchy	Development Standards	
	Should have:	Might have:
Neighbourhood – Pocket Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Playspace for Junior/Toddler Age Group (Swings as a minimum) • Playspace to cater for active and imaginative play * • Accessible Path to Playspace and Seating • Seating – with back and arms • Trees to provide natural shade • Signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Elements for Play • Picnic Table or Integrated seating • Fencing • Rubbish Bin • Sand Play Area • Garden Bed Planting (Drought-Tolerant) • Inground-edging
Consultation - Pocket Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information available on Council website • Mailout of Concept Design to residents within Local Neighbourhood • Advertisement in local school newsletter • Opportunity to comment directly to a Council Officer • Sign within park with council contact phone number 	
Neighbourhood	Should have:	Might have:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Playspace for Junior/Senior Age Group • Playspace to cater for active, imaginative, cognitive and social play * • Kick-About Space • Accessible Path to Playspace and Seating • Seating – with back and arms • Trees to provide natural shade • Rubbish Bin • Signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Elements for Play • Accessible Drinking Fountain • Picnic Table and Integrated Seating • Fencing • Sand Play Area • Garden Bed Planting (Drought-Tolerant) • Art/Sculpture • Inground-edging or accessible entry points (Depending on Site Conditions)

Consultation - Neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information available on Council website • Mailout of Concept Design to residents within Local Neighbourhood • Advertisement in local school newsletter • Opportunity to comment directly to a Council Officer • Sign within park with council contact phone number 	
Neighbourhood – Major	<p style="text-align: center;">Should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Playspace for Junior/Senior Age Group • Playspace to cater for active, imaginative, cognitive and social play * • Inground-edging or accessible entry points (where in-ground edging is not possible) • Kick-About Space • Landscape Play Elements • Accessible Path to Playspace and Seating • Accessible Path to Swings • Seating – with back and arms • Picnic Tables and integrated Seating • Trees to provide natural shade • Signage • Rubbish Bin 	<p style="text-align: center;">Might have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible Path to Under Deck Area • Accessible Drinking Fountain • Barbecue • Picnic Shelter • Fencing • Sand Play Area • Garden Bed Planting (Drought-Tolerant) • Art/Sculpture • Bicycle Racks • ½ Basketball Court or Hit Up Wall • Public Toilets • Informal Sporting Opportunities
Consultation - Neighbourhood Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information available on Council website • Advertisement in local Leader newspaper • Advertisement in local school newsletter • Mailout survey • Neighbourhood meeting / On-site workshop • Mailout of Concept Design to residents within Local Neighbourhood • Opportunity to comment directly to Council Officer • Sign within park with council contact phone number • Neighbourhood celebration in park 	
District	<p style="text-align: center;">Should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playspaces catering for all ages and offering a broader range of access to Playspace, to Swings, and to Underdeck Areas 	<p style="text-align: center;">Might have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramped access to Play Structure • Tactile Surfaces for Vision Impairment • Sand and Water Play

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playspaces catering for a diverse range of play experiences across all categories of play * • Accessible Path to Playspace and Seating • Accessible Path to Swings and under deck areas • Trees for natural shade • Open space areas for informal play • Landscape Play Elements • Garden Bed Planting (drought tolerant) • Inground-edging or accessible entry points (where in-ground edging is not possible) • Seats with backs and arms • Picnic tables and integrated seating • Barbecue • Picnic Shelter • Accessible Drinking Fountain • Bicycle Racks • Public Toilets • Parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities for Young People – depending on results of consultation • Facilities for 0-3 years – depending on consultation • Skate Facility • Fencing • Informal Sporting Areas • Art/Sculpture • Musical/Sound Elements
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information available on council website • Advertisement in local Leader newspaper • Advertisement in local school newsletter • Mailout survey • Neighbourhood meeting / On-site workshop • Mailout of Concept Design to residents within Local Neighbourhood • Temporary noticeboard displaying plan on site • Opportunity to comment directly to staff • Sign within park with council contact phone number <p>Opening event or celebration in park</p>	
District – Major	Should have:	Might have:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as District PLUS • Several Playspaces, including 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramped Access to Play Structure • Specialised Play Elements

	<p>one 'All Abilities Playspace' catering for a diverse range of play experiences across all categories of play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities for Young People – including ½ Basketball Court • Art/Sculpture • Musical/Sound Elements • Sand and Water Play • Tactile Surfaces for Vision Impairment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skate Facility • Fencing • Informal Sporting Areas • Facilities for 0-3 years – depending on consultation
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information available on council website • Advertisement in local Leader newspaper • Advertisement in local school newsletter • Mailout survey • Neighbourhood meeting / On-site workshop • Mailout of Concept Design to residents within Local Neighbourhood • Temporary noticeboard displaying plan on site • Advertised concept plan displayed in local customer service centres and local library • Opportunity to comment directly to staff • Sign within park with council contact phone number • Opening event or celebration in park 	
Regional Parks	<p>Should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as for District – Major PLUS • Ramped Access to Play Structure or ground level interaction • Specialised Play Elements • Fencing 	<p>Might have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory Planting • Auslan Signage / Cues • Accessible Sand Play • Facilities for 0-3 years – depending on consultation
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park listed for upgrade on Playspace, BMX and Skateparks web page of Council website • Mailout survey • Neighbourhood meeting / On-site workshop • Mailout of Concept Design to residents within Local Neighbourhood • Temporary noticeboard displaying plan on site • Advertised concept plan displayed in local customer service centres and local library • Opportunity to comment directly to staff 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign within park with council contact phone number • Opening event or celebration in park 	
Urban Spaces	Should have:	Might have:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playspace to cater for a diverse range of ages • Playspace integrated with furniture or sculptural elements • Interpretive signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory Planting • Musical Elements • Temporary Events or Installations
Consultation	Urban spaces throughout Darebin may vary in size and function. Consultation will vary from site to site and should therefore replicate the consultation process outlined above for a park of a similar size	
	Should have:	Might have:
Conservation Parkland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park environment as Playspace • Interpretive signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary Events or Installations • Educational Programs

(Note: That retrofits of playspaces may occur without consultation, where improvements are being made for example to paths to increase accessibility, or equipment is being modified or replaced due to wear and tear).

