

# Play Space Strategic Framework

2025-2034





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# Executive Summary

Play is the way that children learn about the world and their role in it. It can be physical, social, cognitive, imaginative, and creative – sometimes all at once. The value of rich play opportunities, particularly in early childhood in terms of acquiring skills, knowledge and self-awareness is immeasurable.

## The benefits of children's play include:

- Play creates physically and emotionally healthy children
- Play balances risk-taking and safety
- Play connects children with their community
- Play supports children's learning
- Play gives children time and space to relax and just 'be.'

Warrnambool City Council currently provides 61 play spaces throughout the municipality. These play spaces are highly valued by the community. However, Council is aware that not everyone can enjoy the benefits of play equally and is committed to reducing barriers to play where possible. **Common barriers that tend to preclude children, young people and their families from participating fully in play are:**

- Play space is located too far away from home
- Physical barriers such as highways or rivers block easy access to the play space
- Lack of transport to access play spaces
- Play space cannot be physically accessed by people of all abilities
- Play space is not inclusive and welcoming to a range of people of different ages, cultural backgrounds, etc
- Lack of knowledge in relation to where local play spaces are and what facilities they offer
- Restricted independent mobility around local neighbourhoods leave children and young people with very little free time to visit play spaces

- Structure of children's lives (e.g. sport and sports training, music lessons, etc) may take precedence over unstructured play at a play space.

The Warrnambool City Council's Play Space Strategy provides a clear direction for the design, planning, provision, management, maintenance and renewal of play spaces over the next 10 years, taking into consideration community needs, play trends, growth areas, existing distribution of play spaces, play value, condition of existing play spaces and resource availability.

Warrnambool City Council is particularly keen for this strategy to provide quality play opportunities, equitably distributed throughout the community, being mindful of the resources available.

## Based on feedback received, key priorities of local residents include:

- Improving play opportunities within existing play spaces
- Constructing toilets in play spaces that are well visited
- Providing shelters in play spaces or an undercover area
- Providing play spaces within walking distance from homes
- Installing fencing in some play spaces, particularly those with a high number of visitors and a busy road
- Providing shade to protect visitors from the sun
- Providing more BBQs
- Providing nature-based play opportunities
- Providing accessible play spaces for people of all abilities

- Providing more seats
- Providing indoor play spaces.

## Some key priorities identified in the Strategy include:

- Ensuring that play spaces are well designed and offer 'play value' to all who use the site (including challenging play and nature-based play).
- Ensuring that all homes in local precinct areas have access to a diversity of public play spaces close to home.
- Ensuring that the Warrnambool City Council continues to reduce the barriers to accessibility and inclusion where possible and using Universal Design Principles to create play spaces with improved accessibility.
- Ensuring that play spaces meet Australian Standards and other relevant regulations and legislation.
- Ensuring the play spaces are sustainable in their design and management.
- Ensuring that play is considered in other non-recreational based projects
- Implementing specific play space actions as identified in the strategy.
- Adopting new classifications (hierarchies) of play spaces
- Adopting construction guidelines and qualitative measures as a process for renewals and new play space developments.
- Using construction guidelines and qualitative measures as part of the brief for new play spaces and procurement of play equipment.



# Introduction

Well-designed, located and maintained play spaces play a vital role in enhancing the quality of life for residents of all ages and abilities. As part of its commitment to fostering a vibrant, connected and healthy community, Warrnambool City Council has developed this Play Space Strategy. It is intended to build upon the previous play space planning, ensuring that it meets the evolving needs and expectations of the community and aligns with Council's strategic directions and resources. It will help to guide the planning, delivery, operations, and maintenance of play spaces from 2025 to 2034.

## Vision and planning principles

The vision that has been developed for play spaces in Warrnambool is:

***Our diverse range of play spaces are accessible and well-designed and encourage active, social living across the city for residents and visitors of all ages.***

Planning principles to help achieve this vision are:

Planning principle	Description
<b>Welcoming and inviting</b>	Play spaces are designed to be fun, visually attractive, functional and appealing.
<b>Accessible and inclusive</b>	Play spaces are accessible and inclusive and provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.
<b>Community connections</b>	Play spaces are designed to promote community interactions.
<b>Diversity</b>	Each play space offers different opportunities and experiences from one another – achieved through installation or usage of a variety of different types of equipment, materials and landscaping.
<b>Equity</b>	Play spaces are distributed around the entire municipality to ensure that all residents, regardless of where they live, can access play opportunities within close proximity to their homes.
<b>Safety</b>	Play space equipment, features and infrastructure are designed to meet relevant legislation, Australian safety standards and safety design principles.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Materials used to create play spaces consider environmentally sustainable design principles to minimise the impact of the space on the environment.
<b>Value for money</b>	Play space equipment, features and infrastructure are constructed of quality materials and maintained at a level to ensure longevity of equipment and infrastructure.



# Council's role

Council has a number of roles in relation to play spaces, including:

Planning and design	Management and maintenance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing, monitoring and reviewing Council's Play Space Strategy</li> <li>Planning of play spaces in partnership with the community</li> <li>Ensuring that play opportunities are incorporated into other Council strategic documents</li> <li>Overseeing the design of play spaces by contractors or developers</li> <li>Ensuring that play spaces adhere to relevant legislation, safety standards and design guidelines</li> <li>Seeking external funding to develop / renew play spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing annual play space budgets</li> <li>Ensuring that appropriate infrastructure such as seats, shade trees and signage is provided in play spaces</li> <li>Activating play spaces through community activities</li> <li>Promoting the location of play spaces</li> <li>Organising for annual safety inspections</li> <li>Undertaking regular maintenance of play spaces</li> <li>Repairing equipment and infrastructure as required</li> <li>Programming upgrades and renewals</li> </ul>

As more play spaces are developed, there will be a greater requirement for maintenance and management related issues. It is imperative, that any play space developments align with the Asset Management Policy.



# Value of play

“Play encompasses children’s behaviour, which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live.” (Play Wales)

## To ensure a quality play opportunity is provided, consideration needs to be given to:

- Play opportunities providing suit the age of users and provide a graduated challenge
- Ensuring that a range of different types of play are provided for
- Play space being accessible and well connected
- Play space being designed well so that elements and activities flow naturally and there are no conflicts of use
- Play spaces have a mix of open areas in addition to quiet areas
- Ensuring that a variety of materials are used for surfacing and play
- An appropriate level of maintenance is undertaken to keep equipment in good, workable condition.

Play tends to fall into four main types of play, all of which may cross-over with each other and within the experience available at any one play space:

Physical play	Cognitive play
<p>Physical play is crucial for physical development and involves the practice, development and mastery of physical skills. It involves movement, coordination, balance, strength, and motor abilities.</p> <p><b>Physical play includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gross Motor Skills: i.e. activities that involve large muscle movements, such as running, hopping, jumping and climbing.</li><li>• Fine Motor Skills: i.e. activities that require smaller, precise movements, like threading beads, model making, painting or drawing.</li><li>• Coordination and Balance: i.e. activities that challenge a child’s ability to balance and coordinate their movements, such as riding a bike, throwing a ball or balancing on a log.</li><li>• Social Interaction: i.e. activities that involve interacting with others, developing teamwork, communication, and social skills.</li><li>• Exploration and Adventure: i.e. activities that encourage children to explore their environment, such as nature walks or ninja warrior obstacle / parcour courses.</li></ul>	<p>Cognitive play helps children develop critical thinking skills, equips them with the skills to solve problems and is important for overall development. It enhances the ability of children to focus on tasks and persist through challenges. It can also foster a love of learning and prepares children for academic success.</p> <p><b>Cognitive play involves:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creativity</li><li>• Imagination</li><li>• Problem solving activities</li><li>• Memory enhancement</li><li>• Logical reasoning</li><li>• Language development</li></ul> <p>In terms of play spaces, cognitive play may be provided through activities such as mazes; water play systems such as sluices or hand pumps; and play panels with games that focus on numbers, symbols or letters.</p>
Creative and imaginative play	Social play
<p>Creative and imaginative play includes activities that stimulate a child’s imagination and creativity. This allows children to explore new ideas, role play or act out different scenarios. These activities are essential for cognitive and emotional development and can help children problem solve and develop empathy for others. Creative and imaginative play encourages children to be innovative, think outside the box and express themselves in their own way.</p> <p><b>Creative and imaginative play includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Role-playing: i.e. activities such as pretending to be a pirate, horse or superhero</li><li>• Storytelling: i.e. telling stories verbally or through the use of toys or props</li><li>• Fantasy: i.e. developing games where the child pretends to be living in a fantasy world such as a faraway land</li><li>• Art: i.e. activities such as drawing or painting or building sandcastles</li><li>• Innovation: i.e. activities that encourage children invent new ideas or games.</li></ul>	<p>Social play includes activities that involve interaction with others and is essential for a child’s social development. Through social play children can learn how to make friends, communicate effectively interact with peers, cooperate, share, negotiate and collaborate. Social play is also important in the development of conflict resolution, empathy and emotional regulation.</p> <p><b>Social play may include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group games, e.g. hide and seek</li><li>• Team sports, e.g. soccer</li><li>• Role playing, e.g. cops and robbers</li><li>• Collaboration, e.g. working together to build a cubby house out of loose materials.</li></ul>



