

2008

CITY OF  
WODONGA

# PLAYGROUND STRATEGY



|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>                    | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>STRATEGIC CONTEXT .....</b>                    | <b>10</b> |
| Council vision.....                               | 10        |
| Council’s strategic objectives .....              | 10        |
| <b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>                         | <b>11</b> |
| Purpose.....                                      | 11        |
| Background .....                                  | 11        |
| <b>PART 1: CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT .....</b>         | <b>13</b> |
| <b>IMPORTANCE OF PLAY .....</b>                   | <b>13</b> |
| Planning for young people .....                   | 14        |
| Integrated art .....                              | 14        |
| Marketing, promotion and community education..... | 14        |
| <b>PART 2: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT .....</b>          | <b>16</b> |
| <b>PLANNING FOR PLAY .....</b>                    | <b>16</b> |
| Demographics.....                                 | 16        |
| Playground hierarchy and distribution .....       | 17        |
| Classification.....                               | 18        |
| Regional parks.....                               | 19        |
| Neighbourhood parks.....                          | 20        |
| Local park definition .....                       | 20        |
| <b>PART 3A: BUILT ENVIRONMENT.....</b>            | <b>22</b> |
| <b>AMENITIES.....</b>                             | <b>22</b> |
| Seating and supervision.....                      | 22        |
| Toilets.....                                      | 22        |
| Shade .....                                       | 22        |
| <b>ACCESSIBILITY PRINCIPLES.....</b>              | <b>23</b> |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Ease of access .....  | 24        |
| <b>PART 3B: PROVISION OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT .....</b>    | <b>25</b> |
| Framework for the provision of playgrounds.....             | 25        |
| Proposed playground removals.....                           | 25        |
| Method and approach to removing nominated playgrounds ..... | 26        |
| <b>PART 4: SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT .....</b>                     | <b>27</b> |
| Community involvement .....                                 | 27        |
| Internal processes/departmental communication.....          | 27        |
| Playground design process .....                             | 27        |
| Opportunities for young people.....                         | 27        |
| <b>PART 5: ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT .....</b>                   | <b>29</b> |
| <b>BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS .....</b>                          | <b>29</b> |
| Maintenance, inspections and external auditing.....         | 29        |
| Minimising maintenance .....                                | 30        |
| Graffiti and vandalism.....                                 | 31        |
| <b>9. CONCLUSION.....</b>                                   | <b>32</b> |

# Definitions

For the purpose of this strategy, the following definitions apply.

## ***Playground***

Playgrounds are play environments that consist of infrastructure, complimentary facilities and landscapes on council land and maintained by council to comply with Australian standards for the safe provision of play. This strategy does not include playgrounds where access is subject to payment of a fee ie: pool playground nor skate parks or fitness tracks.

(Playgrounds are not supervised play environments that may include early childhood centres, private indoor playgrounds and schools. Whilst these play facilities contribute to the services that are available for the community, access to these playgrounds is usually conditional.)

## ***Play***

Play constitutes exercise or action by way of amusement or recreation.

## ***Play spaces***

Play spaces are areas and spaces that are designed to encourage and enhance play and exercise, of both the mind, the body and for recreation.

## ***Neighbourhood Identification***

For this strategy, the city is divided into the same neighbourhoods that reflect the ID profile statistics on council websites. This has allowed demographic data to be used to support the strategy. These areas are:

- ***Wodonga East***
- ***Wodonga West***
- ***Wodonga South***
- ***Wodonga Central***
- ***Martin Park***
- ***Melrose***
- ***Federation Park***
- ***Belvoir***

## **Executive summary**

Building a child and family friendly city is about improving children's lives by recognising and realising their rights therefore building better communities today and into the future. A key factor in building a child and family friendly city is a practical process which must actively engage with children and their real lives.

Play is a fundamental right of children and should be preserved. Play enhances every aspect of children's development and learning, and it is through play that children learn to interpret and make sense of the world around them. Play is so important that its significance in children's lives is recognised by the United Nations as a specific right in addition to, and distinct from, a child's right to recreation and leisure. Play opportunities for children, along with their access to play environments, are impacted by social change and the built form.

Parks and playgrounds are becoming increasingly important for community recreation as areas become more urbanised, residential allotments decrease in size and natural play opportunities are lost to urban development.

Council is committed to providing playgrounds to enhance the health and well being and social connectedness of its community. This strategy was developed through a process of research, benchmarking and data and information collection to give a clear picture of the current state of the city's playgrounds.

The following recommendations have been developed with the aim of creating a system of playground networks that is built around a number of key criteria including cultural, built, natural and economic considerations.

# Overview of recommendations

## *Cultural environment*

### **Importance of play**

It is recommended that the design of future playgrounds takes into account a holistic play space development model that provides a balance of play experiences relevant to the type of playground being developed.

### **Planning for youth**

It is recommended that council considers the provision of spaces for youth that encourages unstructured outdoor activity relevant to the type of playground being developed.

### **Integrated art**

It is recommended that playground design and provision maximise local character and cultural references through the inclusion of an integrated art component relevant to the type of playground being developed.

### **Marketing, promotion and community education**

It is recommended that council works to actively market and promote the city's network of playgrounds to ensure maximum community access by:

- Preparing a playground location and play features' brochure for public distribution;
- Ensuring high quality consistent signage is provided for all playgrounds to assist residents and visitors to find the playground of their choice; and,
- Including a searchable listing of playgrounds and their features on the council web page.

## *Natural environment*

### **Planning for play**

It is recommended that council prepares a proactive approach to supporting the provision of play in new development areas. It should:

- Liaise with developers to ensure compliance with design principles and standards when developing playgrounds;
- Engage in partnership with developers, landscape architects and playground designers to design new playgrounds proposed within a structure plan where such a contribution exists;
- Continue to identify playground requirements in new growth areas and use new local structure plan procedures to develop/fund playgrounds as development occurs;
- Consider developing information kits/sessions for developers that outline design principles and standards using visual material to reinforce options; and,
- View the overall objective of the playground policy as one that will override any developer's desire to erect a playground within their project; rather, developers should be encouraged to provide contributions to playgrounds within Wodonga.

### **Demographics**

It is recommended that council plans to meet changing demographics, growth areas and provide sufficient variation in playground provision between sites by:

- Ensuring planned playgrounds meet the needs of the community mix of children's age groups;
- Ensuring there is no duplication of facilities within any local area; and,
- Considering major barriers when calculating playgrounds allocation.

### **Playground hierarchy and distribution**

It is recommended that council adopts a system of playground hierarchy that will provide for the local, neighbourhood and regional needs of the community.