Children’s Services Centres

Refer to section Strategic Planning in Playspaces:Children’s Services Centres for further information regarding development standards.

Neighbourhood Houses

As Neighbourhood Houses are all uniquely individual in their programming and use of space, it is recommended that the recommended outcomes of the site assessments (refer Vol 4. of this strategy) are used as a guide to development of outdoor spaces in these centres.

Rationalisation of Playspaces

Relocation

Occasionally there may be situations where the site of a playspace needs to be relocated on site and in this situation the setting, context and proximity of the new site to the road should always be considered.

Closure

There should be no need for playspaces to close and be removed unless a preferred alternative local site is identified and in this situation consultation with the local community should be

undertaken and a final decision made by Council.

Developer Contributions Scheme

The City of Darebin also has a Developer Contribution Plan Overlay (DCP) that applies to buildings and works approvals under the Subdivision Act 1988. This is discussed at length in the Open Space Strategy. The implications of this are that council may acquire parcels of land or monies to the equivalent percentage of the unimproved value of the site for the development of open space for the community.

Joint-Use Playspaces

Council currently has joint use agreements at Croxton School in Northcote, Ruthven Primary School in Reservoir, and Reservoir Secondary College .

The current State Government view about school-community partnerships is to encourage joint and multi-use facilities and the development of 'community hub' models where a range of education and community infrastructure are located together. As stated in the Open Space Strategy council will continue to encourage State Government to develop equal partnerships that share development, management and maintenance responsibilities.

Any consideration of such a model by the City of Darebin would need to clearly consider the cost to council and the community for the potential benefits that would be realized, and as a principle meet an identified need as set out in Council Strategies.

Community Involvement in Playspaces

Darebin City Council has an ongoing commitment to engaging the community in decision-making processes, through consultation and public participation. Council ensures that its playspaces are designed by experts in the area of Landscape Architecture and Children's Play Design but recognises that community involvement is key to Darebin's playspaces becoming even more diverse and local in character.

Development of playspaces has in the past included community discussions and it is recognised, by Council, that this involvement is critical in gaining a complex local understanding and for achieving successful outcomes.

There are many benefits to including the community in the development of playspaces. Four objectives in particular have been identified and they underpin a range of valuable outcomes for the community that can be achieved through thoughtful planned consultation.

Inclusion, Understanding, Opportunity and Ownership

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

Broadening consultation to regularly include a wider range of groups will assist Council's understanding of the community's diverse needs. These groups include Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people from established and emerging communities, indigenous communities, people with a disability, older people and youth. Accessing these individuals is not always easy for Council and the inclusion of school communication tools such as newsletters and notice boards will provide an opportunity to advise residents of community consultation opportunities. Council will include a range of consultation techniques effectively engage a clear cross-section of the community.

Increased participation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) in parks and playspaces consultation is also a priority for council. This involvement will provide council with a better understanding of how these communities use parks and playspaces and assist Council with future planning.

Methods such as increasing access to multi-lingual information regarding consultation and accessing groups through forums such as the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) will also provide valuable networks within these communities and assist with facilitating consultation sessions. Incorporating consultation into local cultural festivals or events has also been identified as a successful way to engage with CALD communities.

Youth Participation

Council has Youth Participation Principles and the Young People in Darebin Parks Research Project 2005 document provides guidance for undertaking consultation and provides direction when designing for youth. The Youth Participation Principles are incorporated into the Playspace

Strategy work program.

Involving Young People in the planning and design processes is an important step to successful 'inclusive' community outcomes. Looking beyond standard community consultation towards a broader range of consultation techniques and forums to engage young people is also critical to ongoing success. A range of consultation such as using the web, youth events and workshops and the use of incentives such as movie tickets for participation are recommended as better ways of engaging young people in consultation. This provides council with better local knowledge of young people's use of parks and playspaces.

Consultation with the broader community will also include education to advocate for the 'right' for young people to use open space and will promote better equity and shared use of parks across the community.

Access for All

Participation of aged and disabled users in parks and playspaces consultation helps to break down barriers and ensures better outcomes in the design of All Abilities Playspaces and ultimately greater use of parks for these members of the community.

Where specific disability groups or local special schools are known to use particular sites or there is a much higher level of disability access involved in a park or playspace project more specific or individual consultation should be organised with these groups during both the planning and design concept stages.

Promotional information for accessibility in both parks and playspaces are to be provided by Council for both disabled and aged members of the community, outlining facilities and levels of access involved in playspaces across the municipality.

Ownership through participation

Darebin's parks are publicly owned open space and Council is the caretaker of this land for the community. When parks become tired the community use declines and subsequently community ownership and pride in the park declines. The park upgrades process is an opportunity for the community to regain pride and ownership in their park/playspace.

The consultation and design process assists the community to physically get back into the space and begin to reconnect (or in the case of undeveloped parks experience being in the space for the first time). Physically being in the space can open the communities mind to the project possibilities.

