



Member news

promoting the value of play

Winter 2020 :: Issue 10



Executive Director's message

Welcome to all members and to what is turning out to be a most unusual year for us all.

I trust that you are coping with the changed circumstances in which we are working, and in particular, I am thinking of Victorian members who are still in a state of lockdown and curfew, which will hopefully end before too long.

Our work continues, and I know that the Play Australia team has never worked so hard in this online environment. We have refreshed the website www.playaustralia.org.au and hopefully you will enjoy the new format and style. Thanks particularly to Renae and Kieran who have worked long and hard on this development.

Our Communications and Advocacy work has grown significantly over recent months, and we are delighted with the response to our e-News. Thanks to Karen, who has driven this development. Thanks to our many members who responded to the Members Survey and we are now working on strategies to put into effect your feedback. Your responses will be shared shortly.

Training for 2020 is currently postponed due to COVID but we hope to be able to run the 2 Day program in October or November in Melbourne. We are currently developing our Online Learning Series for 2021, a program which will include our 2 Day Training program both in Melbourne and online, and a professional development program

for members to be delivered digitally. The 2 Day program will be delivered in a variety of online formats which will enable quality training to be accessed by all members across the country. This program will provide Levels 1, 2 and 3 Certificates to participants who complete the programs. Details will be available shortly. There is nothing new to report on the Standards front but we can expect publication of some amendments later in 2020.

State Branches will hopefully resume activity soon, and I am particularly pleased to announce that Play Australia NSW has begun, and we welcome members of the NSW Committee: Chair, Bec Ho; Secretary, Claire Edwards; Sue Elliott, Kim Becherand, Fiona Robbe, Robyn Monro Miller and Philippa Dunstan. The Committee is able to co-opt members as required. NSW members can expect to receive an Invitation to attend an online meeting sometime soon. Can I suggest that you all download Zoom if you haven't already! Play Australia will be using Microsoft Teams and Zoom in future.

1000 Play Streets has been postponed due to COVID and will resume when safe to do so. Given that each state is at a different stage of communities re-connecting, we expect that the project will be completed by June 2021. We welcome Gavin Fairbrother to the PA Team.

Gavin is heading up the SA Government-funded Street Play project to be rolled out at Campbelltown City Council. We are thrilled to work with Gavin as so much of the knowledge underpinning the 1000 Play Streets project in Australia can be attributed to him.

Playground Finder is another new project for Play Australia and work has begun on it's further development. We believe that there can be significant outcomes for both the public and our organisation in growing Playground Finder to maximise the benefits for play. We have engaged a terrific project team and we look forward to councils and industry involvement as this project develops. Thanks to Kieran for his leadership and energy put into the development of this important project.

Finally, we are working on a new Membership structure, which will operate from the beginning of 2021, the details to be shared soon. Our aim is to make membership of Play Australia affordable, equitable, and accessible to further expand our support to members, and to increase the opportunities for all children to play outside every day. This is the challenge!

So, keep safe, keep washing those hands, and take great care of yourselves.

Barbara Champion

Traditional hopscotch game in street.

Hop to it! Street games for Childrens Week 2020

By Judy McKinty

Children's Week in Australia is always in October. Throughout the country, we recognise children's rights and celebrate their talents, abilities and achievements with events and activities organised at national, state and local levels.

The theme for 2020 is based on Article 15 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which celebrates the right of all children 'to choose their own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others'. In this year of COVID-19, Article 15 has also been interpreted by some as 'Children have the right to choose their own friends and safely connect with others'.

2020 so far has been the year of the pandemic. At various times, COVID-19 has affected the way we can play, with children's regular gathering-places like schools, kindergartens, playgroups, clubs and associations closed, play equipment in our local parks taped off and even play-dates with friends banned. This has generated a huge number of creative online programs, activities and performances, to help children and adults stay connected and playful while being locked down in their homes, or going about their 'covid normal' lives under the social-distancing and hygiene rules we're all so familiar with. The restrictions also mean that many of the Children's Week events and activities will now be delivered online.

But what if we could all take part in a Children's Week activity that lets us celebrate children through their play, and at the same time adds colour to our neighbourhoods to remind people that the spirit of play is alive and well throughout the country? There's a new play initiative being planned that makes it

possible for people to celebrate Children's Week in their own neighbourhoods. This is not an online event – it happens outside, on the street.