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
|                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional playgrounds should be large spaces with specially designed playgrounds featuring a diversity of play opportunities and relevant support services to meet the needs of large number of people arriving by car.</li> <li>• Neighbourhood playgrounds should provide a range of play experiences and be supported by adequate services for people within a predetermined radius of up to 3 kilometres. This formula should govern the number of playgrounds that exist within the city.</li> <li>• Local playgrounds should meet the needs of the immediate local community.</li> </ul> <p><b>Regional parks</b></p> <p>It is recommended that council adopts the following as a regional playground site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sumsion Gardens.</li> </ul> <p>It is further recommended that the playground:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forms part of the master planning of Sumsion Gardens;</li> <li>• Is inclusive for age groups up to 17 years;</li> <li>• Is built in stages; and,</li> <li>• Capital budget reflects a cost of \$200,000 per annum over the five years.</li> </ul> <p><b>Neighbourhood parks</b></p> <p>It is recommended that council adopts the following as neighbourhood playground sites and upgrade where required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Les Stone Park;</li> <li>• Willow Park;</li> <li>• Belgrade Avenue;</li> <li>• Oakmont;</li> <li>• Fleet Street;</li> <li>• Baranduda; and,</li> <li>• Cambourne Park</li> </ul> <p>New developments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White Box Rise;</li> <li>• Whenby Grange;</li> <li>• Corner of Silva Drive and Marshall St;</li> <li>• Leneva;</li> <li>• Spillway; and,</li> <li>• Gateway.</li> </ul> <p>It is recommended that council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the local playgrounds and upgrade or decommission where required.</li> </ul> <p><b>Local parks</b></p> |
| <b><i>Built environment</i></b> |   |
| <b>Amenities</b>                | <p>It is recommended that council adopts an approach that addresses the needs of carers through the provision of appropriate amenities.</p>   |
| <b>Shade</b>                    | <p>It is recommended that council adopts a strategy that supports shade provision for playgrounds through tree planting and the related costs form part of each playground budget. It should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the location of playgrounds in relation to existing mature shade trees;</li> <li>• Consider strategic, forward planting of trees in parks and reserves identified for future playgrounds;</li> <li>• Consider advanced trees for those playgrounds that lack appropriate shade;</li> <li>• Consider the relationship between shade and seating for caregivers and children;</li> </ul>  |

## Accessibility principles

- Include a section on Sunsmart principles in any publications that list available playgrounds and where possible on signage; and,
- Wherever possible utilise shade trees to meet Sunsmart objectives and avoid building costly shade structures that have potential public risk factors.

- It is recommended that council ensures reasonable access to playground sites and a meaningful play experience for children and carers through, and subject to, the relevant playground type. These include:
  - Pathways to playgrounds that meet Australian standards;
  - Location of car parking in relation to playground;
  - Disabled parking in relation to playground;
  - Accessible paths around and through the site;
  - Heights and positioning of sensory elements and planting in relation to access pathways;
  - Wet pour (rubberised surface) below and leading to equipment such as swings and low slides to facilitate easy access to equipment;
  - Auditory and tactile elements to ensure experiences for children with vision impaired; and,
  - Australian standards being met.

## Framework for the provision of playgrounds

It is recommended that council considers a range of issues as outlined in the guidelines before redeveloping existing playgrounds.

It is recommended that council undertakes a process to establish the feasibility of decommissioning the following playgrounds and using these spaces for alternate uses such as community gardens or selling the land to fund new playground developments or upgrades. This list has been developed using the proposed guidelines for the provision of playgrounds.

- Kiev
- Clover
- Murphy
- Phillips St (Replaced by White Box Rise)
- Strathmore street
- Acacia
- Lynch
- Highland Crescent
- Croyland
- Pettiford (replaced with Hunter Land playground)
- Bent Place
- Cambourne Court
- Ronan (Replaced with Marshall and Silva)

Amalgamate the playgrounds at Willow Park and upgrade.

## *Social environment*

### Community involvement

It is recommended that council encourages opportunities for the community to participate in the design process associated with the planning of playgrounds and amenities on appropriate redevelopment. This should be achieved by:

- Informing the local community of intentions to redevelop/develop playgrounds;
- Seeking feedback on community aspirations through public meetings/focus groups/working groups;
- Public displaying of concept plans to seek feedback; and,
- Displaying final plans.



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Opportunities for youth</b></p>                        | <p>It is recommended that council consults with young people in the design of any space development or upgrade for youth.</p>  |
| <p><b><i>Economic environment</i></b></p>                    |  |
| <p><b>Budgetary Impacts</b></p>                              | <p>It is recommended that council adopts the 10 year budget and timelines and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• investigates the possibility of selling decommissioned playground land (where appropriate) to fund new playground development;</li> <li>• Continues to apply for funding for playground renewal or development; and,</li> <li>• Continues to consult with residents about proposed changes to playgrounds.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Maintenance, inspections and external auditing</b></p> | <p>It is recommended that council continues to maintain a high level of maintenance and safety review in its playgrounds by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing its formal system of maintenance - inventory, independent audits and inspections; and,</li> <li>• Increasing the equipment replacement budget to ensure the safety and quality of all play equipment in the city's' playgrounds.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Minimising maintenance</b></p>                         | <p>It is recommended that council ensures all new playground designs and proposed provision of equipment minimise maintenance and consider options for ground cover through sound design principles.</p>   |
| <p><b>Graffiti and vandalism</b></p>                         | <p>It is recommended that playground planning design should consider graffiti and vandalism minimisation principles. These principles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The location of playgrounds should, wherever possible, allow for passive surveillance as a deterrent to vandals;</li> <li>• Lighting near playgrounds be considered as appropriate;</li> <li>• Involve the community and especially local youth in the consultation process associated with the location and design of new playgrounds;</li> <li>• Where there has been vandalism, equipment should be removed or repaired immediately as these present a safety hazard;</li> <li>• Where damage or unsightly graffiti has been identified, it should be dealt with within 24 hours to ensure users are not deterred from visiting the playground in the future; and,</li> <li>• Funds should be allocated to ensure timely removal and replacement of equipment due to vandalism for equipment under insurance excess.</li> </ul> <p>It is furthered recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willow Park north playground swings be relocated to the south playground; and,</li> <li>• Relocation of the playground to a more prominent position in the park is considered as part of the master planning exercise.</li> </ul> |

## **Strategic context**

### **Council vision**

*Our City, Our People, Our Future*

### **Council's strategic objectives**

A key council strategy is the 'facilitation of the development of a child and family friendly city'. Council's commitment to playground development through this strategy is one of the building blocks towards making the city a place where children's right to play is valued and respected. This will happen best when areas are planned and designed for quality play and social opportunities for the whole community.

This involves the 'process of consultation and participation of families and key stakeholders'; another key strategy outlined in the council plan. Appropriate community consultation is important in ensuring that the design of playgrounds responds to the wishes of the local community and users. By inviting input into such things as playground siting and equipment mix and uses, council will provide facilities which better meet the needs of the local community as well as fostering a greater sense of ownership.

This document actions the key strategy to 'implement recommendations and works' program of the playground strategy'. The plan of action outlines key actions to move the city forward in developing a system of playground networks and a program of works for the next 10 years that will ensure playgrounds become social hubs where people from all ages come together to enjoy the element of 'play'.

# Introduction

## Purpose

The purpose of the playground strategy is to provide council with a plan that will guide the planning and development of playgrounds now and into the future. Playgrounds provide a low cost and accessible child and family focused environment for participation and engagement in play and leisure. Wodonga Council is committed to providing play spaces that are of a high quality and equitably distributed throughout the city.

The public 'play spaces' aim to serve a neighbourhood of people from different backgrounds and cultures. Play provides public places of interaction for both children and adults – a place where local culture can be nurtured. Public spaces provide valuable opportunity for the development of informal community networks and dissemination of community information. The community building function can play a valuable role in new development areas where these community networks are not pre existing.

This strategy aims to address key issues such as playground planning, community consultation, provision, maintenance, accessibility and complementary facilities.

Council aims to develop playgrounds that will be:

- Designed to a high standard with diverse approaches and interesting, stimulating and fun play value;
- Safe and well maintained;
- Designed so that collectively children have access to an environment with sufficient diversity so their many individual needs are met;
- Accessible to children/parents with disabilities, their carers and families;
- Designed and located to compliment, enhance and celebrate the unique qualities of park locations;
- Equitably distributed throughout the city in accessible and inviting settings within 400 – 500m walk of each household taking into account physical barriers to access such as roads and waterways;
- Inclusive of integrated artwork which adds value to the play experience;
- Inclusive of community ideas on their design and siting;
- Environmentally sustainable where suitably durable and cost effective materials and processes are available;
- Inclusive of supporting amenities such as seating, paths and shade trees; and,
- Designed to be readily repaired and maintained.

