



## **COUNCIL POLICY**

### ***CHILDREN'S PLAYSPACES***

**Approved by:** *Strategy and Policy Committee on 9 December 2002*

Subsequent Amendments:

*None*

**Document Owners**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adelaide City Council's New Directions state that **“Adelaide will be the living model for future cities, attracting average daily visitor numbers of at least 150,000”**.

The playgrounds in the Adelaide Park Lands are significant recreation facilities provided by Council and play an important role in attracting people to the City to spend their leisure time.

Light'n Up in Adelaide – City Recreation and Sport Policy identifies that **“Adelaide City Council will provide, promote and support a range of facilities...to meet the diverse recreation and sport needs and interests of City residents, visitors, students and workers”**. Play is the work of childhood where children learn about the world. Providing a place for children to play gives them different settings and environments to explore, exposure to different challenges, a social setting to play with other children and adults, and a place to discover what they can and cannot do.

The Adelaide Park Lands are provided for the enjoyment of the community and to be used in a variety of ways, being either actively or passively. The vision of the Park Lands Management Strategy is that the **“The Park Lands will be a model of excellence for the provision, maintenance and development of ...a diverse range of recreational opportunities...”**. This vision has guided the development of the Children's Playspaces Policy.

This Policy provides Adelaide City Council with direction and guidance on the future provision of playspaces in the City and outlines clear parameters regarding the planning, design and development of existing and new spaces for children's play. Traditionally, annual expenditure on playgrounds has been used primarily to purchase play equipment, which has resulted in an ad hoc approach to design and a sameness and predictability of City playgrounds.

Primarily, playgrounds in the City are located in pleasant surrounds, are reasonably accessible and are safe with good amenities. However, there is significant potential to make improvements and create playspaces as unique and exciting features for residents and visitors to the City.

The Children's Playspaces Policy and Operating Guidelines focuses on the play needs of children (0-12 years) and the subsequent needs of their parents and caregivers when visiting playspaces. The Policy does not examine in detail the provision of playspaces for young people, such as the skate park and BMX track. It does however, acknowledge that children over the age of 12 visit playspaces and look for opportunities to be challenged.

The term's 'playground' and 'playspace' are both used throughout the Policy. The term 'playground' refers to existing spaces in the City that are dominated by play equipment. The term 'playspace' implies looking beyond the traditional supply of play equipment and considering features both within and surrounding play areas. While it is recognised that children's play can occur anywhere, this Policy focuses on the provision of play opportunities within a defined space.

The Children's Playspaces Policy and Operating Guidelines ensure that Council's resource allocation results in the development and ongoing maintenance of unique and attractive playspaces that are sustainable and inclusive.

## **2. POLICY OBJECTIVE**

Council will provide fun and stimulating playspaces in the City that engage the community, foster growth and development of children and encourage an active lifestyle by residents and visitors.

## **3. POLICY STATEMENTS**

- 3.1 Playspaces will be unique features that attract residents and visitors to the City
- 3.2 Playspaces will be designed and maintained to achieve and exceed Australian Standards and ensure that they are safe and attractive
- 3.3 Playspaces will be designed to cater for a diversity of social and physical needs
- 3.4 Adequate resources will be provided for an ongoing asset replacement and redevelopment program
- 3.5 Playspaces will be physically accessible to all groups in the community
- 3.6 Playspaces will be appropriately located in the City acknowledging the need to provide for City residents as well as visitors to the Park Lands and City centre

## **4. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND CORPORATE POLICY CONTEXT**

In adopting this policy it is recognised that there are specific legislative requirements to be met as well as other Corporate goals.

### **Relevant major legislative requirements are the:**

- Local Government Act
- Park Lands Plan Amendment Report
- City Development Plan

### **This Policy is to be implemented in conjunction with the Council's Strategic Directions and other relevant Council Policies and Strategies including:**

- New Directions
- Park Lands Management Strategy
- Light'n Up in Adelaide – City Recreation and Sport Plan
- Park Lands Signage Strategy
- Watch this Place – Public Art Policy
- Public Communication and Consultation Policy
- Young Adelaide – Youth Strategy
- Public Convenience Policy



## **OPERATING GUIDELINES**

*POLICY TO WHICH THE OPERATING GUIDELINES RELATE:*

### ***CHILDREN'S PLAYSPACES***

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Subsequent Amendments:

*None*

#### **Document Owners**

Position: Visitor Growth Plan Coordinator (*Jill Andrews*)

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Scope

Primarily, playgrounds in the City are located in pleasant surrounds, are reasonably accessible and are safe with good amenities. However, there is significant potential to make improvements and create playspaces as unique and exciting features for residents and visitors to the City.