The idea came from a street games project which began during the first lockdown. Play Australia member Judy McKinty started drawing Hopscotch patterns and Elastics loops in chalk on the footpath, and pinning sheets of children's games onto a tree at her front gate. Children and adults loved the street games, particularly the Hopscotch patterns that had them hopping and jumping as they went by on their daily exercise walks. It was a moment of playfulness in an otherwise scary and difficult time in all our lives.

Hopscotch is a traditional children's game, widely recognised by people of different ages and cultural backgrounds. When you draw a Hopscotch design on the footpath, a shared space, it instantly becomes a community activity that belongs to everyone, so anyone can play until rain washes the chalk away. It's a simple, familiar game, but the best news is that it's a safe game to play during the pandemic. Only one player at a time, with everyone else standing back. That makes it ideal for a playful Children's Week activity for people to share at home. So you're invited to Hop To It! and join in!

Here's what you'll need:

- Coloured chalk (large sticks of pavement chalk are best for drawing on footpaths)

- A playing piece ('taw') for each person to keep for themselves. (Something to throw into the numbered squares, like a flat stone, stick, piece of tanbark, broken tile or wood, small bean bag)
- Hopscotch game sheet (will be available on the website) or remember how you played it at school

Here's what to do:

- Draw colourful and creative Hopscotch designs on your footpath with chalk (ideas will be on the website or make up your own)
- Play Hopscotch games with your family (and people in your street, depending on COVID-19 restrictions)
- Take a photo of your Hopscotch design / your family playing the game
- Upload your jpg photos to the Hop To It Street Games Facebook page or send as an attachment to hoptoit1020@gmail.com

Hop To It! Street Games for Children's Week is a community activity being planned by Judy McKinty, Independent Children's Play Researcher and Play Australia Life Member. It will run for one week, from 24 October to 1 November, 2020.

Visit the Hop To It! street games website in early October for more information and resources.

Website: www.hopscotch2020.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/hoptoitstreetgames

Email: hoptoit1020@gmail.com



Boy on Snail Hoppy.



Girl playing hopscotch with Japanese numbers.
Source: Museums Victoria



Adult hopping.



Board News

Building A Healthier Australia Through Play

***"We want to see a connected and healthy Australia where PLAY is a part of everyone's daily life."* – Play Australia**

This is the vision that Play Australia is committed to realising as our organisation launched its bold new five-year game plan in July to build PLAY in Australia as we move toward life post-COVID19.

When we consider that only 1 in 3 Australian children engage in free play outdoors daily and the overall health of Australians is at all time low levels, it is of great concern.

Executive Director, Barb Champion states "play is essential because it provides us all with our physical, social, mental and emotional foundations, in order to establish healthy habits in our children and young people that last a lifetime, so we can all experience optimal health and wellbeing."

Play Australia's new Strategic Plan 2020–25 builds on our organization's rich 105 year history and sets out a clear and exciting path into the future - to position PLAY as a national health priority and ensure every Australian values play, supports play and accesses places to play every day.

"We are very excited about the next five years" says Barb, "as we continue to celebrate and foster all the things we love about our organisation, such as our enduring connections to the people and groups who have helped our wide-reaching work to date."

"Looking forward we will seek to take greater risks and forge new partnerships to broaden our play impact, to benefit all children, young people and adults, particularly those who need more support to play - including our most vulnerable communities who have been further disadvantaged by the pandemic."

Play Australia will also launched a range of exciting new partnership opportunities in July 2020 for interested parties to collaborate on and help grow play in Australia over the coming years, including the 1000 Play Streets movement, the Play Today campaign and the Playground Finder platform.

And final words from Barb: ***"We welcome you to not only read this plan, but to join us in our mission to promote the value of PLAY and support Australians to play every day so we can all experience a better tomorrow."***

[Read the full strategic plan 2020-25 here.](#)

[Read the 2-page summary here.](#)



Designing Streets for Kids



Global Designing Cities Initiative

Publication Review

Designing Streets for Kids; Global Designing Cities Initiative & NACTO

Island Press 2020

Making a city that works for children creates a city that better serves all of its residents across ages and abilities. The physical and mental health benefits of walking and biking are challenged by speeding traffic and unsafe pedestrian rights of way. Streets that are designed with the needs of children and their caregivers in mind have been shown to improve road safety, health, and quality of life.

