



## Rob Walton - Accelerate Play

April 2021

Teen mental health problems are increasing at 27% per year which equates to a tripling since 2008. What are we doing to improve this alarming trend and help get kids off the screens and more active with fun outdoor play and all its benefits?

We want to help Councils and communities reduce the rising financial and social costs of teenage depression, obesity, and anti-social behaviours.

Research clearly states active pre-teens, that make physical activity part of life, are less likely to suffer from these problems in their teenage years and for the rest of their adult life. But there is a gap in our current public play spaces for the pre-teen age bracket leading to boredom and low physical activity by the time they hit the teens.

It's the disturbing youth mental health and obesity stats, and the fact there is no current solution that made me frustrated enough to put my money where my mouth is and create an inclusive play solution.

Coupled with the fact that young people, according to Australian Health guidelines, need to do 60 minutes every day of moderate to vigorous physical activity. *Where are they supposed to do this?* I believe active recreation facilities for kids older than seven must:

- **Be interactive and social** – Being fun really helps but also for encouraging teamwork and a whole host of things, cooperation, socialisation
- **Encourage creative play** – This allows for a different, informal/casual and fun way to play games with different equipment
- **Provide room for many players, playing a variety of games** – This helps when it's also the time that kids are introduced to sports.
- **Take up minimal green space** – Which means we get more, for less space
- **Community social fitness hubs** - Families and anyone can show up, play and stay in a healthy, social community atmosphere.
- **Must take you from seven to teens** – so your kids never stop playing and become more likely to remain active later in life.

Youth mental health and other social issues is about working on the problem before they get to their teens so that the kids are well adjusted when they go through this confusing time in life.



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We know that playing games (physical activity) starts benefiting kids in so many ways- we just need better alternatives to what exist.

Our local Councils need to rethink their play offerings and find solutions that keeps kids outdoors, playing, problem-solving, socializing and building confidence and resilience within themselves.

Communities and Councils who desire to truly lower these risks in today's world are proactively looking for alternatives to keep our kids playing.

We provide a low footprint, community playspaces that allow three separate groups of up to 10 (30 all up!) young people to play 3 different games at the same time in a creative, interactive way.

This Australian designed playspace is a first of its kind in the world and a great example of how a recreation facility can make a massive difference to our kids and their families by looking outside the square.

More information can be found on [www.accelerateplay.com.au](http://www.accelerateplay.com.au)

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#### **Additional Research/ items:**

There are nearly 3 times more adolescents (12-17 year-olds) with severe mental disorders than children (4-11 year-olds).

**Reference:** *Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing-Australian Dept of Health Website*

Research tells us that children that are physically active, play team activities and socialize in groups are 80% less likely to suffer from mental illness, obesity, or participate in anti-social behavior.”

Inactive youth are more than twice as likely to have moderate to severe symptoms of depression and anxiety than active youth.

**Reference:** *Physical Activity for Cognitive and Mental Health in Youth: A Systematic Review of Mechanisms. Official Journal for the American Academy of Paediatrics*



#### **Brief Bio:**

Rob Walton has been a jackeroo, a boat “yardy”, a counsellor, a multimedia and corporate business developer and entrepreneur, “I’m passionate about sport and games and getting young people active- because I know the massive benefits to children and the community”.



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