## Background

Wodonga Council is currently responsible for 64 public playgrounds across the city. In the past, the playground has not been well thought out, planned or designed. Over the last 20 years, council has simply placed modular units on sites identified for playgrounds with little thought as to the user groups, surrounding facilities and needs of the overall community. This has seen the development of playgrounds with similar play features with little imagination and limited play value.

A major problem with many of the existing playgrounds is the placement of playgrounds on unsuitable land that is often too steep, on a flood plain or drainage corridor and usually surrounded by back fences. This can lead to inappropriate behavior and also provides no surveillance for users as well as being not aesthetically pleasing or visible for potential users to find.

Recent feedback from approximately 700 families in Wodonga identified playgrounds as a high priority improvement opportunity. This was in response to being asked, 'What one thing could be changed to make the city more child and family friendly?'

In general, the existing playground equipment stock is maintained to a safe and reasonable standard with older playgrounds being in a serviceable condition. However, due to the age of the equipment, many of the city's playgrounds have been deemed non compliant with the new Australian standards. In the past, there has not been a sufficient replacement schedule or budget to ensure that equipment was replaced within a reasonable timeframe, and this has now left the city with stock of ageing play equipment that requires a higher level of maintenance.

While the stock is well maintained, it is ageing as capital replacement funds have not kept up with depreciation. In addition, the play value and interest offered by the city's playgrounds are generally below what should be expected and what can be provided with contemporary materials and design approaches.

## Part 1: Cultural environment

### Importance of play

Play and recreation are of great importance to the physical, social, cognitive, creative and emotional development of children. Children represent the future of society, and planning for quality play environments is therefore seen as an investment in the future. In the past, it has been considered sufficient to provide structured playgrounds with limited ancillary facilities such as a seat and bin.

It is now recognised that, although structured play equipment is a useful play element within a park, it does not satisfy all the play needs of children. The lack of quality design and the proliferation of generic playgrounds with little regard for site-specific conditions, ancillary facilities and play value mean Wodonga is left with unremarkable and uninteresting play spaces.

Children are the group to whom the provision of quality open space is possibly the most significant. They are heavily dependent upon local opportunities, as they cannot travel far from home. The quality of the physical environment in which play takes place has a great impact upon the quality of the activities and their significance for the child.

Play and playgrounds are becoming increasingly important to the development of children's minds and bodies, so creating future play spaces that are safe, creative and fun for all ages is essential. The overall design of playgrounds now has to consider much more than just placing a piece of equipment into a space. It must consider a range of issues that have numerous design implications

Play areas, which provide only structured play equipment, will be used as intended while they provide a challenge. For older children, this may be for a period as short as 10-15 minutes after which the equipment is mastered. It is then that the children will look for more challenging ways to use the equipment not necessarily as intended by the manufacturer or provider. Provision of natural elements with a playground, for example dry creek beds, water features, planting, climbing trees, rocks, art, sound and movement, provide a more attractive and stimulating area for children, as they provide for use of the child's imagination. Provision of such facilities within parks can greatly increase the usability of a park and, if correctly designed, can still provide a 'safe' area for play.

In today's society, childhood obesity is becoming more prevalent, and the importance of physical activity both structured and unstructured has become a focus. This is where play becomes an important area of physical development and providing opportunities for young people to play and get physical, stimulate the imagination, be challenged and most of all have fun.

Variety and diversity are essential requirements when planning for children's play. Therefore, it is important to ensure a balance is achieved when designing playgrounds between the physical and experiential. A design model has been developed with desirable elements that will work towards providing a complete play experience (Appendix 1).

## Planning for young people

There is a realisation that the changing youth culture is tending towards young people being more mobile and independent at younger ages. It is not unusual for groups to select a central meeting place that is accessible by pushbikes or, as Wodonga is experiencing presently, young people coming together to physically construct bike jumps, courses or to construct cubby houses on public land.

Spaces could be identified and developed in such a way as to suggest some adult intervention without necessarily trying to make full provision that may be inappropriate or unwanted. Some of these spaces may be short term, such as over a holiday period, or more permanent.

In order to maximise the opportunities for young people, these spaces should be linked to other areas of activity if possible including shops, public transport routes, skate facilities, natural areas and other structured recreation linkages such as cycle paths and linear parks. It should be noted that, at this age, a degree of separation from overt adult supervision is desirable for young people, and these issues should be regarded genuinely but innovatively in the designation of space and its ensuring design.

## Integrated art

The inclusion of public art in some form, which is integrated with the theme of the design and enhances the play experiences, should be a consideration at all playgrounds. Public art in the form of murals, sculptures etc can greatly enhance the aesthetics and individuality of playgrounds. Opportunities for interpretation of local history or culture should be identified where possible, including community art outcomes. For regional playgrounds, it is recommended that there is employment of an artist to design or craft art components of the playground in conjunction with the playground designer. Involvement of children in contributing or being involved in the design of the art component should be a priority.

## Marketing, promotion and community education

It is an important part of the overall strategy to educate parents, carers and children on the importance of play. This can be done via the use of focus groups, preschools, childcare centres and playgrounds. It would also benefit the whole community if a playground brochure, including a map and description of play facilities in Wodonga, was developed outlining the importance of play. As council works toward improving the playground network, the brochure could have economic benefit as visitors to the city would also gain from this information.

At times, conflict over the use of parkland is likely to arise. It is important for council to retain a strong planning framework for its actions and explain them fully and carefully. Participatory processes and educating the community about council's direction will be of benefit as the city moves towards improved playground systems in the city.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that the design of future playgrounds takes into account a holistic play space development model that provides a balance of play experiences relevant to the type of playground being developed.
2. It is recommended that council considers the provision of spaces for youth that encourages unstructured outdoor activity relevant to the type of playground being developed.
3. It is recommended that playground design and provision maximise local character

and cultural references through the inclusion of an integrated art component relevant to the type of playground being developed.

4. It is recommended that council works to actively market and promote the city's network of playgrounds to ensure maximum community access by:

- Preparing a playground location and play features' brochure for public distribution;
- Ensuring high quality consistent signage is provided for all playgrounds to assist residents and visitors to find the playground of their choice; and,
- Including a searchable listing of playgrounds and their features on the council web page.

## Part 2: Natural environment

### Planning for play

In the past, when new residential areas were developed, sites designated for recreational areas were often parcels of land unsuitable for housing development due to topography, access, shape and size.

The suitability of a site for recreation development in relation to topography, access, shape and size, needs to be considered at the planning stage, to ensure council does not accept sites unsuitable for such development. If council accepts such a site, it will be responsible for continuing maintenance without necessarily having a site suitable for the provision of recreation facilities.

Therefore, there is an opportunity for council to work with developers to ensure adequate supply of suitable play provision in new land release areas. The developer partnership may take the form of playgrounds developed as part of the residential developments or by way of financial contribution to council to assist in providing appropriate playgrounds for the population of the new area. The developers may provide the playground in order to enhance the marketability of their new estate.

Many developers now include some form of community facility developments in order to create a point of difference selling point. Difficulties arise if these provisions are tokenistic, as the facility will eventually become the responsibility of council. Given that council will eventually assume the responsibility for all public playgrounds, it is vital that private sector developers are required to conform to the same standards and guidelines as council initiated playground development. It is important that consultation takes place with developers planning playgrounds to ensure that they are in the best location and provide different types of play experiences to any nearby council playground.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council prepares a proactive approach to supporting private sector provision of play in new development areas. It should:

- Liaise with developers to ensure compliance with design principles and standards when developing playgrounds;
- Engage in partnership with developers, landscape architects and playground designers to design new playgrounds proposed within a structure plan where such a contribution exists;
- Continue to identify playground requirements in new growth areas using new local structure plan procedures to develop/fund playgrounds; and,
- Consider developing information kits/sessions for developers that outline design principles and standards using visual material to reinforce options.