The Children's Playspaces Policy and Operating Guidelines guide the future provision of playspaces in the City and outline clear parameters regarding the planning, design and development of existing and new spaces for children's play. The Policy ensures that Council's resource allocation is fair and equitable and results in the development and ongoing maintenance of unique and attractive playspaces that are sustainable and inclusive.

The Policy focuses on the play needs of children (0-12 years) and the consequent needs of their parents and caregivers when visiting playspaces. The Policy does not examine in detail the provision of playspaces for young people, such as the skate park and BMX track. It does however, acknowledge that children over the age of 12 visit playspaces and look for opportunities to be challenged.

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## 1.2 Legislative and Corporate requirements

**Relevant major legislative requirements are the:**

- ◆ Local Government Act
- ◆ Park Lands Plan Amendment Report
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## 2 STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

### ***Policy Statement:***

#### ***2.1 Playspaces will be unique features that attract residents and visitors to the City***

##### *2.1.1 Guideline - Incorporate cultural elements and artworks in the design of playspaces.*

Designing playgrounds to encourage dynamic play is about creating a sense of place or belonging. A community can reinforce its heritage and culture through appropriate themes and art in playspaces. Particular attention should be given to signs and entrances to playspaces, which as first impressions can set the stage for the diverse and vibrant experiences anticipated and invite people to enter the space.

Opportunities exist to design unique and attractive features that serve functional roles within playspaces such as fencing, seating, tables and shelters. These features should be in addition to amenities provided as per the Park Lands furniture suite. Children should influence the design of playspace features.



Playspaces proposed outside of the Park Lands should look to play a dual role of providing play opportunities for children while contributing aesthetically to the city environment. This is reflected in the City Recreation and Sport Plan, which identifies an opportunity to create a playground as artwork in the inner City shopping or cultural precinct.

##### *2.1.2 Guideline - Appropriately name playspaces to reflect their character and individuality.*

There is a need to name playgrounds in the Park Lands to create a sense of character and individuality for each playspace. This will result in better recollection of City playspaces as they become easier to identify and distinguish between. It will also contribute to the marketability of playspaces.

The names should be child oriented and be supported by signs that are individually designed. Where appropriate, the naming of playspaces should encapsulate interpretations of Kaurua names for the Park Lands.

##### *2.1.3 Guideline - Promote playspaces to invite visitors to the City.*

Unique and interesting playspaces are significant features of cities that can entice families to travel considerable distances to visit. Thus, there is an opportunity to increase city visitation through promoting the City's playspaces.

Promotion to potential visitors should focus on playspaces that have suitable carrying capacity and amenities, such as toilets and parking, and located where they are of greatest appeal to visitors.

##### *2.1.4 Guideline - Promote playspaces to encourage City Living.*

The provision of quality playspaces may attract people with children to live in the City. Playspaces should be promoted in conjunction with 'City Living' marketing initiatives to entice people, particularly families with young children, to live in the City.

## **Policy Statement:**

### **2.2 *Playspaces will be designed and maintained to achieve and exceed Australian Standards and ensure that they are safe and attractive***

#### *2.2.1 Guideline - Design playspaces in accordance with risk management best practices.*

Playspaces should be designed to be challenging within the parameters of acceptable risk. The design of City playspaces should as a minimum comply with current Australian Standards (AS 1924.1 and AS/NZS 4486.1) and Local Government Association Mutual Liability Scheme (LGAMLS) guidelines.

Playspace designs should also incorporate 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design' (CPTED) principles. In particular, public conveniences should be designed to ensure they are non-threatening and safe to use.

Appropriate plants and shrubs should be used and trees that provide reasonable levels of shade should be a high priority. Plants and shrubs should not reduce passive surveillance opportunities from adjacent areas.

Barbecues should be located outside fenced playspaces, or a reasonable distance away from play equipment that is not fenced.