Quiet Knowledge

Council recognition of the importance of local knowledge is discussed many times within this document and the variety of ways to gather it. Thoughtful consultation techniques can assist Council in tapping into community 'Quiet Knowledge'. Quiet Knowledge is a combination of knowledge the local community has of how their park is used, it's history, the good and bad and other more subtle information that makes the neighbourhood unique. This information is not always apparent to even the community and therefore a variety of methods are utilised to draw out

and capture this important information for the planning and design of the park.

The involvement of the community from the initial analysis stage prior to detailed design is critical for ongoing ownership of local parks. During consultation, Council officers will use varying techniques for expanding ideas around local spaces, What is valuable to the local community?, What do we need? What could it be? What is possible?

Park Sameness can be seen as a result of repeating the same techniques in public consultation. Thinking laterally about 'other' non- standard opportunities and locations for playspaces, changing processes and using a variety of techniques for consulting changes the design outcome. Creating diversity of experience that is specific to the local community's needs and desires is a priority for Council.

Consultation Methods

Well considered consultation requires a commitment from Council and the Community and in some case can take several months to complete. For this reason the consultation process and complexity will vary according to the project and the different levels of parks and are listed in section Development Standards. These standards sit under the following hierarchy:

- Neighbourhood Park - Pocket Park
- Neighbourhood Park
- Major Neighbourhood Park
- District Park
- Major District Park
- Regional Park
- Urban Space
- Conservation Parkland

Prior to meeting with residents, surveys are used to develop a greater understanding of general community needs or desires and to provide an opportunity for members of the community who are unable or do not want to be involved at other stage of the project. Through surveys and tailored consultation with specific user groups, Council is able to develop a greater sensitivity to the very different ways that some people and cultures use open space.

On site workshops and exercises can be tailored to different ages, abilities and backgrounds and are important to gaining information through methods other than direct questioning. During these processes, information is often revealed for the first time, especially in the case of young people and children. Observation is also critical, not just observing children's play, but also in looking at what is highly valued and well used, this is key to understanding the difference between what adults, young people and children understand as valuable in a playspace.

When developing playspaces for neighbourhood parks, Council will send out concept plans to the local community for comment. This includes schools and other local community groups. All information will provide some translations, information to access Councils multilingual line and a youth comment section. In addition, this standard consultation, Major Neighbourhood, District Parks and Regional Park Playspace consultation will include opportunities to attend a public meeting and a workshop in the park. Various methods will be utilised to access and involve residents from Diverse Communities, Disability Groups, Aging Communities and Youth. (refer to section Development Standards).

Understanding

When developing playspaces it is important to understand that adults, children and young people understand, use and negotiate open space very differently and that we as a community need to use these spaces simultaneously. We all have the right to be in parks and as increasing population density places more demand on our open space thoughtful design of 'shared space' is going to become increasingly important. Participation in community consultation workshops provide an opportunity to develop an understanding and acceptance of others opinions and views, a key factor in community building.

Expectations

Playspace consultation gives the community the opportunity to learn about Council processes, the broader Open Space System to hear each others views and to hear from experts in child/adolescent play and landscape design. This process is also important to mediating Council and community expectations, as they can differ and don't always fit with available funding or conventional ideas of what a park should or could be.

Connection through Art

Public Art is a key method for creating a 'local sense of identity' in parks and playspaces and a key way to involve local communities and where possible, Council will look for opportunities to undertake art projects in parks with the community (refer to section Strategic Directions: Darebin Playspaces).

Ownership through use

Creating a strong sense of connection through the design and consultation process, capital works implementation and ongoing events has proven to be valuable for both the community and council. During consultation residents are encouraged to be familiar with who is using the park and to advise Council of any issues that may arise. An increased level of maintenance is arranged for the 6 months and parks maintenance staff and the community can become familiar with the users of the park.

Council organised events are not always possible for all parks but Council supports the community utilising parks for events and will assist where possible to prepare the park for the event by providing additional maintenance and litterbins. For major park upgrades, a park opening or a summer event in the park will be arranged as a celebration for the community. Events in parks can be a natural evolution of community spirit and ownership and are a wonderful opportunity to bring communities together.

Darebin Community Consultation Model:



Recommendations Summary:

Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) in Consultation

- Broaden the range of consultation methods to engage a cross-section of both Established and Emerging Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities
- Utilise multi-lingual translations when distributing public promotional material and information through venues such as local schools
- Continue to develop Councils relationship with the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) for support, facilitation and advice

Consulting Young People

- Introduce a broader range of consultation techniques for engaging young people
- 'Advocate' for the right of young people to use open space

Access for All

- Involve local disability groups and/or special schools in consultation at the planning and design concept stages of park and playspace projects with a high level of disability access.
- Investigate opportunities to increase promotional opportunities to provide information on disability access in playspaces

Ownership through participation

- Encourage community participation through involvement in consultation for public park and playspace upgrades and development projects

Quiet Knowledge

- Draw out and use 'local knowledge' when consulting with the community in public park and playspace projects

Consultation Methods

- Employ a range of different consultation techniques to maximise community engagement
- Annually evaluate consultation and community satisfaction on playspace projects

Ownership Through Use

- Facilitate community celebration of a major public park playspace projects by organising a park opening or event

Promoting Play & Playspaces in Darebin

General Information to Be Promoted

Better promotion of Playspaces in Darebin is essential to creating more actively used Open Space. The Darebin Community have told us that the following types of information would help them to better use Darebin's Playspaces and Parks:

- Location (including Melways REF)
- Facilities Available
- Age Group Catered For
- Accessibility
- Public Transport
- Toilets
- Fencing

Parks Alive

Parks Alive is the City of Darebin's parks website, providing information to the community online about all of Darebin's parks. It is recommended that as an outcome of this project Open Space Planning at Darebin seek to build on this website by providing online information about the facilities offered at Darebin's Playspaces.