# Policy context

To ensure that the Play Strategy aligns with existing Council plans and strategies, it is important to be aware of the key objectives and directions articulated within these documents:

**The Warrnambool City Council Plan 2021-2025 (Revised 2024)** identifies the vision as 'a thriving city at the heart of coast and country'. Its strategic objectives of relevance to the play strategy include: a healthy community; a sustainable environment; and a connected and inclusive place.

Council's **Healthy Warrnambool 2021-2025** plan notes the following themes of relevance to the play space strategy:

- Improved physical health
- Improved social and emotional wellbeing
- Increased resilience and safety from impacts of climate change.

The vision contained within Council's **Active Warrnambool Strategy 2019-2030** is 'for Warrnambool to be a healthy, active regional city where people thrive'. The three key goals of this strategy are:

- For more people to be more physically active and socially connected, more often.
- For facilities and spaces to be well-managed and utilised to optimise health and wellbeing outcomes
- To utilise the resources available to efficiently manage and deliver on key priorities.

The purpose of Council's **Asset Management Strategy 2024** is to create guiding principles and an agreed methodology so that decisions can be made related to the procurement, management, utilisation and disposal of assets in accordance with Council's business needs and its strategic and operational plans. No direct references are made regarding play spaces.

**Council's Asset Management Plan 2022-2032** informs the community about how Council controlled infrastructure and other assets are to be managed to achieve the Council Plan objectives and Community Vision statement. It notes the four key challenges for Council in relation to asset management as:

- Delivering services from our existing assets into the future
- Increasing services demand in the face of limited funding
- Existing assets with significant service shortcomings or non-compliance with current standards
- Continuous improvement of asset management practice.

The plan states that 18% of open space and recreation is made up of playgrounds. Overall Council predicts that open space and recreation (which includes play spaces) will have a fairly consistent maintenance and operation budget to the year 2031-32; that projected capital renewal will be highest in 2026-28; projected capital new and upgrade will be highest in 2028-2029 and even more so in 2030-31; and that the average condition of facilities will decline over time. The plan notes playground renewal and upgrades as a challenge to fund.

Council's **Long Term Financial Plan 2021-31** outlines a 10 year financially sustainable projection regarding how the actions of the Council Plan may be funded to achieve the Community Vision. It notes that capital works for parks, open spaces and streetscapes amounts vary over the 10-year period, with the largest expenditure levels highest in 2026-28.

Council's previous **Draft Play Space Strategy 2019-2028** and its supporting background document was prepared by Communityvibe, Bricolage Design and Warrnambool City Council's Asset Management unit. It is understood that whilst the majority of this strategy provided a good 'road map' to follow which would result in improved diversity and play value, there were mixed opinions about the emphasis on reduction of the number of play spaces in order to reduce Council's asset base.

**Council's Open Space Strategy 2014-2026** is soon to be renewed. It will provide a public open space planning framework to 2040.

The Vision of the Open Space Strategy (OSS) is: "Warrnambool will have a high quality, diverse, accessible open space network that reflects community needs and enhances social connection, environmental protection and economic benefit."

An updated OSS is also important to enable the development of an Open Space Contributions Policy for inclusion in the Warrnambool Planning Scheme. Council is currently developing an Open Space Contributions Policy.



# Demographics

## Current population

The current population of the City of Warrnambool is estimated to be approximately 35,907. By 2036, the population is forecast to be 46,209 – an increase of 10,302 people over the next 12 years. Most of this growth is expected to occur in the older age groups. By 2036 there is anticipated to be 7,750 young people from 0-19 years of age living in the City of Warrnambool. This is slightly down on the existing population base of 8,414 young people living in the municipality.

## Visitors to Warrnambool

Warrnambool is the largest regional city in southwest Victoria, and services an area much larger than its own population. In addition to local residents, thousands of holiday-makers each year and people in neighbouring areas such as Port Fairy may access some of the larger play spaces, such as Lake Pertobe.

## Cultural background of our residents

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up 2.0% of the population (compared with 1.0% of Victorians) and 10% of the Warrnambool community was born overseas (compared with 30% for Victoria). The five most common countries of birth outside Australia include: UK, New Zealand, China Philippines and

India. Emerging groups include Vietnam, Philippines, India and China. 0.9% of people do not speak English well or at all (compared with 1.1% of regional Victorians). The five most common languages, other than English, that are spoken at home include: Mandarin, Filipino / Tagalog, Vietnamese, Sinhalese and Thai. Consideration may need to be given in the future to providing information about play opportunities in community languages and potentially incorporating some indigenous or cultural elements to play spaces.

## Income and vehicle access

The median weekly household income within the City of Warrnambool is \$1,419 (compared with \$1,802 for Victoria). Over one third of all households (36.7%) have access to two or more cars, compared with the Victoria figure of 36.0%.

## Socio-economic situation

The provision of play spaces locally is particularly important in lower socio-economic areas where families may not have access to vehicles or public transport to access play spaces some distance from their homes or where household income limits the ability of children to access other forms of paid sport and recreation activities. On the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (SEIFA) scale, Warrnambool is listed as

just below the state average of 1010 with a score of 995. Within the City itself, the areas of most disadvantage include:

- Warrnambool (East) Racecourse – 926.4
- Warrnambool (South) – 962.1
- Hopkins Ward – 943.9
- Central Ward – 977.6
- Warrnambool (West) – 945.7
- Warrnambool (Central) – 984.8
- Platypus Park Ward – 949.9
- Botanic Ward – 993.2

Areas with higher SEIFA scores than the state average of 1010 include: Bushfield-Woodfield, Warrnambool (North), Warrnambool (North-East), Russells Creek Ward, Wollaston Warrn, Warrnambool (Botanic), Warrnambool (South-East) Hopkins, Allansford, Pertobe Ward and Dennington.

## Areas of growth

Growth is most likely to occur within greenfield residential growth areas over the next 25 years in the following locations:

- North Dennington (up to 1,250 lots)
- South Dennington (up to 800 lots)
- North of the Merri River (up to 2,600 lots)
- North-East (up to 1,500 lots)
- Hopkins Coastal (up to 650 lots)
- East of Aberline Road (up to 5,000 lots).