Fully fenced playgrounds are desired by parents, particularly when visiting a playspace with more than one child. Physical barriers, such as fencing, should be provided where play equipment in the Park Lands is located close to a road. The design of fences should be that dogs are not able to enter children's playspaces. Fences and barriers should preferably be integrated with other play elements or as a play element in their own right.

Signs should be displayed at entrances informing users that dogs are not permitted and adults should be accompanied by children. Council's contact details should also be provided on signs to encourage community reporting of playground defects or hazards.

The placement of signs on play equipment indicating appropriate ages of use should be investigated in the redevelopment of playspaces.

#### *2.2.2 Guideline - Playspaces will be visited by staff daily to ensure they are safe and hazards identified promptly.*

Playspaces will be visited by Council staff daily to ensure any dangerous situations are cleaned up, or at the very least secured to make it safe, until full repairs are completed.

#### *2.2.3 Guideline - Maintain playspaces at least weekly to ensure they are safe and of a clean and tidy appearance*

Playspaces will be cleaned at least weekly and maintained in accordance with the requirements of play equipment manufacturer instructions, standards AS 1924.1 and AS/NZS 4486.1, and as specified in Council's maintenance inspection procedure and reporting procedure.

A review of playspace standards and Council's maintenance and reporting procedures should be undertaken annually.

## **Policy Statement:**

### **2.3 Playspaces will be designed to cater for a diversity of social and physical needs**

#### *2.3.1 Guideline - Design playspaces with different features and challenges to accommodate a diverse range of age groups and experiences.*

To ensure playspaces in the City provide a diverse range of interactive, creative and physical challenges, the design of playspaces will incorporate the following five key principles:

- ◆ Active play equipment;
- ◆ Active non-structured play areas;
- ◆ Imaginative/creative play areas;
- ◆ Adult/caregiver areas; and
- ◆ A 'special' feature or link to a special feature in close proximity.

#### Active Play Equipment

Play equipment plays an important role in the playground by aiding children's development through physical challenges. Many families visiting playspaces have children of different age groups. As children use play equipment differently, it is important that playspaces contain active play equipment for a variety of age groups.

Older children in particular seek very challenging play structures. To cater for this need, a playspace with 'adventurous' play equipment should be provided in the City.

Preference should be given to the provision of play equipment that encourages interaction between children and their parents, and other children.

'Recreation hubs' should continue to be developed. These hubs, involving informal recreation facilities established adjacent playgrounds, offer families a wide range of experiences within a single location.

#### Active Non-Structured Play Areas

Open spaced areas provide opportunities for activities to develop spontaneously. They are important areas for meeting and socialising and for informal ball games. The provision of hard surfaces and structures, such as a basketball ring, should be considered as part of open space areas to allow for a wider range of activities. Older children are generally attracted to these areas and particularly desire areas for ball games.



#### Imaginative/Creative Play Areas

It is important to allow children to interact with the natural environment. Therefore, playspaces should include natural areas containing creative elements for playful and stimulating activity. These elements include water, sand, rocks and pebbles, grass, bark, logs, mounds, plants, shrubs and trees.

Where equipment contributes to imaginative/creative play areas, it should be interactive equipment that can be manipulated by children.

### Adult/Caregiver Areas

Parents, grandparents and caregivers look for comfortable environments within playspaces to supervise and interact with their children. Public conveniences, sun and wind protection, seating, grassed areas, fencing and drinking water are important elements in making an adult's stay at a playground enjoyable. Quality provision of these elements can result in longer periods of use of playspaces and increased repeat visits. Public conveniences should be located within or close by playspaces to aid supervision and access.



### Special Feature

A special feature can be a significant or unique piece of play equipment or an adjacent element, such as a lake or sporting facility, that contributes to the enjoyment and/or range of experiences offered. These special features help identify playgrounds and can influence the theme and design of the playspace. Linkages to special features should be considered as part of future playspace redevelopments.