Printed Information

Printed information on Playspaces has the potential to reach widely into the community. It is recommended that as an outcome of this project, the following publications are developed to promote Playspaces in Darebin:

- Playspace Strategy Strategic Directions
- Playspace Strategy Best Practice Principles for Children's Services Centres
- A promotional pamphlet for Children / Young People about Playspaces in Darebin – including a map and facilities. This is to be distributed via Children's Services Centres, Neighborhood Houses, Community Centres, Schools and Customer Service Centres

Information will be made available in alternate formats and large print upon request and details regarding access to the Multi-Lingual Line for translations of information in a range of community languages will be made available on all publications.

Playspace Strategy Website

The website has been developed for the purposes of this project. Once the strategy is adopted by council it is anticipated that ongoing information regarding the project will be regularly updated.

Other Opportunities for Promotion of Playspaces

Other opportunities to promote Darebin's Playspaces in the future should be sought, in particular the opportunity to promote at any of Darebin's regular events or festivals.

Recommendations Summary:

Marketing & Promotion

- Investigate and evaluate more effective ways to promote playspaces in Darebin

Website

- Continue to develop the 'Darebin Parks Alive' web pages to include more detailed information about playspaces
- Annually update accessibility and facility information in the community portal and Parks Alive web pages

Printed Material

- Develop Darebin playspace promotional material focusing on location, facilities and children's information
- Distribute promotional material on playspaces at Darebin events, through customer service centres, local libraries and Bundoora Park Visitor's Centre.

Playspace Management

Effective management of Playspaces are critical to the success of their use and longevity. The following section deals with some of the key issues related to the management of Playspaces in Darebin.

Lifecycle of Public Playspaces

It is anticipated that generally the lifecycle of a Playspace in a public park will be between 10-15 years.

Regular equipment safety audits

Playspaces in public parks and children's services centres are independently audited for safety and compliance issues on a 6 monthly basis.

One recommendation of this Strategy is that the process for auditing is reviewed to provide council with more specific information and the contract re-tendered to provide for the change in scope of work.

Maintenance of Public Playspaces

Playspaces in public parks are inspected on a fortnightly basis. Materials such as sand and mulch are topped-up bi-annually and centres are encouraged to top up mulch and sand if required in between.

Maintenance of Children's Services Centre Playspaces

In addition to the regular ongoing maintenance, an annual review is undertaken at all the centres to identify larger maintenance / upgrading issues and schedule works into council's facilities maintenance program.

Maintenance of Neighbourhood House Playspaces

In addition to the regular ongoing maintenance, an annual review is undertaken at all the centres to identify larger maintenance / upgrading issues and schedule works into council's facilities maintenance program.

Common Maintenance Problems

Listed below are some of the more common maintenance issues occurring and council's process for managing them:

Non-compliance

Many of Darebin's playgrounds were manufactured and installed prior to the adoption of the current Australian Standards for Playground Equipment AS: 4685 (Parts 1-6) 2004. Whilst not retrospective, all upgrades undertaken through Darebin's annual Playground Upgrades program look to ensure that playspaces are brought in line with the current standards.

Mulch

Impact absorbing tested soft-fall mulch is measured for appropriate depth in accordance with Australian Standards / NZ Standards for Playground Undersurfacing AS/NZS 4422/96 during fortnightly inspections. As mentioned earlier soft-fall mulch is topped up generally at playspaces on a bi-annual basis.

Vandalism

Vandalism in playspaces occurs randomly and can range from low-level graffiti to complete destruction of a playspace. While it is important that the environmental design of new or upgraded playspaces consider prevention techniques, it is also critical that low level vandalism and incidences of graffiti and rubbish dumping are attended to as soon as possible. Care in this area has been shown to have a large effect on public perception of safety and therefore use of parks and playspaces, as well as the re-occurrence or escalation of vandalism.

Graffiti Management

Darebin City Council has a Graffiti Management Strategy adopted by Council in 2008. Environmental design is identified as key method for reducing the occurrence of graffiti and maintaining public perceptions of safety through design promoting legitimate activity. Council encourages the regular removal of graffiti through council programs and in rapid removal in particular is considered one of the most effective methods of preventing re-occurrence

Repair of random items

For various reasons play equipment items may over time cease to operate effectively. These issues should be identified as part of the regular fortnightly inspections and immediate repair or replacement of the missing or broken part should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Replacement of random items

For various reasons play equipment items may over time also become degraded and no longer functional. In this circumstance the item will be either replaced by another like item or re-considered as part of an entire playspace upgrade. In all cases discussion between the various responsible areas of council should occur to decide the best option for replacement.

Recommendations Summary:

Maintenance Assessments

- Further develop the data collection, reporting and use of the bi-annual playspace maintenance assessments.
- Review playspace maintenance audit processes and market test on a regular basis

Graffiti Reduction

- Develop a graffiti management plan for playspaces in line with current Council programs and policy on graffiti management

Action Plan for Playspaces

Children's Services Centres

Renewal and upgrade of playspaces in Children's Services Centres is currently supported by a combination of council funding, centre fundraising and various grants programs on a case by case basis. A recommendation of this strategy is that a review of current funding arrangements, planning and support for renewal and capital development is undertaken by the appropriate areas of council to determine planning, ongoing maintenance requirements, as well as funding arrangements for future capital improvement.