### Demographics

Demographics of an area should be investigated prior to planning a playground to ensure that facilities are provided in the most appropriate area of the municipality. In areas with a large percentage of young children, it is desirable to provide play areas within approximately 400 - 500m walking distance from residential areas. Table 2 demonstrates the local demographics for each neighbourhood indicating the number of children aged 0-17 years and the number of playgrounds that service each area. Other information on the table relates to the housing density and the income levels of each neighbourhood. According to the demographic profile, there appears to be a fairly



even spread of children aged 0-17 years across the city with slight decreases seen in Martin Park and Wodonga Central.

Table 2: Information about local neighbourhoods across the city

| Suburbs of Wodonga | Population of suburbs | Population of 0-11yr | Population of 12-17 yr | Number of playgrounds | Playground per child population | Housing density: Highest to lowest | Low income: % of households | High income: % of households |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Melrose            | 7968                  | 1581 (20%)           | 879 (11%)              | 18                    | Per 136                         | 25.5%                              | 22.6%                       | 28.2%                        |
| Martin Park        | 3163                  | 552 (17.5%)          | 227 (7.1%)             | 4                     | Per 194                         | 12.2%                              | 33%                         | 14.5%                        |
| Belvoir            | 3331                  | 634 (19%)            | 292 (8.7%)             | 8                     | Per 115                         | 11.1%                              | 20.1%                       | 25.2%                        |
| Wodonga Central    | 2564                  | 366 (14%)            | 208 (8.1%)             | 6                     | Per 95                          | 10.6%                              | 35.8%                       | 15.3%                        |
| Wodonga South      | 3359                  | 618 (18%)            | 443 (13.1%)            | 7                     | Per 151                         | 9.8%                               | 10.9%                       | 50.5%                        |
| Wodonga East       | 2660                  | 556 (21%)            | 188 (7.2%)             | 5                     | Per 148                         | 9.3%                               | 23.3%                       | 19.5%                        |
| Wodonga West       | 2649                  | 612 (23%)            | 241 (9.1%)             | 4                     | Per 213                         | 7.8%                               | 11.8%                       | 43%                          |
| Federation Park    | 2293                  | 519 (22.5%)          | 241 (10.6%)            | 5                     | Per 152                         | 7%                                 | 12.7%                       | 42.3%                        |
| Rural              | 2926                  | 528 (18%)            | 297 (10.2%)            | 7                     | Per 117                         | 6.7%                               | 11.5%                       | 44.9%                        |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>30,913</b>         | <b>5,966 (19.5%)</b> |                        | <b>64</b>             |                                 | <b>100%</b>                        |                             |                              |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council plans to meet changing demographics and growth areas and provide sufficient variation in playground provision between sites by:

- Ensuring planned playgrounds meet the needs of the community mix of children's age groups;
- Ensuring there is no duplication of facilities within any local area; and,
- Considering major barriers when calculating playgrounds allocation.

## Playground hierarchy and distribution

There are many factors that influence whether a particular space is suitable for development as a play space. The establishment of a hierarchy of parks takes into account the different kinds of parks that will be used in different ways and require different planning and design approaches. This is dependent upon:

- How far people have to travel to use them (catchment area);
- How they travel (foot, car and bike);
- The size of the space;
- The kind of setting and experience it offers; and,
- The location.

A dilemma facing council relates to the increased mobility of the population being balanced with a desire to encourage less car usage. By providing quality local spaces, car usage can be reduced. It is desirable to develop a hierarchy whereby local playgrounds provide basic play opportunities to occupy children for a limited time of up to one hour. Neighbourhood and regional spaces reflect greater ambition in the

challenges provided and greater amenity to provide for longer stays thus encouraging return visits.

## Classification

Three potential categories of playgrounds exist in the city (see Table 3). The use of these three categories enables the affordable installation and maintenance of a diverse range of play facilities across the city.

Table 3: Current classification of playgrounds across the city

| Category      | Distribution preference                      | Budget range to construct  | Budget range to upgrade  | Current Quantity |
|---------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| Local         | 400- 500 radius<br>5-10 min walk             | \$85,000 -<br>\$100,000    | \$ 30,000 -<br>\$ 50,000 | 61               |
| Neighbourhood | 1 -3 km radius<br>10 min walk or<br>bike/car | \$150,000 -<br>\$250,000   | \$ 50,000 -<br>\$ 80,000 | 3                |
| Regional      | 3 or more km<br>radius driving<br>distance   | \$500,000 -<br>\$1,000,000 |                          | 0                |
| <b>Total</b>  |  |                            |                          | 64               |

In planning the distribution of the playgrounds in the city, a key goal is to maximise the chances of any area within the city having access to one or more playgrounds within the distances outlined above in table one. When circles are drawn on a map representing these distances, gaps should be minimal. There will be, however, sections of the city which are better catered for than others, as there is not an even distribution of suitable and accessible parks across the city.

As part of assessing appropriate distribution, the locations of major access barriers such a main roads, waterways and railway lines are also taken into account. This may mean that, in some circumstances, playgrounds will be located closer to each other than a straight line 400m. In practice, the proposed playground hierarchy and distribution criteria maximises the chance that every resident and their children/grandchildren have easy access to playgrounds, while ensuring that council is not managing an excessive number of facilities. It also enables council to offer a variety of playground design styles and to ensure diversity of play experiences.

Sites selected for playgrounds should be large enough to allow for the provision of a play structure, open space, ancillary facilities and natural play area whilst ensuring that adjoining properties will not be unduly affected by the future playground. Sufficient area should be allowed to provide screen planting for adjoining properties, where necessary, and adequate distance from residents to play areas to ensure the impact of noise is not a future problem. The other important thing to consider is the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles which include passive surveillance of the area from surrounding properties and maintaining that surveillance, where possible, to reduce problems such as vandalism and undesirable behavior.

It is desirable to have playground sites, particularly local parks, at least 5000 square metres in area to allow for the provision of the above. As the requirements and user needs become greater, larger sites will be needed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council adopts a system of playground hierarchy that will provide for the local, neighbourhood and regional needs of the community.

Regional playgrounds should be large spaces with specially designed play spaces featuring a diversity of play opportunities and relevant support services to meet the needs of large number of people arriving by car.

Neighbourhood playgrounds should provide a range of play experiences and be supported by adequate services.

Local playgrounds should meet the needs of the immediate local community.

### Regional parks

Regional parks tend to be sited where a special feature, whether natural or man made, attracts people from a wide area including outside the municipality. It is assumed that visitors stay longer and are attracted to experiences not available elsewhere in the playground network. Large regional play spaces are important social places for family outings or occasional visits. Regional playgrounds should be:

- Prominent;
- Free to access;
- Central to the population they serve;
- Positioned strategically in relation to other similar facilities;
- Accessible to public transport and served by a shared pathway;
- A choice of seamless routes around the space and to the activities;
- Supportive of parents and carers as they watch their children playing;
- Accessible to amenities such as toilets, car parks and shelters; and,
- Offering clear and logical relationships between activities.

Wodonga currently has a potential regional park site at Sumsion Gardens. The play areas could consist of several different areas catering for varying age groups. These could also include amenities such as picnic tables, barbecues, toilets and shelters. The budget would be \$500,000-\$1,000,000 which includes the cost for amenities to be upgraded and/or increased in size to cater for potential user numbers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council adopts the following as a regional playground site:

- Sumsion Gardens.

It is further recommended that the playground area:

- Forms part of the master planning of Sumsion Gardens;
- Is inclusive for age groups up to 17 years;
- Is built in stages; and,
- Capital budget reflects a staged development at a cost of \$200,000 per annum over the five years.