#### *2.3.2 Guideline - Ensure excellence in playspace design by creating functional and dynamic places for people to play.*

Playspace design should consider the following:

- ◆ Combine a number of different play elements within a playspace, ie imaginative, physical and social (detailed in Guideline 2.3.1).
- ◆ Provide areas for children of different age groups. Children are attracted to all equipment. Consideration should be given to the location and access to equipment for older children, as young children will be attracted to it and may potentially hurt themselves or be disappointed that they can't use it. Grouping of similar age relevant equipment can minimise this problem.
- ◆ Provide graduated challenges for children. Ensure each playspace contains a range of play features that can accommodate several age groups. This is particularly important for playspaces located close to inner City schools.
- ◆ Differentiate between play zones to minimise conflict of use. Place play equipment away from open space areas where ball games are frequently played.
- ◆ Provide areas to socialise and hold functions. Design playspaces to accommodate large groups while minimising the impact on individuals using the playspace.
- ◆ Assist supervision of children by establishing adult/caregiver areas centrally where practical and/or placing equipment such as seating close to play areas for very young children.
- ◆ Shade should be provided in adult/caregiver areas and over play equipment. Wherever possible, trees should be used in preference to made structures. The location of trees or structures, or alternatively the placement of play equipment, should be that maximum shade is provided in the afternoon.



- ◆ Observation spaces should be provided for children. Older children like to ‘perch’ on top of play equipment. Mounds can be used to create more interesting topography and be used as informal observation areas.
- ◆ Pathways and entrances to playspaces should meet disability access requirements (detailed in Guideline 2.5.1). Public conveniences should be accessible to all age groups and people with disabilities.
- ◆ Native plants that attract birds and butterflies should preferably be used. Preference should also be given to plants that provide things to play with such as leaves, bark, kernels and twigs. Robust plants should be arranged in order that they become creative play features. Bushes with sparse leaf cover should be provided to allow children ‘privacy’ without compromising supervision.
- ◆ A unique variety of sights, sounds, aromas and tactile sensations should be incorporated in playspaces to stimulate children’s senses.

### *2.3.3 Guideline – Design playspaces to be inclusive for people from all cultural backgrounds and abilities.*

The design of playspaces in the City should respond to the diverse cultural backgrounds of families who live in and visit the City. There are opportunities to incorporate visual cues and symbols that invite and welcome people from different cultures to City playspaces and enrich people’s knowledge of other cultures.

An integrated sensory playspace should be developed in the City that is accessible to people of all ages and provides activities which are suitable for children with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.

### *2.3.4 Guideline - Engage the community in the design, development and management of playspaces in the City.*

The community will participate in the preparation of concept designs for playspace development. In particular, working with children should be a key component of the concept design process.

Where community groups have a clear interest in a playspace, such as an adjacent school, then they will be consulted as part of the playspace development. Community partnership opportunities should be explored for joint development and maintenance of playspaces in the City (detailed in Guideline 2.4.4).

## ***Policy Statement:***

### ***2.4 Adequate resources will be provided for an ongoing asset replacement and redevelopment program***

#### *2.4.1 Guideline - Include an annual budget allocation for playspace redevelopment in Council’s Capital Works Program.*

To achieve a high standard of playspace provision in the City, playspaces need to be redeveloped to ensure they are functional and dynamic spaces. The preparation of concept plans for a playspace should occur in the financial year preceding the year of its redevelopment. This allows for appropriate budgets to be allocated, resulting in redevelopment budgets for each playspace reflecting the level of works required.

The order of redevelopment of playspaces will be influenced by a number of factors including:

- ◆ Current and predicted usage;
- ◆ Accessibility;
- ◆ Diversity of experiences within and surrounding the playspace;
- ◆ Condition of facilities;
- ◆ Location; and
- ◆ Other opportunities such as external funding.

*2.4.2 Guideline - Allocate sufficient resources in Council's annual Operating Budget program for maintenance of playspaces.*

The ongoing maintenance of playspaces is needed to ensure they remain safe and attractive places for residents and visitors to spend their leisure time. As playspaces are redeveloped with unique and diverse features, an increase in operational budgets may be required to reflect maintenance requirements.

*2.4.3 Guideline - Annually investigate external sources of funding in the form of grants or sponsorship for playspace development.*

Council will apply for external funding to assist in the development of playspaces in the City.

*2.4.4 Guideline - Investigate the possibility of financial contribution from educational institutions for playspace maintenance or redevelopment of playspaces regularly used by City schools.*

Examples of joint funding agreements between local government agencies and educational institutions will be reviewed to identify opportunities for joint funding of playspaces used frequently by schools in the City.