Neighbourhood Houses

Renewal and upgrade of outdoor areas and playspaces in Neighbourhood Houses is currently supported by both council's 'Community Grants Program' and Federal / State Government grants funding on a case by case basis. A recommendation of this strategy is that a review of current funding arrangements and planning processes is undertaken by the appropriate areas of council to determine planning, ongoing maintenance requirements, as well as funding arrangements for future capital improvement.

Playspaces in Darebin Parks

The actions listed below are a combination of works proposed requiring operational and / or capital funding for playspaces in public parks. Priorities have emerged through site assessments and precinct analysis and aim to support recommendations put forward in this strategy.

The works program includes overall City of Darebin actions that impact on the entire municipality, then actions that are relevant to each precinct. The action plan will guide the development of a 15 year Capital Works Program. Funding will be subject to Council approval and funding grants will be accessed where possible to deliver the 15 year program.

The priorities identified in the program are defined as follows:

A – to be completed 1-4 years

B – to be completed 5-8 years

C – to be completed 9+ years

Municipal Wide

Actions	Responsibility	Priority
Prepare a 15 year Capital Works program for the renewal of existing and the creation of new playspaces in Darebin	Leisure & Open Space	A
Review existing renewal programs, programming and maintenance for playspaces in Children's Services Centres and Neighbourhood Houses	Early Years Unit / Facilities Maintenance / Leisure & Open Space /	A
Review external safety and compliance bi-annual maintenance assessment process	Leisure & Open Space / Darebin Parks	A

and reporting mechanism		
Review existing Playspace Maintenance Service Levels to extend beyond Play Equipment to broader 'Playspace Environment'	Leisure & Open Space / Darebin Parks	A
Develop a graffiti management plan for playspaces in line with current Council programs and policy on graffiti management	Leisure & Open Space / Darebin Parks / Community Access Health & Safety	A
Develop and implement a Regional All Abilities Playspace at Bundoora Park	Bundoora Park / Leisure & Open Space	A
Develop and implement local neighbourhood 'pedestrian priority' measures as outlined in the Transport & Walking Strategies	Transport Planning	A
Review current funding levels for renewal, playground upgrades, master planning and accessibility budgets in line with strategy recommendations	Bundoora Park / Leisure & Open Space	A

Reservoir East

Actions	Responsibility	Priority
Pending Council's decision on the development of the proposed All Abilities Skatepark at TW Blake Reserve, remove or replace the min-ramp at J.C.Donath Reserve	Leisure & Open Space	A
Develop new playspace at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> San Leandro Drive Reserve 	Leisure & Open Space	A
Upgrade playspace at C.H. Sullivan Reserve to District playspace, once Park Masterplan is undertaken	Leisure & Open Space	A
Remove existing playspace at Beenak McMahon Reserve and consolidate at upgraded Major Neighbourhood Playspace at Clements Reserve	Leisure & Open Space	A
Upgrade existing playspaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> J.C.Donath Reserve (East) D.R. Atkinson Reserve Clements Reserve Frank A.A. Dunstan Reserve F.G. Pike Reserve Foch Reserve Fyffe Reserve Howard/Mendip Reserve I.W. Dole Reserve Leslie Reserve Mc Comas Reserve Nisbett Reserve Shand Reserve Storey Reserve T.W. Andrews Reserve 	Leisure & Open Space <i>To be undertaken in 09/10</i> <i>To be undertaken in 09/10</i> <i>Completed in 07/08</i> <i>Completed in 08/09</i> <i>Completed in 08/09</i>	B C A* A* C B A C A A* A* A B C A*

Kingsbury / Bundoora

Task	Responsibility	Priority
Develop and implement a Regional All Abilities Playspace at Bundoora Park	Bundoora Park, Leisure & Open Space	A
Develop a new playspace at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sugargum Park 	Leisure & Open Space	A
Upgrade existing playspaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barlow Rise Reserve Bundoora Park (South-West) Bundoora Park (North) Bundoora Park (Tunaley Square) Bundoora Park (South-East) Bundoora Park (Coopers Settlement) Gresswell Grange Reserve Judith Scott Reserve Link Reserve Scott Reserve Springthorpe Reserve 	Leisure & Open Space	C A A A A B B A A A C

Preston West

Task	Responsibility	Priority
Develop a new playspace at : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ray Braham Gardens 	Leisure & Open Space	B
Upgrade existing playspaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asling Reserve • H. Swain Reserve • H.P. Zwar Reserve • J.S. Grey Reserve • K.R. Larkins Reserve • L.W. Williams • Newman Reserve • Paywit Reserve • Preston City Oval – Mary Street Reserve • A.H. Capp & W.H. Robinson Reserve • Vale Reserve 	Leisure & Open Space <i>Completed 07/08</i> <i>Completed 08/09</i>	A* B A* B A C A B C A C

Preston East

Task	Responsibility	Priority
Develop new playspaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G.H. Mott Reserve • Greenbelt Reserve • Preston Library Forecourt 	<p><i>To be undertaken in 09/10</i></p> <p><i>To be undertaken in 09/10</i></p>	<p>A*</p> <p>C</p> <p>A*</p>
Investigate further open space opportunities for playspace development at Sylvester Grove / Highview Street, Preston East		A
Develop and implement new All Abilities Youth Activity Area and Skatepark at T.W. Blake Reserve		A
Upgrade existing playspaces at : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adams Reserve • A.G. Davis Reserve • Highview Reserve • Lahinch Reserve • T.A. Cochrane Reserve • Walsh Reserve • Walter Reserve • W.R. Ruthven V.C. Reserve 	<p>Leisure & Open Space</p> <p><i>To be undertaken in 09/10</i></p>	<p>A</p> <p>A</p> <p>A*</p> <p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>B</p> <p>A</p> <p>C</p>