# Trends

Some of the key trends that are impacting play spaces both nationally and internationally include:

Trend	Details
<b>Destination play space</b>	Destination play spaces are designed to be a venue where families specifically go to spend multiple hours enjoying a diversity of play opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. These sites will feature toilets, BBQs, picnic tables. They are generally designed by landscape architects and may feature a specific theme. Their catchment goes beyond municipal boundaries.
<b>Local play spaces</b>	Small outdoor play spaces located close to people's homes were immensely important for people's health and wellbeing during COVID-19 restrictions. These spaces become a place where children, who were home schooled during much of this time, could interact and meet with other local children (in a socially distanced manner). It also created opportunities for children and their families to meet others in their neighbourhood.
<b>Accessibility</b>	There has been a greater emphasis on play opportunities that can be used by people of all abilities, e.g. basket swing, ramps to climbing structures, sand trays, trampolines for wheelchairs, motorised carousels, etc.
<b>Musical play</b>	Outdoor musical equipment such as chimes, drums, keyboards and bells with bridges are more frequently being incorporated into play spaces. Some play spaces will have pre-recorded songs or nursery rhymes which can be accessed by pushing a button.
<b>Water play</b>	Splash parks which feature water fountains, buckets, sprays, etc are increasingly being constructed in municipalities throughout Victoria.
<b>Intergenerational play</b>	In recognition that some parents / carers / grandparents may like to use play spaces with the children they care for, increasingly play spaces are incorporating equipment that can be used by people of all ages and sizes, including outdoor fitness equipment, flying foxes, etc. A number of parks and the play equipment within them are also used by adults with a disability.
<b>Challenging play</b>	Children frequently request equipment that is considered a little challenging. This type of equipment includes: flying foxes, giant slides, climbing walls, climbing structures and zip lines.
<b>Wheel based activities</b>	Pump tracks, which can be used by children on bikes or scooters are very popular additions to play spaces.
<b>Nature-based play</b>	Play spaces featuring rocks, logs and loose materials that can be manipulated such as sand, branches, pebbles, etc are increasingly popular.
<b>Technology in play</b>	Play equipment has come on to the market recently which blends physical activity with technology such as lights, sounds, sequences, games and activities.
<b>Activation of play and play spaces</b>	A number of Local Government Authorities activate play in the streets through programs such as Active Streets or activate play spaces by holding events in parks.
<b>Playful urban design</b>	Some municipalities have introduced play into urban design, creating playful streets for everyone.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Eco-friendly playground equipment, surfacing options and materials are being utilised more often in play spaces, e.g. wood from sustainable forests and high-density Polyethylene (made from recycled household plastics).



# Current situation

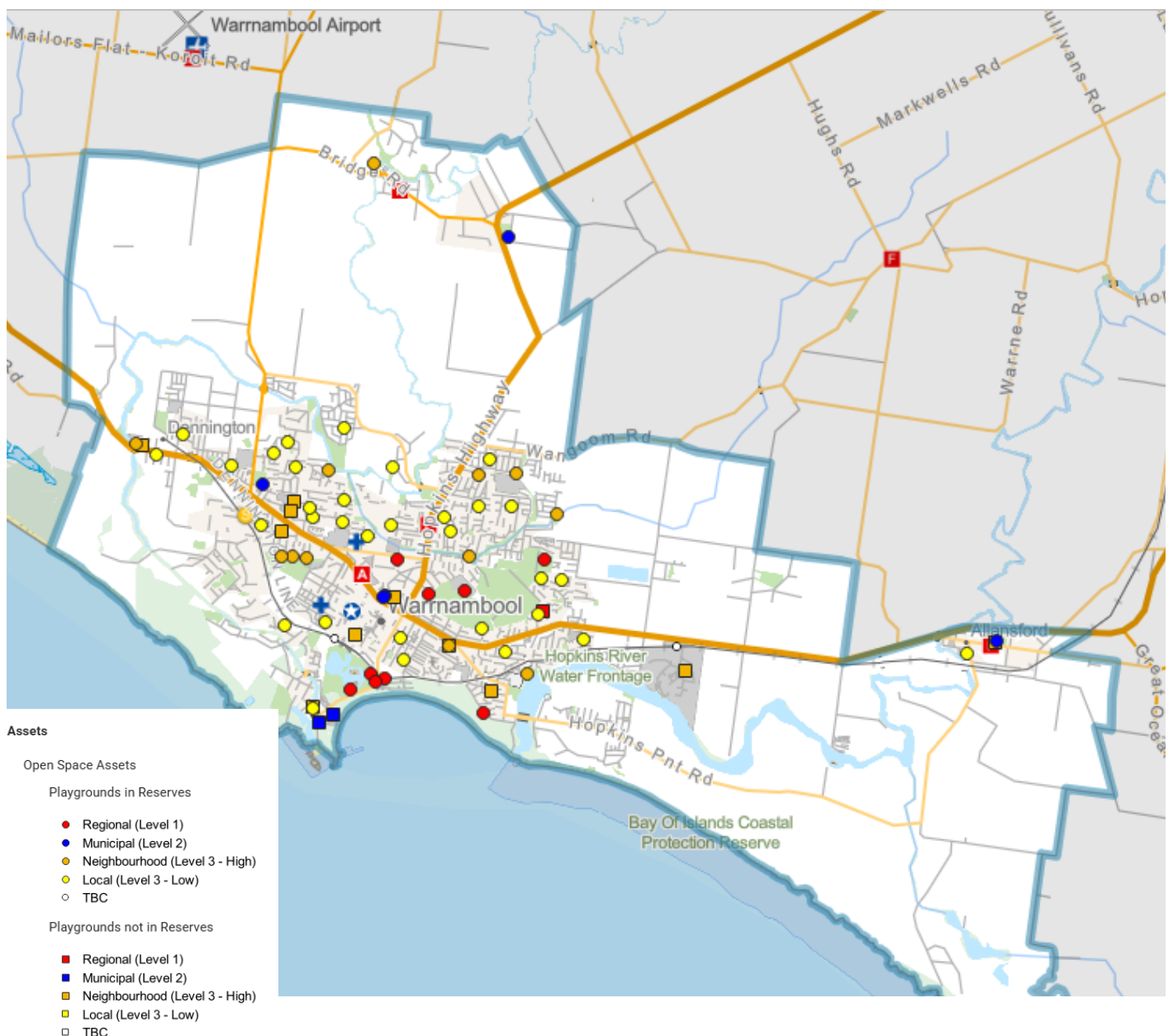
## Overview

There are currently 61 play spaces within the City of Warrnambool. These play spaces range from a small play space featuring a swing, a slide and a climbing structure, through to Lake Pertobe that features numerous climbing structures, slides, swings, flying fox, maze, etc. Compared with a random selection of other Local Government Authorities (LGAs), the City of Warrnambool is well supplied with play spaces, e.g. a sample of three metropolitan and one rural LGA show that they provide between 0.07 and 0.7 play spaces per 1,000 people, whereas Warrnambool has a provision of approximately 1.7 play spaces per 1,000 people.

## Geographic distribution

Play spaces are generally well distributed throughout the City of Warrnambool. Although there are a few gaps in provision, there have been some instances in new residential areas where several play spaces are located within a 400-metre catchment, e.g. Boston Drive and North Warrnambool play spaces as well as Natalie Reserve and Crawley Street West Reserve. This then creates an oversupply in one area, potentially at the expense of an under-supply in another area.

## Map of current play space provision



# Community feedback

## Community survey

A community survey was undertaken as part of the previous play strategy to identify which play spaces people currently visit, their means of transportation, their activities undertaken and their suggestions to encourage greater use. This strategy was distributed in electronic format through various Council networks and was advertised in the media. 303 people completed the survey.

From a geographic perspective, there was a good spread of suburbs amongst survey respondents, however there was a lower response rate in some areas of disadvantage in the municipality. From an age perspective, 83% of respondents were aged 20-49 and 13% over 50 years of age. Response rates from those under 20 was very low, i.e. 4%. Hence results may indicate the views of parents / carers more so than young people.

### Most visited play spaces

The four most frequently visited play spaces (in order), by those who completed the survey are: Lake Pertobe, Cramer Street, Jubilee Park in Woodford and Brierly Park.

### Travel methods and distance from home

38% of people travel less than 1km (the equivalent of a 10-minute walk) to their preferred play space, whilst 41% travel between 1-5km and 20% travel more than 5km. It must be noted that this survey was conducted prior to COVID-19 restrictions, a time when local play spaces within walking distance of homes became more important to families.

### Frequency of use

People tend to visit their preferred play space about once per week (39%), although some visit several times per week (27%).

### Accompanying parents

Most parents take children 0-4 with them (67%), followed by 5-9-year olds (55%) and to a lesser extent, 10-14-year olds (26%).

### Quality versus convenience

Survey respondents were asked to identify whether they would prefer to visit their closest play space, even if the equipment isn't as good as a larger play space or travel further to visit a play space with better equipment. 64% of survey respondents stated that they would prefer to visit the larger, better equipped play space. Once again, it must be noted that this survey was conducted prior to COVID-19 restrictions, a time when local play spaces within walking distance of homes became more important to families.