### ***Policy Statement:***

## **2.5 Playspaces will be physically accessible to all groups in the community**

*2.5.1 Guideline - Provide playspaces that are fully accessible to people with a disability.*

As playspaces are redeveloped, minimum disability access requirements should be met.

Children with disabilities, particularly those with limited mobility, not only desire playspace entrances to be accessible, but also want to be able to access play equipment. Playspaces should contain accessible under surfacing and elements such as large decks and ramps that allow children with disabilities to be immersed within a playspace as opposed to playing on the fringe. Consideration should also be given to suitable spaces for carers to play with children.



Future redevelopments of playspaces should also look at making a number of playspaces in the City 'fully' accessible. This process should consider:

- ◆ Improved access to playspaces via compacted or sealed paths;
- ◆ Ease of access in and out of playspaces where they are fenced;
- ◆ Paths and under surface treatment to assist access within playspaces;
- ◆ Community amenities that are inclusive; and
- ◆ Features and play equipment that are inclusive.

*2.5.2 Guideline - In the design of playspaces ensure that access by bicycles and pedestrians is catered for.*

Families regularly visit playspaces with more than one child, and often with a pram or pusher. Pedestrian refuges and kerb side protuberances should be considered adjacent playspaces that are in close proximity to roads.

Council should ensure the Park Lands path network, including the proposed Recreation Ring Route, should be linked to playspaces. Bicycle access to playspaces should also be enhanced with better access to entrances and installation of bicycle parking facilities.

*2.5.3 Guideline - Ensure adequate on-street car parking is provided for visitors to playspaces.*

Driving is the most common form of travel to playspaces in the City. This is due primarily to City playspaces attracting users from around metropolitan Adelaide. The provision of car parking near playspaces should be monitored to ensure a lack of parking doesn't become a major deterrent. Parking bays for people with disabilities should also be provided close to playspaces that are fully accessible.

**Policy Statement:**

**2.6 Playspaces will be appropriately located in the City acknowledging the need to provide for City residents as well as visitors to the Park Lands and City centre**

*2.6.1 Guideline – Playspaces will be appropriately located in the City.*

Playspaces should be located in the Park Lands. The City's Park Lands contribute to the appeal of playspaces by providing a pleasant setting and back drop for play. The open space adjoining playgrounds in the Park Lands also contribute to the variety of experiences enjoyed by providing alternative spaces for activity.

The siting of playspaces should consider the following factors:

- ◆ Access (disability access/car parking/bicycle paths/pedestrian paths and crossings);
- ◆ Age of people in the area;
- ◆ Distribution of other playspaces;
- ◆ Environmental impact;
- ◆ Proximity to natural elements and features;
- ◆ Proximity to other facilities and services; and
- ◆ Visibility (passive surveillance).

It is important to retain a number of playspaces in the City to ensure variety in experiences and access options. However, where playspaces are identified as being poorly used, consideration will be given to relocating play equipment to other locations or removing the equipment as it becomes redundant.

*2.6.2 Guideline - Identify new locations for playspaces in the City that cater for the growing City residential population.*

Adelaide City Council's New Directions state a desire to increase the number of people living in the City. Therefore, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of children living in the City resulting in growing demand for places for children to play.

The establishment of playspaces in the City environs, such as the City Squares, will dramatically increase the likelihood of residents being within a reasonable walking distance of a playspace. The Squares are ideally located to accommodate playspace elements. It is envisaged that the design of these playspaces would be significantly different to traditional playgrounds, with no commercial play equipment. These playspaces will be unique and in keeping with each individual Square.

The provision of playspaces should also be considered in the creation of new significant residential housing developments. Opportunities may also exist in existing residential areas where facilities and services are upgraded or redeveloped, such as the proposed reopening of Sturt Street Primary School.

A strategic plan for the provision of playspaces in the City should be developed.

### *2.6.3 Guideline - Develop a City Centre Playspace that caters for residents and visitors to the City centre.*

The City Recreation and Sport Plan identified a need for a playspace in the City centre, where parents can allow children to safely 'let off steam' within the shopping precinct. The playspace should be conveniently located to other City attractions and contribute to the overall experience of visiting the City.



The playspace should encompass creative play elements designed to be interactive and contribute to the visual amenity of the area.