Building on the success of their Global Street Design Guide, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) - Global Designing Cities Initiative (GDCI) Streets for Kids program has developed child-focused design guidance to inspire leaders, inform practitioners, and empower communities around the world to consider their city from the eyes of a child.

Designing Streets for Kids highlights strategies, programs, and policies that cities around the world have used to design spaces that enable children of all ages and abilities to utilize cities' most abundant asset – streets. The guide makes relevant global design recommendations and highlights case studies from around the world that encourage streets to be safe, enjoyable, and inspirational for children and their caregivers.

Since publishing the guide in 2020, NACTO have begun to apply these child-focused strategies in 12 cities worldwide - through streetscape transformations, workshops, and training.

This comprehensive guide is available for purchase or to download a digital copy for free at: www.globaldesigningcities.org/publication/designing-streets-for-kids/



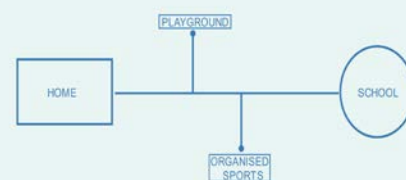
The Power of Play: Re-imagining our Cities Post COVID-19

By Natalia Krysiak

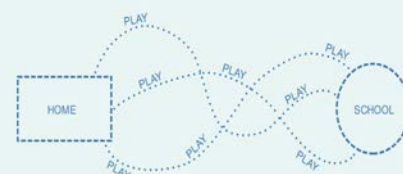
Our cities will change in ways which are still difficult to imagine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the effects of the pandemic have been devastating to many communities across the globe, some positive discussions have emerged around how our cities could be improved post COVID-19. As we continue to reflect on creating more liveable and resilient cities, it vital that alongside re-imagined spaces for learning and working, we also consider spaces for playing to heal and reconnect communities.

As the contemporary British painter David Hockney once said “we tend to forget that play is serious”. The power of play to generate neighbourhood life, provide joy to communities and prepare children for an increasingly complex world must not be underestimated. Acknowledging how vital play is to the development of children and the happiness of communities requires an equally complex response within the design of our cities. This means creating “playable” neighbourhoods with diverse networks of play opportunities, which connect communities. Importantly, the voice of our youngest citizens must be at the forefront of these discussions, ensuring that children’s needs are truly considered through a genuine co-creation process.

Network of Diverse Play Opportunities



Neighbourhood with a designated playground



Neighbourhood with network of diverse play opportunities

A network of diverse play opportunities. Diagrams by Natalia Krysiak.

As most cities around Australia experienced the closure of playgrounds, many parents have reported finding new and exciting opportunities for play within their neighbourhoods. As one parent noted “explaining to my 3-year-old boy why playgrounds are closed and him suddenly finding opportunities for play everywhere but in the playground has been inspiring”.



Car-free street day, Kampong Glam Singapore. Photo: the Housing Development.



In the same way that we are now rethinking the notion that a formal office space is the most appropriate environment for “work”, we should also consider diversifying our understanding of what a space for “play” should look like. Rather than focusing on formal and highly designed spaces for play, we should instead create a network of playable opportunities which are seamlessly integrated into our neighbourhoods and include both formal, informal, temporary and permanent spaces.

This means expanding our understanding of what a “playable space” is and unlocking a vast array of possibilities for play to occur on side streets, empty parking lots, natural spaces, transit stops and unused in-between spaces.

A network of diverse playable spaces should be overlaid onto any new or existing neighbourhood with the aim of creating accessible and unique opportunities, which cater to the needs of each community.

An example of how this could work is seen in Wales, where every local council has the responsibility for assessing the “playability” of neighbourhoods through a Play Sufficiency Assessment. Rather than simply counting the number of playgrounds, local councils work closely with children within a community to establish a network of unique playable opportunities, which directly respond to the children’s needs of how and where they would like to play.