Thornbury

Task	Responsibility	Priority
Develop new Neighbourhood Park playspace at John Cain Reserve in parallel as part of overall Site Development Plan	Leisure & Open Space	B
Develop new Neighbourhood Park playspace at Hayes Park	Leisure & Open Space	B
Upgrade Neighbourhood Park playspace at Andrew Boyd Reserve to Major Neighbourhood Park playspace	Leisure & Open Space	A
Upgrade playspaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allan Shepherd Reserve • Clyde Jones Reserve • Henderson Park • McDonald Reserve • Penders Park • Turner Reserve 	Leisure & Open Space <i>Completed 08/09</i>	A B C C A* B

Northcote

Task	Responsibility	Priority
Upgrade Major District playspace at All Nations Park (Eastern)	Leisure & Open Space	B
Upgrade District playspace at Merri Park	Leisure & Open Space	A
Upgrade existing playgrounds at:	Leisure & Open Space	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Nations (Southern) • All Nations (Youth Space) • All Nations (Outdoor Exercise Area) • Baden Morgan Reserve • Batman Park • Derby Street Reserve • Johnson Park • McAdam Reserve • Oldis Gardens / Northcote Park • Northcote Community Gardens • Pearl Reserve • Peters Reserve • Rubie Thompson Reserve • Spencer Reserve • Stott Reserve • Susan Walsh Reserve • Woolhouse Reserve / Croxton School (Maintenance) • Woolhouse Reserve / Croxton School (Upgrade) 	<p>Completed in 08/09</p> <p>Completed in 08/09</p>	<p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>C</p> <p>A</p> <p>B</p> <p>C</p> <p>B</p> <p>A</p> <p>A</p> <p>C</p> <p>A</p> <p>A*</p> <p>A</p> <p>A*</p> <p>C</p> <p>A</p> <p>B</p>

* Note that Woolhouse Reserve is a custom designed playspace and is therefore divided into two categories one which deals with ongoing maintenance of equipment, the other which deals with an upgrade / replacement of the structure. With this type of playspace it is considered that the timeframe for structure replacement is longer than with off-the-shelf equipment, however the routine maintenance is more regular.

Fairfield / Alphington

Task	Responsibility	Priority
Develop new playspaces at: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broomfield Reserve• Fairfield Railway Station• Wingrove Reserve	Leisure & Open Space	A A B
Investigate opportunity to develop a nature based playspace at Darebin Parklands, in line with masterplan recommendations	Darebin Parklands / Leisure & Open Space / DCMC	B
Upgrade existing playspaces at:	Leisure & Open Space	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breavington Reserve		B
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pitcher Park		B

Implementation and Review of this Strategy

Implementation of this strategy will require a substantial commitment of financial and staff resources by council over the next 10 -15 years. It is important that appropriate budget allocations be made each year in both capital works and operational budgets, to maintain progress in improving and maintaining Darebin's playspaces.

The Council department/s responsible for implementing the tasks listed in the works program are identified in section *Work Program in Public Parks* of this strategy.

Progress in implementation of this Strategy should be monitored and reported regularly to Council and to residents and ratepayers through Council publications, the Annual Report and local media.

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Glossary of Terms

For the benefit of consistency throughout this project the following specific terms will be referred to:

Access All Abilities – in playspaces refers to children and carers of all abilities having access to participate in play spaces.

Age Ranges – this is generally broken up into 5 categories; 0-3 years (toddler), 3-5 years (kindergarten), 5-8 years (junior), 8-12 years (senior), 13 years – 18 years (young people)

Australian Standards for Playgrounds – this refers mostly to 2 critical documents; firstly the AS 4685. 1-6: 2004 which are the standards dealing with the design, manufacturing, installation and maintenance of playground equipment, secondly the AS/NZS 4422: 1996 which is the standard that deals with playground surfacing. These documents are considered 'best practice' guidelines.

Australian Standards for Access & Mobility – this refers to AS 1428 which are the recognized standards that deal with design and construction for building and infrastructure for disabled access and inclusion.

Bad Risk or Hazard – these are elements of a playspace that give no play value to a child or young person's experience, except to cause serious injury or harm. All playspaces should be maintained effectively to avoid these and assessed regularly. If bad risks or hazards are located they should be removed or repaired as soon as possible.

Best Practice Principles – these are principles that have been developed as part of this project to guide and improve the quality of outdoor playspaces in children services centres in Darebin

CALD Communities – refers to Darebin's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities

Carers – refers to an adult responsible for the child's safety and well-being whilst using the playspace. This can range from a sibling, parent or grandparent, to a centre carer.

Categories of Play – these are the 2 main ways play is experienced; structured and unstructured.

Children's Services Centres – this includes all centre-based care managed by council for children 0-5 years including long day care centres, occasional care centres, kindergartens or kindergartens and playgroups in maternal child health centres

DDA – refers to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Elements of Play – these are the main components of playspaces and include 5 critical elements; structures (active play), open space, carers, explorative (creative) play and special features

Entrapment Points – refer to set openings in play equipment where fingers, hands, feet, necks and heads can be trapped and cause injury.

Fall Heights – refers to the set deck height of a structure from which a child might fall.

Fall Zones – refers to the space around a fixed play structure that is over 500mm high that a child might fall into from that structure.

Good Risk or Challenge – these are elements of a playspace that allow for children and young people to test and develop their skills effectively without causing serious injury or harm. They are a necessary part of a good quality playspace.