### Activities undertaken

The key activities undertaken by those people who visit play spaces in Warrnambool are to a large extent determined by what already exists. The top 10 activities in order of preference for the primary site visited include:

1. Swinging (80%)
2. Climbing (76%)
3. Sliding (76%)
4. Meeting with friends (61%)
5. Sitting (59%)
6. Walking (52%)
7. Running (48%)
8. Balancing (45%)
9. Eating (43%)
10. Flying fox (41%).

### Factors that would encourage greater use

Survey respondents were asked "What would make you use other play spaces more?" Responses centred primarily around:

- improving play opportunities within existing play spaces
- constructing toilets in play spaces that are well visited (particularly Jubilee Park in Woodford).
- shelters in play spaces or an undercover area

- the ability to access play spaces within walking distance from homes
- fencing, particularly in play spaces with a high number of visitors and a busy road
- shade to protect visitors from the sun
- BBQs
- nature based play opportunities
- accessible play spaces for people of all abilities
- more seats
- indoor play spaces.

### Other ideas

Survey respondents were asked "Is there anything else you would like to tell us about play spaces in Warrnambool?" Favourable comments were received from a high number of survey respondents about the quality and availability of existing play spaces in Warrnambool and district and the value they place on them. In terms of improvements, the following were suggested:

- providing fencing around some (or parts of some play spaces)
- new play spaces to be developed, particularly in new residential areas or areas where there is a perceived gap in provision.
- under-cover areas to provide shelter from rain and to ensure that play equipment remains dry in winter
- nature-based play opportunities
- BBQs
- indoor play spaces
- more shade
- all abilities play opportunities.





# Indigenous mother's group consultation

A focus group was undertaken with an indigenous mother's group comprising of 15 participants. Key discussion points included:

- Having a fenced in playground is a top priority, many indigenous families will not use Lake Pertobe due to the water and road risk and having children who are "runners"
- Families would like to see more picnic tables at their local playgrounds
- Having sunshade over some of the playgrounds in town would also be useful for the summer months
- The playground at the back of Whitehead Court / Fleetwood Court / Wooles Avenue is not used by indigenous families (this is the closest playground for all families that attend the playgroup). The key concerns are around the people who utilise the park, drug paraphernalia, and stray dogs.
- The families identified a space between Wanstead Street and Whitehead Court that is a very large opened grassed area that they felt would be ideal for a playground
- They would like to see more playground equipment at the Botanical Gardens as this is a well utilised space
- The group really liked the new playground at Albert Park on Cramer Street, but identified the proximity to the road as a safety issue
- The group really like the natural playgrounds – one parent specifically likes these as her child is autistic and struggles with the bright colours that playgrounds often are.



## Issues and opportunities

There are a number of issues and opportunities that have been identified that demonstrate the importance of providing play opportunities for children and their families, as well as around resourcing and maintaining play spaces in the municipality. There are also a range of specific considerations needed to ensure that Warrnambool City Council is meeting current and future community needs. These issues and opportunities include:

### Issues

- Diminishing opportunity for children's independent local neighbourhood mobility
- Structured programming for children, rather than opportunities for 'free play'
- Shrinking private / residential outdoor space and the impact on public open space
- Increasing community expectations around play space development
- Poor access for people of all abilities
- Constrained financial resources
- Coastal environment conditions and the impact on play equipment condition, i.e. rotting and rusting of play equipment
- Oversupply of play spaces in some areas, e.g. in a subdivision in the

northern part of Warrnambool, two play spaces have recently been constructed only 93 metres from one another.

- Need to 'climate proof' play spaces, i.e. address heat and wind issues.
- Need to ensure Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) principles are used in the development and management of play spaces wherever possible.

### Opportunities

- Joint use agreements with schools to provide public access to play spaces outside school hours
- Nature- play opportunities
- Water / aquatic play
- Wheeled play opportunities

- Better promotion of play space facilities and opportunities
- Increased community involvement in play space planning
- Incidental opportunities for play outside of the play space setting
- Climate resilient play spaces.

### Provision considerations

- Providing a variety of play opportunities within a local area
- Providing play for a diversity of age ranges within a local area
- Play for young people / youth
- Intergenerational play – where different ages can play together
- Genuine planning for inclusive play
- Introduction of more challenging play.

# Policy positions

The City of Warrnambool has recognised the need for policy positions to guide its decision-making in relation to the following:

- Appropriate under-surfacing for different locations / conditions
- Deactivation of play spaces to return them to open space
- Play spaces in new residential developments
- Play spaces in structure plans
- Play value and play diversity
- Qualitative measures

A policy position for each of these issues follows.

## Appropriate under-surfacing for different locations / conditions

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for appropriate under-surfacing materials for play spaces in the City of Warrnambool. This policy aims to ensure the safety, accessibility, and sustainability of play spaces while considering factors such as location, usage levels, vandalism, accessibility, cost, material availability, and the hierarchy of play spaces.

### Scope

This policy applies to all existing and future public play spaces within the City of Warrnambool.

### Under-Surfacing Materials

#### Rubber Soft Fall

Usage: Rubber soft fall should be used in high-usage play spaces where safety and accessibility are paramount. This includes regional and municipal play areas, play spaces designed for children of all abilities, and locations with high potential for injuries due to falls. It may be provided in part, but not all of the play space, e.g. at the bottom of a slide and under swings.

- Advantages: High durability, low maintenance, excellent impact absorption and accessibility for wheelchairs and prams.
- Disadvantages: High initial cost, potential for vandalism (cutting or burning), disposal of rubber at the end of its lifespan.

Conditions: Suitable for play spaces with high foot traffic, in urban areas where vandalism is less likely, and where accessibility is a key concern.

#### Sand Soft Fall

Usage: Sand soft fall is appropriate for play spaces with moderate usage, where there is potential vandalism to soft fall such as rubber and where natural aesthetics are desired. It is ideal for themed play areas, sandpits, and spaces that encourage imaginative play.

- Advantages: Lower cost, natural appearance, play qualities and good impact absorption.
- Disadvantages: Requires regular maintenance to ensure cleanliness and depth, can be displaced by wind or water, and dogs or cats may defecate in the sand.

Conditions: Suitable for play spaces in parks and natural settings, areas with moderate usage, areas that could be subjected to vandalism (such as fire) and where regular maintenance can be ensured.

#### Bark Chip Soft Fall

Usage: Bark chip soft fall should be used in low to moderate usage play spaces, particularly in natural or landscaped environments. It is suitable for areas where the budget is limited and a natural look is preferred.

- Advantages: Low cost, natural appearance, and reasonable impact absorption.
- Disadvantages: Decomposes over time, requires regular top-ups, can be uncomfortable to fall on and can harbour pests.

Conditions: Suitable for play spaces in suburban and rural areas, community parks, and where budget constraints are a primary concern.

### Considerations

- **Usage Levels:** High-usage play spaces require durable and low-maintenance materials such as rubber soft fall. Moderate to low-usage spaces can utilize sand or bark chips.
- **Vandalism:** Areas prone to vandalism should avoid high-cost materials like rubber unless adequate security measures are in place.
- **Accessibility:** Play spaces intended for children with disabilities should prioritise rubber soft fall for ease of access.
- **Cost:** Budget constraints must be considered, with more affordable options like bark chips used where feasible.
- **Material Availability:** Local availability of materials should be taken into account to reduce costs and ensure timely maintenance.
- **Hierarchy of Play Spaces:** High-priority play spaces in central or significant locations should use higher-quality materials, while lower-priority spaces can use more cost-effective options.





## Deactivation of play spaces in the City of Warrnambool to return them to open space

### **Purpose**

This policy aims to provide a structured framework for the deactivation of play spaces and their conversion back to open spaces within the City of Warrnambool. It outlines the circumstances under which deactivation is appropriate, the process to be followed, and the methods for engaging the community. Through thoughtful planning and execution, deactivated play spaces can be transformed into valuable open spaces that enhance the quality of life for all residents.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all existing and future public play spaces within the City of Warrnambool.

### **When deactivation is appropriate**

Deactivating a play space and returning it to open space should only be considered under specific circumstances, including:

#### **Oversupply of play spaces in a particular area**

Where there are two or more play spaces in very close proximity to one another, it may be justifiable to deactivate one of the play spaces, providing residents are still able to access the other play space within approximately a five-minute walk from their homes (the equivalent of around 400m distance).