Play as Social Connector

Alongside a consideration for diverse play opportunities within our neighbourhoods, we must also consider how spaces for play can provide environments for social connections and belonging. With more families struggling with mental health and financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important more than ever for society to stretch out a safety net to ensure that no child falls behind.

A fantastic example of play spaces which promote community belonging and connection are adventure play-yards which are

common throughout many cities in Europe including the UK, as well as Japan. Adventure play-yards provide a natural and adventurous space for children to play, acting as a communal backyard available to local children daily and for free. Importantly, play-yards are staffed by permanent playworkers (funded by the local council) who facilitate playful opportunities and connections between the children. As a permanent space that children can attend daily, connections between the children and play-workers are able to flourish, creating a sense of community and belonging. As a permanent space that children can attend daily, connections between the children and play-workers are able to flourish, creating a sense of community and belonging.



A group of youth cooking lunch on a bon-fire with a playworker at a Play-Yard in Tokyo.

Co-creating with Children

As we undertake visioning to improve liveability of our neighbourhoods post COVID-19, we must engage in genuine co-creation with diverse groups including our youngest citizens. Engaging with children in the design of our cities will not only help us understand the unique play needs of each neighbourhood, but also ensure that children feel empowered and valued as members of their communities.

Just before COVID-19, Cities for Play along with Nature Play QLD ran a workshop asking children about their experiences, values and play needs. When discussing local play

opportunities, the children explored complex opportunities for play within their existing natural environments such as water-play in the local creek, climbing trees in the park and looking after the local animals and plants. The children were able to provide input into their local neighbourhoods and play needs which were sophisticated and hugely insightful to the council planners in the room.



A group of children discussing elements of their local neighbourhood.

As we take the time to reflect on how we might improve our neighbourhoods post the pandemic, let’s not forget the power of the play to enrich and uplift our communities and the importance of genuine co-creation with all members of our society including children. As the architect and child-friendly cities expert, Dinah Bornat said “children are the generators of community life”. With this in mind, let’s re-envision better cities with children’s voices at the forefront and a newly found respect for the seriousness and power of play.

Natalia Krysiak is a practising architect and associate at Hayball. Natalia specialises in the design of child-oriented and community environments. She is a passionate advocate for playful cities and spaces, engaging in placemaking and research initiatives around the world. In 2019 Natalia was awarded a Churchill Fellowship exploring best practice for designing child-friendly, high density neighbourhoods in Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada and the UK. Her research explores how we can create more playful and child-friendly urban environments. Based on her research surrounding child-friendly cities, Natalia has founded ‘Cities for Play’ which aims to inspire and promote strategies for playful cities.

Ballam Park Senior Playspace, Frankston Victoria. Image used with permission from Frankston City Council. (Courtesy of photographer Steve Brown)



The Rise of Scooter Play

By Elizabeth Cummins

What is scootering?

Scootering is simply the practice of using a small, lightweight two-wheeled kick scooter for commuting, recreation or play. The beauty of the scooter is the simplicity of its design. Its basic shape hasn't altered in more than a century and even small children can quickly learn to use it.

The history of the scooter and its popularity today

The Scooter is thought to have originated in the late 19th Century. Most scooters at this time would have been homemade, using wood or whatever people could find. It is the simplicity of the design that then continued to encourage a surge of interest into the 1930s and, to a lesser extent, in the 1950s and 1980s.

"Those of us who grew up in the seventies and the eighties will remember how we used to scoot everywhere as children... especially on those large, two wheeled, big tyred scooters. So much fun! Then, for over a decade, scooters practically disappeared!" – Active Babies Smart Kids.

The trend for modern scooters dates from 1996, when Wim Ouboter of Micro Mobility Systems in Switzerland produced a foldable aluminium model. There was also a Razor-scooter boom in the 2000's that was somewhat of a fad.

Benefits for younger children

The increase in younger riders is what has become increasingly noticeable. For parents, the appeal and benefits are obvious. Children often don't feel like walking, to put it mildly and scootering is a fun distraction that allows a child to travel at an adult's pace.

Scooters are powered by a kick, but controlled by balance. Steering the scooter with hands and one foot whilst pushing with the other foot, unconsciously gives both sides of your children's bodies the opportunity to work together and perfect their sense of balance. Once children have mastered scootering they have few problems with balance. Practised scooter riders usually don't need trainer wheels once they graduate to two-wheeler bikes because of their well-developed balance and coordination.