## Neighbourhood parks

Neighbourhood parks comprise the next level above the local park in the park hierarchy. These tend to be larger than local parks and offer a different level of provision of facilities or other settings for play and recreation. It is assumed that people will travel further to use a neighbourhood park and their modes of transport may differ. These parks tend to be designed to meet the needs of more than the user for more than one type of activity ie: adjacent to a sporting field, sited around a picnic shelter and tables or set up along a waterway offering a natural setting for walks and observing wildlife habitat. They may also include existing toilets and barbecues. These parks cater for larger community areas with a minimum size of 1500 square metres and generally cater for travel within a one to three kilometre radius. A mix of vehicle, cycle and pedestrian visits are most common modes of transport to this site. The budget for these types of playgrounds within the existing parks would be \$150,000 to \$250,000 to develop.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council adopts the following as neighbourhood playground sites:

- Les Stone Park; and,
- Willow Park.
- Belgrade
- Oakmont
- Fleet Street
- Baranduda
- Cambourne

The sites considered for future development as neighbourhood playground sites include:

- Whenby Grange
- White Box Rise;
- Silva Drive and Marshall St;
- Spillway
- Gateway and,
- North Leneva.

## Local park definition

This level of park, primarily a small pocket of land, caters for small neighbourhood areas. They are located within walking distance of approximately 400–500 metres from home and are intended to provide for the everyday play and recreation needs of children, as a matter of priority. However, they should not exclude other park users. These parks need to be developed as a network which provides varying settings for the everyday needs of children and their carers. They should be close to home and the outdoor recreational needs of the elderly and other community members and act as a visual relief and ‘breathing space’ in a built neighbourhood for people of all ages. In addition, local parks often contribute to:

- The close-to-home play requirements of older children;
- Spontaneous group activities such as ball games;
- Physical links to other open space systems (if well designed); and,
- Wildlife habitat.

The way a park is designed can either create or limit options for multiple uses. Priority must be given to those most dependent upon a particular space ie those with the fewest options to go elsewhere. Young children, the elderly and people with disabilities

are thus considered to be priority users because of their mobility and restricted options.

Each local park needs to be developed to complement the others in its neighbourhood. Each should present its own setting by offering a different set of opportunities from parks nearby. Each local park should provide some seating for people to sit and supervise their children.

The budget for these local playgrounds within the existing parks would be around \$85,000-\$100,000 to develop and up to \$50,000 to upgrade. Minimum size would be 800 square metres.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that council:

- Review the number of local parks and upgrade or decommission where appropriate.

## Part 3a: Built environment

### Amenities

#### Seating and supervision

The provision of comfort areas for adults/caregivers can increase the usability of a playground as it encourages users to stay longer. It can also lead to a reduction of vandalism and accidents as it encourages an adult presence in the playground.

Seating should be provided in areas to allow easy viewing of the playground, especially in play areas catering for toddlers, as well as considering climatic aspects such as shade and protection from strong winds. Seats in close proximity to the play areas should also be included.

Picnic tables are not always necessary in a reserve. They may however be useful if sited so that adults can supervise children while seated. The shape of the tables needs to be considered and their orientation both for the comfort of users and for ease of supervision. Hexagonal or octagonal tables allow parents to change their position and keep an eye on children in any direction.

#### Fencing

The provision of safety fencing and/or barriers should be considered in sites located near busy roads or water bodies. Although this can be an expensive element in the overall cost of the developing a playground, it can make an area reserved for recreation more useable. The fencing can be designed as a play element or design feature within the play area.

#### Toilets

Consideration will be given to providing toilet facilities in larger regional playgrounds and areas with numerous recreation uses, such as sporting grounds, barbecues and picnic facilities where users will be attracted from a wider area. Toilet facilities, which are maintained regularly, are more likely to be used by the general community. Regular use by the general community will discourage inappropriate use.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council adopts an approach that addresses the needs of carers through the provision of appropriate amenities.

### Shade

Provision of shade in playground areas is becoming an increasingly important aspect of design as the community becomes more aware of the impact of exposure to the sun. As a consequence, there is an increased expectation that shade and shelter will be provided in and around play areas.

Shade structures are expensive to install and, with limited available funding, their non targeted installation will detract from the play value and quality of new or upgraded playground facilities. Shade structures can also be prone to vandalism, thus placing pressure on council's playground maintenance budget.

Where possible, it is desirable for sites selected for playground development to have existing trees to provide shade or a plan for the planting of new trees. Council will consider the installation of shade structures over playgrounds in exceptional circumstances, on a site by site basis, and then only at larger neighbourhood and

district playgrounds. Where shade structures are deemed necessary, consideration should be given to integrating them with other park shelters and picnic facilities. Council considers this issue to be a joint responsibility between carers and the city.

As an overall approach to dealing with the hazards of solar radiation, council endorses the Sun Smart guidelines of the Anti Cancer Council of Victoria and recognises that carers should not rely solely on council to provide shade and shelter from the sun and should consider and implement sun smart practices such as:

- Ensuring children (and carers) wear adequate protective clothing and hats;
- Ensuring sunscreen is applied and re applied; and,
- Timing visits to playgrounds where possible to avoid the hottest parts of the day.

Council can play a role in encouraging these key messages to the community through education and signage.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council adopts a strategy that supports shade provision wherever possible for playgrounds through tree planting. It should:

- Consider the location of playgrounds in relation to existing mature shade trees;
- Consider strategic planting of trees on parks and reserves identified for future playgrounds;
- Consider advanced trees for those playgrounds that lack appropriate shade;
- Consider the relationship between shade and seating for caregivers and children;
- Include a section on Sunsmart principles in any publications that list available playgrounds and where possible on signage; and,
- Wherever possible utilise shade trees to meet Sunsmart objectives and avoid building costly shade structures that have potential public risk factors.

## Accessibility principles

All children need to play for all the same social, biological, emotional and physical reasons regardless of their age or ability. This is where social inclusion, universal design and accessibility in playgrounds come to the fore, and all three need to be carefully considered when designing play spaces within Wodonga.

- Social Inclusion is a philosophy which stresses the need to accommodate and value equally all people regardless of race religion, ability, culture or gender within all social structures and community functions in our society.
- Universal design is a design philosophy which stresses the need to try and accommodate all potential users in the one design solution.
- Accessibility is a broader issue than just simply providing physical access into a playground. Consideration must be given towards 'experience for all'. This does not imply that all things must be accessible to all people. Consideration, however, must be given to people with disabilities having, not just physical, access to sites but also access to experiences and challenges within them.

The playground strategy will endeavor to use the concepts of universal design as a basis for playground development within the city. This will ensure that accessibility is improved at all playgrounds as they are constructed or upgraded. While all playgrounds should maximise accessible design, it is recognised that council has to operate within budgetary constraints and, as such, the larger regional and neighbourhood playgrounds will enable the inclusion of more comprehensive accessible designs and

equipment ranges suitable for children and carers with a broad range of disabilities than smaller local scale playgrounds.

### **Ease of access**

Playgrounds should be easily accessible to all – strollers, wheelchairs, etc.

Carers should also be considered in relation to the design of playgrounds. If children and young people are the targets users, it is necessary to consider how they might get there and who they might go with and how council might accommodate their needs. If the needs of the carers or users are not met, then the length of stay will be limited.

Pathways should be provided to allow access to all parks and play areas. The pathways provided may serve a dual purpose, such as a dinky (bike) track for smaller children. However, it is necessary in such cases that design measures be implemented to clearly define pedestrian areas and potential bike tracks to avoid potential conflicts.

Future consideration needs to be given to linking play areas throughout Wodonga. One way this can be achieved is through site location along cycle paths. This would make it possible to create a play adventure, not just single playgrounds. This creates the idea of extended or progressive play along council cycle paths and should be considered in the overall program of works.