#### **Low usage levels**

If a play space exhibits consistently low usage, it may no longer justify the resources required for its maintenance and upkeep. Monitoring of usage over a reasonable period of time through surveys, observations and smart park technology should be employed to determine usage patterns and to understand why low usage occurs (and if usage could actually be increased).

#### **Safety concerns**

Play spaces that pose significant safety risks, where the cost of addressing these risks is prohibitive or impractical, might be candidates for deactivation.

#### **Vandalism and anti-social behaviour**

Play spaces that become frequent targets of vandalism or attract anti-social behaviour can impact the surrounding community negatively. If mitigation efforts fail, deactivation may be considered. The preference, however, would be to work with the people who are causing the issue to determine ways of preventing future vandalism and to develop a positive sense of 'ownership' and stewardship of the site.

#### **Accessibility issues**

Play spaces that are not easily accessible to their intended user groups, such as those located in areas with poor active transport links, in a court with very limited access to surrounding residents or those that cannot be easily adapted for users of all abilities, may be better suited as open spaces.

#### **Financial considerations**

If there is insufficient funding to replace the equipment – as is sometimes the case on public land when committees of management cannot afford to upgrade facilities, then deactivation may be required.

#### **Environmental impact**

Where play spaces that negatively impact the environment, or where restoration would significantly benefit local biodiversity, deactivation may be considered as an option.

#### *Community engagement*

Deactivating a play space is a significant decision that affects the community. Therefore, community engagement is crucial to ensure that the needs and concerns of residents are addressed prior to any play spaces being decommissioned.

Prior to engaging with the community, it is important to determine whether or not there are any actions that could improve usage of the site. Further, existing and future demographic data for the area needs to be understood in case there is likely to be future demand for play at this space.

## Prepare rationale for deactivation

Prepare clear reasons for the potential deactivation of a play space and identify the potential benefits of returning the space to open space.

## Initial engagement

Initiate a consultation process with the local community to discuss the potential deactivation of a play space. This might include media releases, public meetings, online surveys, and meetings with key stakeholders. Present the rationale for potential deactivation and gather feedback from the community regarding their views, ideas and concerns.

## Transparent communication

Ensure that the decision-making process is transparent. Provide regular updates to the community through various channels, including the City of Warrnambool's website and social media pages, local media and community newsletters. Provide the community with ample notification before the deactivation begins. A minimum notice period of three months

is recommended to allow residents to adjust to the upcoming changes.

### *The process of deactivation*

Once the decision to deactivate a play space has been made, a structured process should be followed to ensure a smooth transition:

## Planning and design

Develop a detailed plan for deactivation, including timelines, budget estimates, and design proposals for the restored open space.

## Resource allocation

Allocate the necessary resources, including funding, personnel, and equipment, to carry out the deactivation and restoration process.

## Dismantling of equipment

Safely dismantle all play equipment. Any salvageable play equipment (i.e. in good condition and not past the end of its lifespan) should be relocated to another play space within the play precinct if possible.

## Site restoration

Restore the site to a condition suitable for open space use. This may include soil remediation, planting of native vegetation, and installation of pathways or seating areas.

### *Considerations*

- Ensure that the deactivation process considers environmental impacts, implementing measures to protect local wildlife and biodiversity.
- Consider seasonal factors when planning deactivation. For example, avoid deactivation during peak usage times, such as school holidays, local events and summer months.
- Should the site not be converted back to open space, but instead is sold, the funds from the sale should be used to improve an existing play space in that general precinct or develop a new play space in that precinct.





# Play Spaces in New Residential Developments

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide the planning, development, and implementation of play spaces in new residential developments. This policy aims to ensure that play spaces are strategically located, adequately funded, and designed to meet the evolving needs of the community, thereby enhancing the quality of life for residents.

## Scope

This policy applies to all new residential developments within the City of Warrnambool. It encompasses the responsibilities of developers, the role of Council, and the expectations for the design, funding, and implementation of play spaces as integral components of community infrastructure.

## Considerations

### Developer contributions

The cost of new play spaces in residential developments should be funded through the Developer Contributions Scheme. This ensures that the loss of open space through residential development is compensated for and that the financial burden of providing high-quality play spaces is shared fairly.

### Strategic alignment

Developers must refer to the updated Play Space Strategy, structure plans and planning regulations (e.g. Warrnambool Planning Scheme Clause 56.05-2) to ensure that their designs align with the City of Warrnambool's strategic directions. This play strategy outlines the vision, objectives, and design principles that should be incorporated into play space planning, including relevant hierarchies for specific locations.

### Suitable land

Play spaces will ideally be developed on unencumbered land, i.e. land that is free of easements, road reserves, slopes / escarpments, areas of conservation / biodiversity significance, areas of heritage significance, areas subject to wildfires, waterways, drainage basins and land that is prone to flooding. Occasionally play spaces may be located close to some of these spaces, or paths leading to play spaces may traverse through some of these spaces.

### Community needs

Play spaces should cater to the diverse needs of the community, including different age groups and abilities. They should provide safe, accessible, and engaging environments that promote physical activity, social interaction, and imaginative play.

## Timing

Play spaces should be planned and developed in tandem with the residential development to ensure they are available for use as soon as residents move in. Early consultation and timely implementation are crucial to achieving this goal.

### Planning Process

#### Initial consultation

Early in the planning process, developers should consult with the City of Warrnambool's planning staff to discuss the requirements and expectations for play spaces in their proposed residential development. This includes understanding the Play Space Strategy and the Developer Contributions Scheme, including the value amount that needs to be provided to Council in terms of land and infrastructure.

#### Design proposal

Developers must submit a design proposal that aligns with the Play Space Strategy. The proposal should detail the location, features, and layout of the play space, ensuring it meets the community's needs

and strategic objectives. It must adhere to the appropriate hierarchy level as detailed in the Play Space Strategy.

### Review and approval

Warrnambool City Council will review the design proposal to ensure compliance with the Play Space Strategy and other relevant policies and legislation. Feedback will be provided, and necessary adjustments should be made before approval is granted.

### Implementation

Upon approval, developers will proceed with the construction of the play space, adhering to the agreed-upon design and specifications. Regular inspections and progress reports may be required to ensure quality and compliance.

### Handover and maintenance

Once the play space is completed, a formal handover process will take place. Warrnambool City Council will assume responsibility for ongoing maintenance.





# Play spaces in structure plans

## Purpose

This policy position aims to ensure that suitable land is identified and set aside for the development of play spaces in new residential areas during the early stages of structure planning by the Council's strategic planning unit. By integrating these spaces into the initial planning process, we aim to create vibrant, liveable communities that cater to the needs of residents of all ages.

## Scope

This policy position applies to any new play spaces constructed in yet to be developed residential areas within the City of Warrnambool.

## Considerations

### Early identification and allocation of land

It is crucial that play spaces are identified early in the structure planning process. Allocating land for these spaces from the outset ensures that they are well-integrated into the overall design of new residential areas including integration with other community facilities. Land allocated should be unencumbered land, i.e. land that is free of easements, road reserves, slopes / escarpments, areas of conservation / biodiversity significance, areas of heritage significance, areas subject to wildfires, waterways, drainage basins and land that is prone to flooding. Occasionally play spaces may be located close to some of these spaces, or paths leading to play spaces may traverse through some of these spaces.

### Inclusions

It is vitally important that any play spaces proposed for development (either by Council or developers) are assessed by Council's strategic planners in partnership with Council's play space staff prior to finalisation of designs to ensure that the proposed play spaces align with the Play Space planning principles around play value, diversity of play opportunities, access and inclusion, sustainability, etc.

### Location of play spaces

It is important that the location of play spaces takes into consideration the location of existing or other proposed play

spaces within the development area to ensure that there is not an over- or under-supply of play spaces within a specific area. The majority of play spaces to be developed in new residential areas are likely to be local or neighbourhood level, however, there may be occasions where a district level play space is constructed if the residential development itself is large. The walkable catchment area of each of these types of play spaces is 400 metres to 800 metres. The Warrnambool Planning Scheme Clause 56.05-2 states that local parks should be located within 400 metres safe walking distance of at least 95% of all dwellings.