In order for the body to balance upright without falling over, the brain needs to:

- Know where the body parts are.
- Know what the body parts feel like in movement.
- Be able to control them while moving – both sides together, separately and each side independently of the other.

To keep balanced in any position takes a lot of movement planning. The more complicated the movement, the more planning the brain has to do. Usually children are two and a half to three and a half, before they can balance on one foot and later hop on one leg.

Body awareness, muscle tone, vision and inner ear function all must develop before a good sense of balance can be achieved. Well-developed balance is essential for the establishment of integration – that is, for the two sides of the brain to work together. Integration is, in turn, crucially important for successful learning.

Scootering is a great way to perfect balance skills. If your child is three years of age, let them whizz around on a three-wheeled scooter. If your child is four years or over, a two-wheeled scooter makes a great present!

And why not get one for yourself at the same time? There are now great ones out there for 'big people' too.

Designing spaces for scootering

Different types of designed spaces are now popping up for scootering, some associated with playspaces, skate facilities or bike courses and some even just incidentally. Whether you're looking to design a customised space or not, it is important to consider the basics tools for scootering in your open space so that intentionally or unintentionally you are assisting this activity.

Children and young people are likely to want to scooter to their local park so firstly making sure there are good footpath connections to and around local open space is important. Spaces in local areas with half basketball or other hard paved areas help to provide 'safe' space for scootering that a child or young person may not have access to at home.

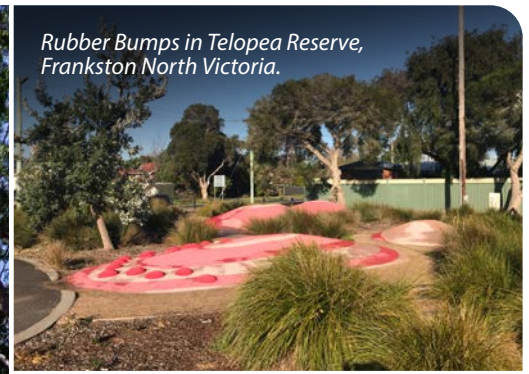
If you are looking to create a customised scootering area in a local park, first consider the age-group you are appealing to and this may be guided by the context, for example is there a playspace for younger children or is there a skate facility or playspace for older children?

Scootering spaces can be designed in several different ways. A series of interconnecting circuits (similar to the traffic schools of yesteryear) with miniaturised roadways and traffic signs etc. Or perhaps a more free form organic collection of bumps, berms and ramps for rolling through, these are often created in rubber or concrete. A broader way to look at it might be as part of a pump or bike skills track with ramps and slopes in timber that cater for both juniors learning bike skills as much as scootering skills.

Boy Berwick Waters Playspace Bike and Scooter Circuit, Berwick Victoria.



Rubber Bumps in Telopea Reserve, Frankston North Victoria.



Conflicts between scooting and skating

One important point to note is that scooting and skating are not always considered co-habitable by members of the skating fraternity and therefore it's important to know the users of your local skate facilities well before introducing scooting into the fold – even if co-located onsite with skating.

Generally most of the conflict emanates from a well-founded code of etiquette that exists in skate facilities amongst the skate community and a perception that scooting is seen as a bit of a fad – something lightweight or undertaken by children. However there is quite a bit of evidence to suggest that millennials are taking up scooting seriously.

Scooting as extreme sport

“Eighteen years after the release of the first Razor, scooters have come of age, spawning a uniquely millennial subculture with the same disruptive spirit as skateboarding – minus the steep learning curve. And according to many scooter riders, it's actually overtaking skateboarding in popularity.” – Dan Gentile, Rolling Stone Magazine (January 2018)

In many cities a new type of flash mob has evolved called a 'street jam', where multitudes of scooter riders flock from all over the world to shred a city, performing tricks and generally causing mayhem with traffic.

Just like its reluctant bedfellow, skateboarding, freestyle scooter riding involves spectacular feats of gravity defying flips, twists and airborne tricks. As skateboarding has now been added the program for the upcoming Tokyo Summer Olympics there is a belief that scooting

may also be eventually as a recognised Olympic sport.