There are at least three levels of accessibility which are relevant to playground design. These include:

- Access to the reserve – barrier free routes to the reserve from residential areas require footpaths, kerb crossings and safe pedestrian crossing;
- Access into the reserve – common barriers include level changes at park entry, inaccessible fence design, rough loose paths or soft muddy/grassy surfaces; and,
- Access to the amenities of the reserve – inaccessible seating, inaccessible play equipment and mulched play areas and inaccessible toilets, barbecues, tables or shelters.

It is recommended that all new developments should be designed for accessibility at all three levels.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that council ensures reasonable access to playground sites and a meaningful play experience for children and carers through, and subject to, the relevant playground type. These include:

- Pathways to playgrounds that meet Australian standards;
- Location of car parking in relation to playground;
- Disabled parking in relation to playground;
- Accessible paths around and through the site;
- Heights and positioning of sensory elements and planting in relation to access pathways;
- Wet pour below and leading to equipment such as swings and low slides to facilitate easy access to equipment;
- Auditory and tactile elements to ensure experiences for children with vision impaired; and,
- Australian standards being met.



## Part 3b: Provision of the built environment

### Framework for the provision of playgrounds

It is important to recognise that playground equipment has a lifespan of 10 – 15 years and that current design approaches to playground provision focuses on building upon the uniqueness of specific sites, landscape features and the community's needs and aspirations. Therefore, playground provision should not be undertaken in isolation from the planning of community facilities and open space planning. To avoid ad hoc provision, master planning for a 5-10 year period should form the basis for decisions regarding amalgamation, upgrading and closure of playgrounds.

As part of establishing a strategic framework for the provision of playgrounds, the following guidelines reflect current thinking on playground provision and should provide the basis to review the appropriateness of existing playgrounds.

- Is the location accessible ie: what are the major barriers to access (major roads, waterways, railways)?
- Factors that assist access (crossing points, public transport, pathways).
- Size of site and any nearby play opportunities that exist.
- Attractors or unique qualities that may draw people to the site.
- The range of age groups to be serviced by the playground or play space.
- Profile of the site, community awareness, visibility and its location in relation to major roads, community infrastructure, sporting activities etc.
- Demographics of the surrounding and local area. Where there are many young children, there will be a greater need for playgrounds and play spaces.
- Quality of the landscape, site vegetation, shade and amenities that encourages children and families to visit.
- Where there are two playgrounds within one park, consider consolidating them into one playground when upgrading is required.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council considers a range of issues as outlined in the guidelines before redeveloping existing playgrounds.

### Priority guidelines

Guidelines are required to enable competing playground priorities to be assessed. Priority guidelines will support resource allocations. The following guidelines form the basis for prioritising provision.

- Demographic profile – number of children and teenagers.
- Safety aspects of existing playgrounds.
- Requests from residents for improvements to playground provision (customer requests).
- Age, condition and functionality of equipment; deterioration.

### Proposed playground removals

There will be a number of existing playgrounds that may be candidates for removal/de-commissioning over time. The key reasons why removing existing playgrounds is considered include:

- Maintaining a fair and equitable spread of playgrounds across the city;
- Maintaining a manageable number of good quality playgrounds in terms of capital upgrade and maintenance costs;

- Poor play value and proximity to other reserves and playgrounds which are considered to provide better opportunities for quality playgrounds; and,
- Changed demographics and changed usage of the playground.

### **Method and approach to removing nominated playgrounds**

The removal of a playground from a reserve does not mean that the park or reserve is lost to the community. In the city, there are already many small parks that do not contain playgrounds which are valuable open spaces for the local community. There are some parcels of land being used as playgrounds that may have been bequeathed to the community by a local citizen. Council needs to consider that open spaces bequeathed to the city are continued to be used for the purpose/s intended.

Prior to removal of a nominated playground from a park, a sketch landscape design will be undertaken to plan possible future improvements to the park. Some parks may require new paths, seats or picnic tables. Other parks may be better suited to tree planting; thus, reinstating the area left by the playground for 'kick to kick' or 'muck about' space which may have not been previously possible. There may be an opportunity to create community gardens in the vacated areas. The designs for the park would be tailored to the needs of the local area and conditions.

In some instances, there may be the opportunity for the sale of previous playground land to provide funds for future play areas or upgrades of existing playgrounds.

Local residents surrounding the parks where playgrounds are to be removed will be notified of the proposal explaining the reasons and rationale for the removal of the playground. The residents will be notified of possible landscape improvement works and be given the opportunity to provide feedback.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that council undertakes a process to establish the feasibility of decommissioning the following playgrounds and using these spaces for alternate uses ie: community gardens.

- Kiev
- Clover
- Phillips St (A new playground in White Box Rise to cater for this neighbourhood)
- Acacia (After Tooley Park is upgraded)
- Ovens Court
- Croyland
- Pettiford (replaced with Hunter Land playground)
- Marshall Street
- Murphy Street
- Cambourne Court
- Bent Place
- Huon View (After upgrade of Huon Creek Road)
- Ronan Court (After Siva and Marshall playground is built)
- Cottrell Park (when Sumsion is redeveloped)

Amalgamate the playgrounds at Willow Park and upgrade.

## Part 4: Social environment

### Community involvement

Appropriate community consultation is important in ensuring that the design of playgrounds responds to the wishes of the local community and users. By inviting input into such things as playgrounds' siting and equipment mix and uses, council will provide facilities which better meet the needs of the local community as well as fostering a greater sense of ownership. The type and extent of community consultation should, however, reflect the size and type of playground being installed. That is, a large complex facility will require greater community consultation than a small local facility with a limited mix of equipment.

### Internal processes/departmental communication

It is important that council has good internal communication to ensure that maximum strategic advantage is gained for playgrounds by:

- Setting realistic capital works funding;
- Ensuring holistic play/sport/open space planning;
- Linking with cultural/arts opportunities within council; and,
- Developing well designed playgrounds using contribution and provisions from developers.

### Playground design process

Community consultation is an integral part of developing open space for public use and can assist in:

- Determining community aspirations;
- Informing of proposed or desirable developments;
- Expanding perceptions of what is possible;
- Generating support for proposed development;
- Encouraging community discussion, debate and dissension;
- Keeping the community informed; and,
- Advocating for the rights of children.

The extent of community consultation on any given project will vary depending upon factors including:

- The size of the development;
- The location of the development;
- The budget;
- Possible cultural and social implications; and,
- Possible environmental implications.

The process should include some or all of the following steps:

- Notification of intention to develop;
- Review of the demographic information and population projections;
- Public meeting/focus groups/working groups;
- Display of initial concept plan in public viewing area for predetermined time;
- Provision for community comment; and,
- Display of revised concept plans preparation of final plans.

### Opportunities for young people

As council comes to make improved provision for children, it has become apparent that one of the next challenges is the provision of appropriate facilities for young people. As children develop greater independence and a capacity to move throughout their domain with greater confidence, they will seek to identify places for meeting and 'hanging out'.

There are a number of elements that the city can provide to initiate gathering places for young people, and these include skate parks, half courts, seating shelters and new playground elements for teenagers. The success of these elements depends heavily on the site criteria. To guarantee the site's success as a 'hangout', the following is important:

- Located near activity/transport nodes;
- Separated from but next to activity areas; and,
- Designed as safe locations.

There should always be community consultation, and particularly consultation with young people, in the design of any space development or upgrade for youth. The consultation with young people should include:

- Design workshops;
- Involvement in location selection;
- Consideration of transport options;
- Proximity to services; and,
- Suitable balance between surveillance and secluded site surroundings.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council encourages opportunities for the community to participate in the design process associated with the planning of playgrounds and amenities on appropriate redevelopment. This should be achieved by:

- Informing the local community of intentions to redevelop/develop playgrounds;
- Seeking feedback on community aspirations through public meetings/focus groups/working groups;
- Public displaying of concept plans to seek feedback; and,
- Displaying final plans.