### Community needs and demographics

Understanding the likely demographics and needs of the community in which future residential developments will occur will assist in planning for and delivering appropriate play spaces. Considerations should include the proposed age distribution of the population, cultural preferences, and the specific needs and abilities of different groups.

### Environmental sustainability

The location and size of the proposed play spaces within the structure plan, should be mindful of the principles of environmental sustainability. This includes ensuring minimal disruption to natural habitats, providing links to other areas of open space and incorporating green spaces that contribute to biodiversity and the overall environmental health of the area.

### Active transport

Play spaces identified in structure plans should ideally be located so that they link to walking and cycling networks so that people can easily access these play spaces without having to necessarily travel by car. Active transport links may enable older children to access the play space independently.

### Safety and accessibility

Safety and accessibility are paramount in the location and design of play spaces. This involves creating inclusive environments that are easy to access for children of all abilities and are not located near major hazards where possible, e.g. busy roads. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Principles (CPTED) are paramount so that there is clear visibility into the play space.

### Resourcing and developer contributions

The funding and resourcing of play spaces identified within structure plans will be supported through developer contributions. Developers involved in the construction of new residential areas will be required to contribute to the establishment of play spaces as part of their development obligations. This ensures that the financial burden is shared and that high-quality facilities are provided for the community. Warrnambool City Council will take over maintenance and future upgrades of the play space once the site is handed over by the developer.



# Play value and play diversity

## Purpose

This policy position aims to ensure that play areas within the City of Warrnambool provide high play value and a diverse range of play experiences. By focusing on these aspects, we strive to foster environments that stimulate physical, cognitive, and social development while offering enjoyment and engagement for all users.

## Scope

This policy applies to all existing and future public play spaces within the City of Warrnambool.

## Definition of play value

Play value refers to the ability of a play space to offer meaningful and engaging experiences that contribute to a child's development. High play value is achieved through the incorporation of various elements that encourage exploration, creativity, physical activity, and social interaction. These elements include diverse play equipment, natural features, sensory stimulation, and opportunities for both structured and unstructured play.

## Considerations for achieving high play value

- **Diverse Play Equipment:** incorporate a range of play structures such as swings, slides, climbing frames, and interactive installations to cater to different age groups and abilities.
- **Natural Features:** integrate natural elements such as sand, water, trees, and rocks to create a rich, sensory environment that encourages exploration and connection with nature.
- **Sensory Stimulation:** include features that engage the senses, such as textures, colors, sounds, and scents, to enhance the play experience and support sensory development.
- **Opportunities for Social Interaction:** design spaces that promote social play, with areas for group activities, cooperative play and communal seating.
- **Inclusive Design:** Ensure that play spaces are accessible to children of all abilities, with equipment and pathways designed to accommodate diverse needs.

## Definition of play diversity

Play diversity involves providing a wide range of play experiences within and between play spaces to ensure that all children have opportunities to engage in different types of play. This includes physical play, imaginative play, sensory play, and social play. By offering diverse experiences, we can cater to the varied interests and developmental stages of children.

## Considerations for achieving play diversity

Consider incorporation of some or all of the following (depending on the play space hierarchy):

- **Physical Play:** equip play areas with structures that encourage physical activity, such as climbing walls, balance beams, and obstacle courses.
- **Imaginative Play:** incorporate elements that stimulate creativity and imagination, such as themed play areas, loose parts play, and spaces for role-playing games.
- **Sensory Play:** include features that engage the senses, such as water play installations, sand pits, and sensory gardens.
- **Social Play:** design spaces that facilitate group interactions and cooperative play, with areas for team games and communal activities.



# Qualitative Measures

Durability in a coastal environment is a critical to the longevity of play spaces, in particular equipment and furniture. The following section discusses preferences around material choices and finishes in play spaces.

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## Custom elements

Higher-level play spaces (i.e. regional and district) have more customised or bespoke play elements. It is important that when these are designed and installed that the quality and durability of materials in relation to their use is demonstrated and a suitable management plan for all customised and bespoke elements is provided. Play activities that have parts that move are more likely to degrade and break down more quickly than fixed elements.

## Material preferences

- Materials for each play space should be suited to the site context and be durable and robust enough to meet a life-span of 15 -20 years.
- Equipment and structures are best built from steel, and high-density plastics or fibreglass. Hardwood timber can also be used for in ground uprights structural longevity in play units, furniture, above ground edging and elements.
- Fixings and moving parts should be of a marine grade stainless steel, as these are the parts under most stress in equipment and therefore need to be durable.
- Any rope or net elements specified should be steel reinforced.
- Edging should be concrete when in-ground and ACQ treated pine is to be avoided where play spaces sit above ground as it is not proving a durable replacement to the old Copper Chromium Arsenate treatment of pine.
- Concrete should be minimum 32MPa strength and reinforced where appropriate and be of a suitable depth for use. Paths and sections of paving should include expansion and control joints and be graded for positive drainage.
- Any toppings used on paths should be consolidated using a binder and compacted with either a steel or treated pine edge.
- Impact absorbing materials should be manufactured and installed compliant with Australian Standards AS: 4865 and AS/NZS: 4422 in terms of depth and tested effectiveness. These should come with installed fall rating certification.

## Compliance with Australian Standards

All play equipment should be manufactured and installed in accordance with the following Australian Standards: AS: 4685 Playground Equipment and Surfacing Parts 1-6 (2021).

Review and advice from an independent play space auditor around compliance with Australian Standards should be sought during the design, documentation and construction stages of any higher-level play space.

## Certification and warranties

- Play spaces should receive structural certification from an engineer on any slabs or structures. Civil engineering advice should be sought on drainage where appropriate. This should be provided by the play equipment supplier or play space designer.
- Advice from an independent play space auditor around compliance with Australian Standards should be sought during the design, documentation and construction stages of any higher-level play space.
- Replacement warranties should also be sought on materials and play equipment where possible before the end of the defects liability period or play space opening to public (whichever is earlier).















# Play space hierarchy classification

Development of a play space hierarchy and service levels enables both Council staff and the community to develop clear expectations and understanding around play space design and management. The following hierarchy aligns with the draft Victoria Open Space Strategy guidelines.

Hierarchy level	Details
<b>Regional</b>	Regional play spaces provide a wide range of play experiences and infrastructure that has a 10km catchment (up to a 20-minute drive away) but potentially has a South-West Victoria catchment. These spaces can accommodate simultaneous uses by large numbers of people. These play spaces are generally greater than 15 hectares in size. It is expected that visitors to regional play spaces may stay and play for multiple hours, and could also use BBQ, picnic facilities, water bubblers, seats and toilet facilities. These spaces will be including and will cater for all age groups. They may also form part of a large sporting precinct. An example of a regional play space is Lake Pertobe Central Reserve.
<b>District</b>	Play experiences and infrastructure provided in a District play space may be sufficiently appealing to attract people from other neighbourhoods or suburbs to visit. Generally, these spaces are between 5-15 hectares in size and have a catchment of 2km (up to a 10-minute drive away). Visitors may stay in these play spaces for extended periods of time. These play spaces may be situated next to community facilities or within recreation reserves with playing fields, multipurpose courts, pavilions, etc. Infrastructure within the play area may include public toilets, BBQs, picnic facilities, seats, space for informal play, etc. An example of a district play space is Marrakai Estate, Boston Drive.
<b>Neighbourhood</b>	Neighbourhood play spaces provide a range of play opportunities for multiple users at the same time. These spaces may include supporting infrastructure such as BBQs, picnic facilities, water bubblers, seats and space for informal play. They typically have a safe walking catchment of 800 metres (up to a 20-minute walk) and are generally 1-5 hectares in size. Visitors may be attracted from neighbouring suburbs and may stay in these play spaces for extended periods of time. An example of a neighbourhood play space is at 42 Hayley Drive or 48 Breton St.
<b>Local</b>	Local play spaces tend to provide for two to three activities and are generally 0.20 ha to 1 hectare in size. The walkable catchment is around 400 metres. These play spaces are designed for regular visitation by local residents for short periods of time. An example of a local play spaces is Allansford Recreation Reserve.