Graduated Challenge – refers to the provision of a diversity of age appropriate play experiences within a playspace. This is said to minimise the risk associated with accidents caused by inappropriate use of equipment

Maintenance – refers to the routine inspections and the subsequent work undertaken by council to maintain safe and compliant play spaces

Neighbourhood Houses – these are local community centres that have designated playspaces for playgroup and occasional care programs. The outdoor space may also be used by other community programs including youth groups

Open Space – this refers to parks, reserves, urban spaces and areas of environmental significance. Playspaces may occur in any of these settings

Playground Safety Audits – refers to the quarterly audits undertaken to assess the risk and compliance issues with current playspaces in both public Playspaces and children’s services centres

Playgrounds Strategy Review – refers to Council’s current strategy that was adopted in 1999

Play Provision – the method by which play is planned and provided for across the municipality

Play Structure – are for active or physical play and may include off-the-shelf and custom designed equipment for play

Play Value – this describes the degree to which a play space engages users effectively

Playspace – a children’s play environment that may include some or all of the following; play structures, trees and landscaping, furniture and art elements. Playspaces in Darebin are currently found in public parks and reserves, children’s services centres, and schools. It is expected that they will also come to include urban spaces and environmental areas in the future

Playspace Strategy Review – refers to the review of this specific project

Shelter – in playspaces is usually either a structure (ie. shade sail / verandah) or natural (ie. trees)

Trip Hazards – refer to any raised edges or structures below 150mm that might cause tripping and falling to occur within a playspace

Types of Play – these include the 4 main types of play experience; physical, cognitive, creative or imaginative, and social

Undersurfacing – refers to the material used within the fall zones of a playground area. To be compliant with *AS/NZS 4422: 1996* these must be a ‘tested’ material and can include soft fall mulch, rubber materials, as well as pea gravel and sand. The depth of the undersurfacing within a fall zone is determined by the fall height, but should be a minimum of 250mm.

Upgrade – refers to the capital works process whereby a playspace is improved.

Appendices

- **Summary of 2009 Victorian Children’s Services Centre Regulations:**
97. Outdoor Space
- **Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development:**
Discussion Point on Natural Environments in Early Childhood Centres

97. OUTDOOR SPACE

- (1) A licensee must ensure that outdoor space is provided at the children's service that:
- (a) has a usable area of at least 7 square meters for each child who is cared for or educated by the children's service;
 - (b) includes features that enable each child who is cared for or educated by the children's service to explore and experience the natural environment;
 - (c) includes adequate shading to protect children from harmful exposure to the sun (Penalty: 10 penalty units)
- (2) In calculating the area of usable outdoor space the following must be excluded:
- (a) pathways or thoroughfares less than 3 metres wide;
 - (b) car parking areas;
 - (c) storage sheds and other fixed items that prevent children from using the space;
 - (d) any other ancillary area.
- (3) This regulation does not apply to a limited hours children's service, a short term children's service or an outside school hours care service.

98. OUTDOOR SPACE - OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE SERVICES

- (1) A licensee of an outside schools hours care service must ensure that the following is provided for each child cared for or educated by the service at or near the service at the children's service:
- (a) Outdoor space with a usable area of at least 12 square metres; or
 - (b) Indoor playing space with a usable area of at least 12 square metres.

Penalty : 10 penalty units

- (2) The indoor playing space referred to in subregulation (1)(b) is in addition to the space required under regulation 96.

Children's Services Regulations 2009

Regulation 97(1)(b) requires that the outdoor space that is provided at a children's service with a standard licence includes features that enable each child who is cared for or educated by the children's service to explore and experience the natural environment. Outdoor spaces should include a range of different natural features such as sand, soil, grass, a variety of different plantings and trees.

It is not enough for children to look at trees and plants in children's services, they must be able to actively explore, engage with, and experience different types of natural environments. This means allowing children to touch and interact with the natural environment in their everyday play.

Features that enable children to explore and experience the natural environment

A natural environment in a children's service is an environment which includes natural elements.

Natural environments may include:

- gardens where children can grow their own plants
- sandpits for sensory, symbolic and physical play
- digging patches where children can use garden equipment
- a range of planting to encourage a variety of modes of play such as playing with gum nuts, small branches, flowers, stones and bark
- small pits of pebbles, gravel, coarse sand and smooth river rocks for fine motor and imaginative play
- plants for picking and eating
- plants that encourages birds, butterflies and other insects
- trees which provide shade
- worm farms and compost areas for environmental education
- water play areas for sensory play.

Why include natural environments in outdoor spaces

Current research clearly shows that natural environments and outdoor play are beneficial to children in many ways. Playing outdoors is important for developing capacities for creativity, symbolic play, problem solving and intellectual development. Outdoor play has clear physical benefits for developing children including helping children to acquire gross motor skills, eye-hand coordination and helping to prevent obesity.

Sensory stimulation derived from interacting with natural environments allows children to learn with all of their senses. These senses include seeing, hearing, touching and smelling. It is well known that physical activity is beneficial for children in many ways. In a recent review of literature concerning children outdoors, Munoz examines research linking time spent outdoors to increased physical activity, healthy development and overall wellbeing.

Research also shows that children who have trouble concentrating benefit from playing outdoors, as after playing outdoors these children are better able to concentrate on tasks.

Natural environments give staff members in children's services opportunities to teach children about caring for the world in which we live. Seeing plants grow and change throughout the year helps children to understand and learn more about nature.

Including natural environments in outdoor play spaces

Including natural elements into an outdoor play space does not have to look a particular way, there is no formula that has to be followed. The design will take into account the size and configuration of the space, the way in which the space is used at the children's service and the ages of the children who play in the space.



An outdoor play space with natural features designed for toddlers in long day care will look very different from an outdoor space with natural features designed for an outside school hours care service.