Tips for safe scooting

Proper maintenance of scooters is key to avoiding unforeseen accidents. So before leaving home it's important that riders (and responsible adults) to do a quick check of the following:

- Brakes – check the brakes regularly because they'll wear down as they get older
- That there are no sharp edges on the scooter
- That the steering column locks easily, won't collapse and isn't too short for your child
- The bell or horn is working
- That the handlebar grips don't swivel
- That the running board is high off the ground
- That the scooter has anti-skid footboards.

Scooter lights are a legal requirement for night-time – a white light at the front, and a red light and red reflector at the back. Children **shouldn't scoot at night.**

Children should wear a properly fitted and firmly fastened helmet. It's also a good idea for your child to wear knee and elbow pads and wrist guards – broken wrists are a common scooter injury.

Learning to scoot

Learning to scoot is like any other skill that involves balance and coordination, it needs to be practised somewhere where children are less likely to have accidents.

- Encourage parents / carers to supervise children as they learn

to use the scooter in a safe place, like a shared footpath, courtyard or quadrangle, or ball court which is away from roads, driveways and steep slopes is important

- Facilitate age-appropriate scooter lessons at a local skate park that are fun and teach basic skills
- Encourage parents to supervise children when they're riding a scooter on the streets before judging whether they can scoot alone safely or not
- Teach children road safety rules

Where to get more information

The following are organisations supporting scooting and providing information:

Australasian Scooter Association

www.revolutionise.com.au/asa/home

Elizabeth Cummins is a landscape architect and author. A qualified early years educator, her practice focuses on design for play. She is a co-author of 'Getting the Balance Right: Play Australia's guide to Risk Management' and writes, presents and trains on the use of risk-benefit assessment as a tool for play provision. She is also the current editor of Play Australia's Member News.

Marie Wallace Bike Play Area, Bayswater Park Victoria.



Members Corner

Our place for information and profiles on
Play Australia Members and Membership

Member Profile

Helen Little



Helen Little is a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood and Associate Course Director (Early Childhood) in the Department of Educational Studies. She has been working in the early childhood sector for the last nineteen years. Since 2001 she has been at Macquarie University lecturing, teaching and studying.

Prior to this she was an early childhood teacher with experience teaching in preschools and primary schools in Sydney.

Tell us briefly about yourself

As an Early Childhood teacher and parent, I have always valued and supported the role of play in children's lives. As an academic at Macquarie University, I was instrumental in introducing a unit focused on outdoor play into our programs. Through this unit, I've been able to share current research and practice related to outdoor play with our students to build their capacity to provide rich outdoor play experiences for children in early childhood settings (and beyond).

What prompted you to become a member of Play Australia?

I first met Barb Champion and other members of Play Australia at the IPA conference in Hong Kong in 2008 and was drawn to their enthusiasm

and commitment to advocating for children's right to play and sharing play research and practice.

Is there a highlight achieved within your work that you could share regarding an innovation for children's outdoor play experiences?

I was recently engaged by the Early Childhood Development Agency in Singapore to work with them and the Ministry of Education in their efforts to raise the profile of outdoor play in Singapore. I delivered a 6-day outdoor play training program and helped to develop workshops for early childhood educator professional development as well as providing input into the development of an Outdoor Learning guide for early childhood educators.

How does Play Australia support you as a member?

The opportunities for networking have been very important for my

research. I also regularly access their publications and information and encourage my students to consider becoming members also to support their work with young children.

Why is it important for you to work in the play sector?

With housing density increasing and other factors impacting on children's access to play in natural environments, children often miss out realising the benefits of play and having the freedom to explore and be themselves. My research and teaching allows me to advocate for children's play. I see Early Childhood Education (ECE) as being a key context for children's play, especially outdoor play, and aim to support my students in becoming advocates for play also.

Got Something to Share on Play?

We'd like to make our Members News a little more interactive. As such we'd like to hear from you on themes and ideas for future editions or news about projects and awards to pass on to our editorial team. If you have something you'd like to share please email newsletter@playaustralia.org.au



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For more information on membership services, resources, news and events, or to contact Play Australia, please visit PlayAustralia.org.au