The following table provides an overview of the potential features in each category of play space:

Provided: Yes =  Maybe =  No = 

	Regional	District	Neighbourhood	Local
<b>Location, size and target groups</b>				
Example	Lake Pertobe	Marrakai Estate	Hayley Drive Reserve	Allansford Recreation Reserve
Approximate size	Greater than 15 hectares	5-15 hectares	1-5 hectares	0.2-1 hectare
Walking Catchment	10km 20-minute drive	2km 10-minute drive	800 metres 20-minute walk	400 metre walk
Driving catchment	50km	5kms	800m	400m
Target group	All ages	All ages	All ages	All ages
<b>Play features</b>				
Indicative number of play opportunities	More than 12 play opportunities	9-12 play opportunities	4-8 play opportunities	2-3 play opportunities
Nature play				
Water play				
Challenging play				

	Regional	District	Neighbourhood	Local
Accessible play opportunities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Technological play	✓	✓	✓	✗
Skate parks	✓	✗	✗	✗
Pump tracks / BMX facilities	✓	✗	✗	✗
Half basketball courts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outdoor fitness equipment	✓	✓	✓	✓
Open grassed space for ball games / unstructured recreation	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Infrastructure</b>				
BBQs	✓	✓	✓	✗
Bench seats	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bicycle parking	✓	✓	✓	✗
Car parking	✓	✓	✗	✗
Drinking fountains	✓	✓	✓	✓
Garden beds / landscaping	✓	✓	✓	✓
Paths	✓	✓	✓	✓
Picnic shelters	✓	✓	✓	✓
Picnic tables	✓	✓	✓	✓
Toilets	✓	✓	✗	✗
Trees – providing large canopy shade	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Service level</b>				
Full inspection by an independent assessor	Annually	Annually	Annually	Annually
<b>Development cost</b>				
Budget range (based on 2024 figures)	Construction: \$2.5m +.  Design: \$150,000-\$250,000 (master plan / concept design and tender documentation)	Equipment - \$150,000 - \$190,000  Landscape and Amenity - \$80,000 - \$200,000  Design - \$10,000 - \$20,000 (concept design only)	Equipment - \$90,000 - \$150,000  Landscape and Amenity - \$30,000 - \$70,000	Equipment - \$65,000 - \$70,000







# Play space hierarchy – WCC Play spaces.

Play space	Hierarchy	Indicative renewal cost
Lake Pertobe Central Reserve	Regional	\$3,000,000
Lake Pertobe Recreation Reserve	Regional	\$3,000,000
Warrnambool Skate Park	District	\$410,000
Jubilee Park	District	\$410,000
Marrakai Estate	District	\$410,000
Botanical Gardens	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Baeckea / Laurina Close Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Hayley Drive Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Grieve St. East Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Water Tower Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Hickford Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Shirley Grove Reserve.	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Crawley Street (West) Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Brierly Recreation Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Wendy-Matthews Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
G.G. Payne Reserve.	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Karana Drive Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Shrader Park	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Toohy Estate	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Barton Court Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Witham Park	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Albert Park	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Rawlings Drive Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Victoria Park East	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Pappas Drive Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Pecten Avenue Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
Breton Street Reserve	Neighbourhood	\$220,000
E. Johnson Reserve / Lake Pertobe	Neighbourhood	\$220,000

Play space	Hierarchy	Indicative renewal cost
Woolles Avenue Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Koroit Street Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Victoria Park West	Local	\$70,000
Warrnambool Community House	Local	\$70,000
Iona Avenue Reserve	Local	\$70,000
A.H. Davidson Oval Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Membery Way Reserve (Platypus Park)	Local	\$70,000
Thompson Street Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Heritage Court Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Chisholm / Natalie Court Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Nicolls Drive Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Barbers Lane Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Donald Court Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Bushfield Recreation Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Moonah Street Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Norfolk Place Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Warrnambool Surf Side Holiday Park	Local	\$70,000
Swan Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Allansford Recreation Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Linnear Park (Charles Kane Park)	Local	\$70,000
Crawley Street (East) Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Mahogany Gardens	Local	\$70,000
Wesak Drive Reserve	Local	\$70,000
E.J King Park	Local	\$70,000
Fletcher Jones Gardens Reserve	Local	\$70,000
W.P. O'Sullivan Reserve.	Local	\$70,000
Auty Street North Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Ponting Drive Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Bradley / Archibald Street Reserve	Local	\$70,000
Vic. Park Central / Hopkins Apex	Local	\$70,000
Shipwreck Bay Holiday Park	Local	\$70,000
Wavelinks Youth Space	Local	\$70,000
Merrivale Recreation Reserve	Local	\$70,000



# Management

## Development of new play spaces

Population growth across Warrnambool will result in competing demands on open space and play spaces in established areas and new areas. According to the Planning Scheme Clause 56.05-2, "Local parks should be located within 400 metres safe walking distance of at least 95% of all dwellings."

In anticipation of planned residential subdivisions, we anticipate that new play spaces will be required in the following areas:

- North Dennington (up to 1,250 lots)
- South Dennington (up to 800 lots)
- North of the Merri River (up to 2,600 lots)
- North-East (up to 1,500 lots)
- Hopkins Coastal (up to 650 lots)
- East of Aberline Road (up to 5,000 lots).

A well-designed play space becomes an important community asset. It needs to serve a range of functions and remain relevant and safe during the course of its lifespan. Poorly considered design of both equipment and its setting can result in issues that include lack of use, conflict of use, vandalism, and early replacement of parts and elements. Resources such as Play Australia's Play Area Development Policy for Local Government provides clear guidance on the development of quality play spaces.

## Renewal of play spaces

Different types of equipment and play opportunities have a different lifespan, depending upon the type of material they are constructed with, their exposure to weather and coastal conditions (rust and rot are two major issues in Warrnambool play spaces), the quality of material used in construction and the amount of use the site receives.

Wherever possible, it is recommended that rather than assuming equipment or opportunities need to be replaced in a certain year because that is how long they are reasonably expected to last,

that an assessment is undertaken each year to identify ways in which to prolong the lifespan of items. This may mean re-painting steel poles, replacing a play panel on a combination unit, replacing a swing seat, installing a new slide, etc. It may also mean swapping some equipment around from one play space to another in order to create some change and diversity in play spaces. Not only will this reduce the costs required on an annual basis to replace assets, it will also ensure that the environmental footprint of Warrnambool City Council is reduced through the use of recycling. This process is undertaken by a number of local government authorities in Victoria and has yielded an additional five years from play spaces in areas such as City of Greater Bendigo.

Whilst some Local Government Authorities are able to extend the lifespan of their equipment, play spaces in Warrnambool tend to deteriorate from rust and rot somewhat faster due to weather conditions and locational factors. The expected lifespan of play spaces described in the table below is based on what Warrnambool City Council officers have experienced in recent years. The lifespan achieved does not necessarily align with Council's Asset Management Plan. Therefore, assessment of the lifespan of play spaces within the City of Warrnambool needs to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis, depending on conditions.

For the purpose of this Framework, the following lifespan can be reasonably expected (noting that it may be possible to extend the lifespan through targeted maintenance and minor upgrades) due to environmental conditions these assets are subjected to within the Warrnambool City Council municipal area:

Type of play space	Expected lifespan
Local	15 years
Neighbourhood	15 years
District	15 years
Regional	15 years
Basketball backboards	15 years
Basketball / netball concrete pads	Depending on condition

## Conversion to open space

Play spaces that are to be converted or returned to open space at the end of their lifespan may take various forms including:

- Reinstatement of grassed landscape areas (fill, top-dress and seed)
- Development of low-level incidental nature play elements (i.e. trees, rocks, logs etc.) that can serve the purpose of both providing informal play and improving the open space
- Designated space for other passive recreation purposes.