It is recommended that council consults with young people in the design of any space development or upgrade focused on young people.

## Part 5: Economic environment

### Budget Considerations

A playground budget (Appendix 1) has been developed for a ten year period and works to replace much of the ageing playground infrastructure that currently exists throughout the city. It has also been developed to reflect the planning for new playgrounds in growth areas across Wodonga into the future as well as the upgrades needed in some playgrounds. There is also a need to consider the selling of decommissioned playgrounds to fund the development of new and improved playgrounds across the city. The proposed budget has income for land sales included; however, these figures are a rudimentary estimation only and valuations of proposed land sales would need to be undertaken. Opportunities to apply for funding or work with businesses to assist in the development or renewal of playgrounds should be actively pursued as well.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council adopts the 10 year budget and timelines and:

- Investigates the possibility of selling decommissioned playground land (where appropriate) to fund new playground development;
- Continues to apply for funding for playground renewal or development; and,
- Continues to consult with residents about changes to playgrounds.

### Maintenance, inspections and external auditing

To ensure safety remains the highest priority and to demonstrate council's duty of care, suitable inspection and auditing processes need to be planned and implemented. The frequency of internal site inspections by council staff may vary from site to site depending on playground classification, type of equipment, usage, history of vandalism and other factors. The frequency of inspections is based on a rating system that informs maintenance staff of the frequency to inspect.

External audits by a suitably qualified and experienced person are conducted on an annual basis. These inspections are intended to identify any equipment that does not meet Australian Standards, review current internal maintenance and inspection practices, and provide advice and recommendations on future equipment maintenance and replacement needs.

The practice of documenting the maintenance history of playgrounds and ancillary facilities in case of future playground incident or upgrade is critical. This will also provide an asset number, amount and replacement amount as well as providing written proof in litigation cases where an injury has occurred.

A playground maintenance program has been developed and forms part of the operational plan for playgrounds in the city that ensures safe play areas for children. This includes appropriate softfall, removal of damaged/worn parts and replacement or upgrade of ageing equipment. Appropriate maintenance and replacement funding per annum is required for this to occur and to protect council's capital investments by maintaining assets to a satisfactory standard.

The concept of risk is often interpreted in terms of hazards or negative impacts. Risk management of play spaces involves the systematic application of management, policies, procedures and practices. Council will operate in accordance with the

Australian standards. Risk and opportunity assessments will be undertaken on all new and upgraded playgrounds at various stages in the development/upgrade. A specially designed risk management checklist for playgrounds will also be used on any non compliances identified in the annual audit, in order to prioritise maintenance work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that council continues to maintain a high level of maintenance and safety review in its playgrounds by:

- Continuing its formal system of maintenance - inventory, independent audits and inspections;
- Continuing action management of replacing non compliant and dangerous equipment, maintaining the playground environment;
- Continuing to use a customer requests' system for handling complaints or requests;
- Continuing to create reliable networks of information while training appropriate staff to provide high levels of safety and maintenance;
- Using risk and opportunity assessments on all new and upgraded playgrounds;
- Using the risk management checklist for all non compliances to prioritise works; and,
- Increasing the equipment replacement budget to \$50,000 per annum and/or a set % of the total asset value.

### Minimising maintenance

It is important that council staff ensures that sound design principles are considered when new playgrounds are constructed to minimise future maintenance. These principles include simple design decisions such as locating a slide into the side of a slope so that it significantly reduces the fall height as well as requiring less softfall which therefore requires less maintenance. The regular raking and maintaining of loose softfall surfaces and required depths is an important and time consuming task. The cost can be minimised through judicious use of wet pour surfaces under high scuff equipment such as swings and spinning elements. Council can utilise a combination of both options within a single play space.

In addition, wet pour surfaces allow for wheelchairs and strollers to be wheeled close to equipment so there can be access by people with a mobile disability or a carer with a young child in a stroller has close supervision of children at play.

Council maintenance staff should also be consulted as to landscape and drainage issues associated with proposed playground sitings and design that could have an impact on future maintenance costs.

When ever possible, council should fund the use/installation of wet pour surfaces for all newly developed regional and neighbourhood playgrounds. It should plan and budget for the systematic replacement of softfall material with wet pour surfaces in existing neighbourhood and regional playgrounds.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

is recommended that council ensures all new playground designs and proposed equipment provision minimise maintenance and consider options for ground cover through sound design principles such as:

- Relationship between equipment and topography of site to ensure appropriate

- softfall options are achieved;
- Drainage and land fall to ensure minimum wash away and pooling problems are experienced;
- Orientation of site to ensure favorable growing conditions of plantings; and,
- Whole of life costing comparisons between loose softfall and wet pour surfaces.

## Graffiti and vandalism

Graffiti in public spaces can cause great concern to members of the public and those responsible for the maintenance of the area. For many, graffiti is a symbol of desecration and, if left, is indicative of neglect and lack of civic pride.

Vandalism is a complex issue. However, a prime deterrent is to make parks attractive to a large number of legitimate users whose presence will deter those with less legitimate intentions. Siting parks and structures where there is a high level of supervision or passive surveillance from nearby residents, passing pedestrians or motorists also works to reduce the likelihood of vandalism and graffiti. A recent example is the Willow Park playgrounds that have been a target for vandalism in the last 12 months as both playgrounds are sited away from any passive surveillance. One way of increasing surveillance is to relocate the playgrounds to an area close to the sheltered areas with the ability to be seen by passing motorists and pedestrians. As a result of the vandalism, the north playground consists only of a set of swings as it is located in an area that is isolated at night. Furthermore, the north playground is only 200 metres from the south playground. These two play areas could be amalgamated and updated.

Constant and quick repairs after damage or graffiti will reduce the impression that the municipality does not care about its reserves and reduce opportunity for further damage/graffiti.

One of the strongest deterrents to vandalism and graffiti is community ownership. There is clear evidence that where the local community, including young people, has been meaningfully involved in the planning and design, vandalism is reduced. It is important to note, however, that neither the consultation process nor thoughtful design outcome can totally eliminate vandalism and graffiti.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that playground planning design should consider graffiti and vandalism minimisation principles. These principles include:

- The location of playgrounds should, wherever possible, allow for passive surveillance as a deterrent to vandals;
- Lighting near playgrounds be considered as appropriate;
- Involve the community and especially local young people in the consultation process associated with the location and design of new playgrounds;
- Where there has been vandalism, equipment should be removed or repaired immediately as these present a safety hazard;
- Where damage or unsightly graffiti has been identified, it should be dealt with within 24 hours or the next working day to ensure users are not deterred from visiting the playground in the future; and,
- Funds should be allocated to ensure timely removal and replacement of equipment due to vandalism.

It is further recommended that:

- Willow Park north playground swings be relocated to the south playground; and,

- The relocation of the playground to a more prominent position in the park is considered as part of the master planning exercise for Willow Park.