Considerations when designing or modifying outdoor play spaces with natural environments

Natural play spaces can provide rich opportunities for children to explore new ideas and to develop their interests and understanding.

When thinking about the design of an outdoor space for children the following opportunities for children should be provided:

- to explore and develop a relationship with the natural environment;
- to gain a sense of freedom; and
- to explore and to learn the skills required to manage self risk.

It is not necessary to redesign the whole outdoor space in order to include natural features. In addition to trees and other smaller plants and shrubs, pots, tyres and tubs may be used to contain natural materials for play such as stones, sand, soil etc. Flowers can be grown in small tubs and gardens for the children to grow their own plants can be created in raised beds which can be constructed or bought commercially.

Natural environments indoors

Natural environments do not have to be limited to outdoors. There are many ways in which the natural environment can enhance the children's indoor program. Pot plants and small tubs in which to grow plants are visually appealing in children's rooms. Parts of branches and small logs with the bark attached can be used in imaginative play in conjunction with other materials. Pine cones, seed pods, leaves, gumnuts and small stones can be used in different ways including opportunities for children to explore simple science and maths concepts such as classifying, counting and weighing. Sand and water trays inside provide additional interesting experiences for children's play.

Program planning and natural environments

The *Children's Services Act 1996* requires the proprietor of a children's service to ensure that there is an educational or recreational program available for all children being cared for or educated (section 26A).

This program must be based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, takes into account the individual differences of each child and enhances development. An interesting and dynamic outdoor play space which includes natural features adds interest and stimulation to the program provided and creates additional variety for children's learning.

Early Years Frameworks

Learning outcome two in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (2009) states that 'Children are connected to and contribute to their world'. This outcome requires educators to help children to develop an awareness of the impact of human activity on the environment and the interdependence of living things. Natural environments within children's services are the arena in which children learn these things.

Belonging, Being and Becoming, the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2009) examines the practice of early childhood pedagogy and the role that good learning environments play in teaching. 'Play spaces in natural environments include plants, trees edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud, water and other elements from nature. These spaces invite open ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature. They foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education'.

Designing outdoor play spaces with natural features

There are many books on designing outdoor play spaces for children, these will be of help in sourcing ideas.

Local expert consultants may be contacted for help with designs for outdoor play spaces and advice about child friendly and hardy plants.

References

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Munoz, S. A. 2009. *Children in the outdoors*. Sustainable Development Research Centre. Horizon Scotland.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. 2009, *Victorian Early Learning and Development Framework for Children from Birth to Eight Years*, Melbourne
www.education.vic.gov.au/earlylearning/evldf

Written resources

Outdoor Play Guide for Victorian Children's Services.
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
www.education.vic.gov.au/licensedchildservices

Elliot, S (editor). 2008. *The outdoor playspace naturally: For children birth to five years*. Pademelon Press. Melbourne.

Organisations

Playground and Recreational Association of Victoria (PRAV)
www.prav.asn.au

PRAV supports and work with many different people and agencies in the community, including local government, schools, early childhood centres, playground designers and landscapers and playground manufacturers who have an interest in children and outdoor play experiences.

Environmental Education in Early Childhood (Vic) Inc (EEEC)

home.vicnet.net.au/~eeec/index.php

EEEC aims to promote a holistic approach to environmental education and sustainable practices in early childhood and the early years of primary school. The approach involves policy development, house keeping practices, play and learning experiences and strategies for working with children, staff and parents.

Arabic

توفر "استراتيجية مساحات اللعب 2020-2010" معلومات حول مساحات اللعب الخارجية في منتزهات داربين العامة والحضانات ومراكز رعاية الأطفال والبيوت المجتمعية الخاصة بالمجلس. لمزيد من المعلومات، يرجى الاتصال بخط الهاتف متعدد اللغات على الرقم 8470-8470 (03).

Chinese

戴瑞賓市“2010-2020年游樂空間戰略”詳細了介紹戴瑞賓市公共園地和市議會隸屬學前教育機構、兒童看護中心和鄰里公用建築內的戶外游樂空間。詳情請致電多語電話熱線 (03) 8470 8470。

Greek

Η «Στρατηγική Χωροπαιγνιδιού 2010-2020» ("Playspace Strategy 2010-2020") της Πόλης του Darebin παρέχει πληροφορίες για εξωτερικούς χώρους παιγνιδιού στα δημόσια πάρκα του Darebin και στις μονάδες προσχολικής ηλικίας, στους παιδικούς σταθμούς και στα σπίτια γειτονιάς. Για περισσότερες πληροφορίες παρακαλείστε να καλέστε την Πολυγλωσσική Υπηρεσία στο (03) 8470 8470.

Italian

La strategia del comune di Darebin denominata "Strategia per gli spazi gioco 2010-2020" offre informazioni sugli spazi gioco all'aperto di parchi pubblici, scuole materne, asili e centri di zona del comune di Darebin. Per ulteriori informazioni chiamate la Linea Multilingue al numero (03) 8470 8470.

Macedonian

"Playspace Strategy 2010-2020" на општината Даребин нуди информации за игралишта во парковите во Даребин и општинските претшколски установи, центри за згрижување на децата и куќи во соседството. За повеќе информации ве молиме јавете се на Повеќејазичната линија на (03) 8470 8470.

Vietnamese

"Sách Lực Nơi Chơi Đều 2010-2020" của Thành Phố Darebin có những thông tin về những nơi chơi đều lộ thiên tại các công viên của Darebin và các trường mẫu giáo, nhà trẻ và nhà láng giềng của Hội Đồng Thành Phố. Muốn biết thêm thông tin, xin gọi cho Đường Dây Đa Ngữ số (03) 8470 8470.