## **9. Conclusion**

Playgrounds are not only important childhood play spaces but are valuable places for community and social interaction. The design of playgrounds has a direct impact on the quality of the user's experiences and the extent to which the area is utilised. This places a high degree of importance on the way playgrounds are planned, designed, and maintained throughout the city. This strategy offers a framework that can lead a planned approach to the current and future delivery of playgrounds in the city.



| Code | Playground name           | Classification | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/07 |
|------|---------------------------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1    | Highland Crescent Reserve | Local          |         |         |         |         |         | 8000    |         |         |         |         |
| 2    | McGregor Court Reserve    | Local          |         |         |         | 20,000  |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 3    | Pitmedden Drive Reserve   | Local          |         |         | 20000   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 4    | Skye Court Reserve        | Local          |         |         |         |         | 20000   |         |         |         |         |         |
| 5    | Fleet Street Reserve      | Neighbourhood  |         |         |         |         |         | 50000   |         |         |         |         |
| 6    | Ovens Court Reserve       | Local          |         |         |         | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 7    | Oakmont Circuit Reserve   | Neighbourhood  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 8    | Wedge Court Reserve       | Local          |         |         |         | 18000   |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 9    | Western Park Estate       | Local          |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 1500    |         |         |
| 10   | Jason Circuit Reserve     | Local          |         |         |         |         | 15000   |         |         |         |         |         |
| 11   | Gayview Park              | Local          |         |         |         |         |         |         | 30000   |         |         |         |
| 12   | Marimba Park              | Local          |         |         |         |         |         | 16000   |         |         |         |         |
| 13   | Teal Court Reserve        | Local          |         |         |         |         |         | 16000   |         |         |         |         |
| 14   | Jackson Drive Reserve     | Local          |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 15   | Marshall Street Reserve   | Local          | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 16   | Ronan Court Reserve       | Local          |         |         |         |         | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |
| 17   | Bent Place Reserve        | Local          |         |         | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 18   | Federation Park           | Local          |         |         |         |         | 50000   |         |         |         |         |         |
| 19   | Barton Street Reserve     | Local          |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 5000    |         |         |
| 20   | Page Court Reserve        | Local          |         |         |         | 20000   |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 21   | Forde Court Reserve       | Local          |         | 20,000  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 22   | Kelly Park                | Local          |         |         |         | 30,000  |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 23   | Murphy Street Reserve     | Local          |         | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 24   | Martin Street Reserve     | Local          |         | 2000    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 25   | Les Stone Park            | Neighbourhood  | 75000   | 70000   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 26   | Tooley Park               | Local          |         |         | 35,000  | 30000   |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 27   | Acacia Crescent Reserve   | Local          |         |         | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 28   | Max Gray Park             | Local          |         |         |         | 30000   |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 29   | James Street Reserve      | Local          |         |         | 5000    |         | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |
| 30   | Wilkinson Drive Reserve   | Local          |         |         |         |         |         | 50000   |         |         |         |         |
| 31   | Schlink Street Reserve    | Local          |         |         |         |         |         | 5000    |         |         |         |         |
| 32   | Martin Park               | Local          |         |         | 30000   |         |         |         |         | 8000    |         |         |
| 33   | Willow Park (South)       | Neighbourhood  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 34   | Willow Park (North)       |                | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 35   | Apex Park                 | Local          |         |         |         |         | 50000   |         |         |         |         |         |
| 36   | Hartwig Drive Reserve     | Local          |         |         |         | 20000   |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 37   | Frawley Park              | Local          |         | 5,000   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 38   | Allambie Crescent Reserve | Local          |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         | 30000   |         |
| 39   | Huon View Estate          | Local          |         |         | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 40   | Huon Creek Road Reserve   | Local          |         |         | 50,000  |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| 41   | Cambourne Court Reserve   | Local          |         | 1500    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|      | <b>Sub total</b>          |                | 78000   | 98500   | 144500  | 169500  | 138000  | 145000  | 30000   | 14500   | 30000   | 0       |

| Code       | Playground name                | Classification        | 2007/08        | 2008/09        | 2009/10        | 2010/11        | 2011/12        | 2012/13        | 2013/14        | 2014/15        | 2015/16        | 2016/07        |
|------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 42         | Delaware Court Reserve         | Local                 |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                | 30000          |                |
| 43         | Cambourne Park                 | Neighbourhood         |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 44         | Balmoral Drive Reserve         | Local                 | 5000           |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 45         | Memorial Drive Reserve         | Local                 |                |                |                |                |                |                | 10000          | 10000          |                |                |
| 46         | Phillips Street Reserve        | Local                 |                |                |                | 1500           |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 47         | South Side Terrace Playground  | Local                 |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 48         | Clover Avenue Reserve          | Local                 | 1500           |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 49         | Belgrade Avenue Reserve        | Neighbourhood         | 55000          | 70000          | 20000          |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 50         | De Kerilleau Drive Reserve     | Local                 |                |                |                | 45000          |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 51         | Jack In The Box Creek Reserve  | Local                 |                |                |                | 40000          |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 52         | Kiev Court Reserve             | Local                 |                | 1500           |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 53         | Cottrell Park                  | Local                 | 2000           |                |                |                |                |                | 20000          |                |                |                |
| 54         | Diamond Park                   | Local                 |                |                |                |                | 15000          |                | 5000           |                |                |                |
| 55         | Marie Drive Reserve            | Local                 | 35000          |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 56         | Pettiford Court Reserve        | Local                 |                |                |                |                |                | 1500           |                |                |                |                |
| 57         | Croyland Street Reserve        | Local                 |                | 1500           |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 58         | Baranduda Community Centre     | Neighbourhood         |                |                |                |                |                |                | 50000          | 50000          |                |                |
| 59         | Basil Court Reserve            | Local                 |                |                |                |                |                | 20000          |                |                |                |                |
| 60         | Simon Lane Reserve             | Local                 |                |                |                | 20000          |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 61         | Jamison Drive Reserve          | Local                 |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| 62         | Barry Street Reserve (Killara) | Local                 |                |                | 25000          |                |                |                |                |                | 80000          |                |
| 63         | Kookaburra Point               | Local                 |                |                | 30000          |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
| <b>New</b> | Whitebox Rise                  | Neighbourhood         |                |                |                |                | 40000          | 110000         |                |                |                |                |
|            | Hunters                        | Local                 |                |                |                |                |                | 50000          | 50000          |                |                |                |
|            | Felltimber Creek               | Local                 |                |                |                |                |                |                | 80000          |                |                |                |
|            | Whenby Grange                  | Neighbourhood         |                |                |                |                |                |                |                | 100000         | 20000          |                |
|            | Silva Drive & Marshall         | Neighbourhood         |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |
|            | Spillway                       | Neighbourhood         |                |                |                |                |                |                |                | 120000         |                |                |
|            | North Leneva                   | Neighbourhood         |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                | 150000         |
|            | Gateway                        | Neighbourhood         |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                | 150000         |
|            |                                | Sub Total             | 254500         | 171500         | 219500         | 276000         | 193000         | 326500         | 245000         | 294500         | 160000         | 300000         |
|            | Audits/Marketing/Design        | Other costs           | 55,000         | 56650          | 56700          | 56701          | 56701          | 56701          | 56701          | 56701          | 56701          | 56701          |
|            |                                | <b>Total Budget</b>   | <b>309,500</b> | <b>228,150</b> | <b>276,200</b> | <b>332,701</b> | <b>249,701</b> | <b>383,201</b> | <b>301,701</b> | <b>351,201</b> | <b>216,701</b> | <b>356,701</b> |
|            |                                | <b>Current budget</b> |                | 225000         | 276950         | 333654         | 250564         | 281531         | 323387         | 351569         | 357681         | 541939         |
|            | Surplus/Deficit                |                       |                | -3150          | 751            | 953            | 863            | -101670        | 21686          | 368            | 140980         | 185238         |
|            | <b>Sumsion Gardens Project</b> | <b>Income</b>         |                | 330000         | 150000         | 150000         | 70000          | 95000          |                |                |                |                |
| 64         |                                | Regional              |                | 200000         | 200000         | 200000         | 200000         | 200000         |                |                |                |                |

**Legend:**

|              |             |         |     |
|--------------|-------------|---------|-----|
| Decommission | Replacement | Upgrade | New |
|--------------|-------------|---------|-----|