Each site should be assessed to determine what actions are needed and how that might look on a particular site given the above options. Where possible this action should occur alongside an upgrade of other local play space facilities. The following table show how several other Victorian municipalities decommission play spaces:



Glen Eira City Council	Darebin City Council	Strathbogie Shire Council
<b>Number of play spaces:</b> 47 <b>Population:</b> 149,908 <b>Approximate ratio of provision:</b> 1: 3,189	<b>Number of play spaces:</b> 101 <b>Population:</b> 148,570 <b>Approximate ratio of provision:</b> 1: 1,470	<b>Number of play spaces:</b> 25 <b>Population:</b> 11,455 <b>Approximate ratio of provision:</b> 1: 4,578
<p>Once the equipment has reached the end of its useful life, or is being removed due to a playground upgrade, Council will investigate several 'reuse' options. This includes:</p> <p>playground donations: to not-for-profit organisations such as Rotary Clubs to re-purpose;</p> <p>reusing equipment in other parks: retaining slides and other playground equipment to replace those that require maintenance; and</p> <p>repurposing equipment: in the design phase, considering existing equipment to be used as seating, barriers, artwork, etc. within the new play space.</p> <p>Source: Glen Eira Planning for Play</p>	<p>Rationalisation of Play spaces:</p> <p>Relocation</p> <p>Occasionally there may be situations where the site of a play space needs to be relocated on site and in this situation the setting, context and proximity of the new site to the road should always be considered.</p> <p>Closure</p> <p>There should be no need for play spaces to close and be removed unless a preferred alternative local site is identified and in this situation consultation with the local community should be undertaken and a final decision made by Council.</p> <p>Source: City of Darebin – Playspace Strategy (2010-2020)</p>	<p>Decommission – Play spaces recommended for decommission are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in areas that will be adequately serviced by other surrounding play spaces when removed</li> <li>• Currently providing very little or no additional play amenity to the community</li> <li>• Equipment is old and will require replacement or repair in the near future at a cost to Council, redistribute capital investment to aid in the improvement of other play spaces</li> <li>• Decommissioning will occur when equipment is deemed at the end of its life and notification to the community will be made at that time.</li> </ul> <p>Source: Strathbogie Shire Council 2024-3034 Play and Open Space Strategy</p>





# Construction guidelines and qualitative measures

Guidelines have been prepared to assist in the development of quality play spaces. These guidelines include information about:

- Variety of play opportunities within a local area
- Diversity of age ranges within a local area
- Play for young people / youth
- Intergenerational play
- Planning for inclusive play
- Perceptions of risk
- Construction guidelines for hierarchy levels featuring information about site planning; accessibility and inclusion; play value requirements; play equipment requirements; level of amenity; and quality of environment are included in the Appendix.

In addition to this information, reference should also be made to:

- Australian Standards AS 4685:2021 and AS/NZS 4422: Playground surfacing—Specifications, requirements, and test methods.
- The Good Play Space Guide “I can play too”

- Federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA compliance)
- Universal Design Principles
- CPTED guidelines
- Environmentally Sustainable Design principles
- Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)
- SEPA (Supportive Environments for Physical Activity) guidelines / Active by Design / Healthy by Design
- Council strategies, e.g. Planning Scheme 56.05-2, Infrastructure Design Manual, Structure Plans, Open Space Plan, Recreation Plan, Master Plans, etc.

too much of the same type of play space being installed. A local area should have play spaces with different equipment for a variety of ages and levels of challenge within different landscape settings, which allows for complementary, yet different play between sites.

It is also important to consider a community's mobility in this instance. Whilst regional play spaces may provide a wide range of activities and opportunities for play, they may be difficult to get to for someone with limited access or without a car. Setting and size of open space will also determine provision, as will proximity to other community facilities such as schools, early years facilities and shopping precincts.

## Variety of play opportunities within a local area

Planning strategically for variety within a local precinct is important for Council to achieve an equitable balance of provision and meet each community's needs. Bulk rollouts of play space renewal can lead to





## Diversity of age ranges within a local area

This aspect relates to intergenerational play, as it refers to the opportunities across a given play space or local precinct area for children to experience play that meets their developing needs and encourages them to test and build their skills further.

High-level play spaces (i.e. district and regional) should provide a significant range of activity across all age groups that are organised well so that children can graduate across activities and build their skills over time. It is assumed that most local and neighbourhood spaces will provide play opportunities for children under 12 years of age, as older children are likely to be more independently mobile and able to travel further afield to play.

## Play for young people / youth

Young people (tweens and teenagers) are often excluded from public open spaces and play spaces, either through design (i.e. many play spaces are created for children under eight years of age); by being made to feel unwelcome by adults using the same space; or by their own parent(s) who may not permit them to use open spaces unaccompanied due to fear of strangers. Further, there is a perception by some that the provision of a skate park meets all of the play needs of young people.

Access to a diversity of well-designed public open spaces, however, is vitally

important for young people so that they have opportunities to interact with others and enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of being physically active in outdoor green spaces.

Some key components that may appeal to young people, depending upon their own particular needs, the location where they live, what else is provided nearby, etc, are:

- Shaded or sheltered spaces to sit with their friends to chat
- Free Wi-Fi
- Outdoor courts suitable for informal small-sided sporting competitions with friends, e.g. basketball and netball hoops, soccer facilities, etc.
- Large swings
- Grassy areas suitable for ball games
- Trees and flowers to provide some aesthetic qualities to the space
- Equipment that is fun, challenging, appropriate in size or might have an element of risk, e.g. flying foxes, spinners, climbing walls, outdoor table tennis tables, downball courts, parcour courses, etc
- Spaces for skateboarding or riding mountain bikes / BMX bikes
- Art and cultural elements such as graffiti walls, murals and community art projects that they may have contributed to
- Performance areas to choreograph their own dances or for bands to play, potentially linked to musical systems with speakers and lights
- Water features, e.g. creek beds
- Lighting of key areas, e.g. walking / cycling paths, basketball courts and skate parks to enable usage in the early evening
- Events and activities, e.g. music performances, movies, etc

- Walking / cycling path connections to a park
- Public toilets that are open
- Access to drinking water.

However, to ensure that young people are welcome and included in public open spaces such as parks and play spaces, they need to be genuinely consulted about their specific needs.

## Intergenerational play

An intergenerational space is one that provides opportunities for people of all ages to participate in play in the same location. Intergenerational design of parks and play spaces does not imply that all ages will be using the same space at the same time.

Effective intergenerational design considers the different needs of all people to interact and the provision of ergonomically considered elements that allow for different uses. For example, a wide set of steps may:

- Form a seat with support for an older person
- Be a small amphitheatre for a group of young adults
- Provide a fitness training area for a person
- Be the location for a counting game for a child.

Increasingly, items such as outdoor fitness equipment is being installed in play spaces, effectively providing physical activity opportunities for adults too. What is critical to making an element successful in intergenerational space is its dimension, orientation and location.



## Planning for inclusive play

It would be beneficial moving forward if new play space developments and renewed or upgraded play spaces included a minimum 1,500mm wide access path to all play spaces. It would also be beneficial for this path to pick up any seating or furniture (picnic tables, bins and drinking fountains). Higher classification play spaces should also consider in-ground edging, rather than raised edging to allow for seamless access via rubber unitary surfacing to accessible play equipment.

One or two play spaces in strategic locations may also benefit by being fully fenced with a child-proof safety-latched gate. Fencing in this instance is useful to create a sense of having a secure boundary, which not only helps the child with additional needs to feel more

comfortable but also makes supervision easier for parents and carers.

Creating access to play spaces isn't enough if successful inclusion is to be achieved. The organisation of play equipment needs to also be thoughtfully considered to ensure well-integrated access.

## Perceptions of risk

Balancing risk and safety in play is a challenge for Councils. Perceptions of play spaces as being unsafe or environments where accidents happen to children can lead to a culture of 'risk aversion' and children being too restricted in play.

Recognising that some 'risk' or 'challenge' in a play space where children and young people learn to master new skills and develop good judgement, self-efficacy and confidence is important to play. Dull,

standardised play spaces only encourage children to look for challenge elsewhere, sometimes where it cannot be supported.

A Risk Benefit Assessment is a practice that looks at a play space and identifies all possible risks. Those risks are then divided up into those which represent good play value (i.e. such as tree climbing or scrambling over rock boulders) and those that constitute potential hazards (i.e. sharp edges, trip hazards, degraded equipment). It is recommended that a Risk Benefit Assessment is undertaken in order to achieve a satisfactory balance between duty of care and play value. It enables any identified hazards to be removed or modified and any risks with play value to be retained. In all cases, known risks should be monitored.



# Potential directions

As a guide, the potential directions are laid out according to priorities of high, medium and low. High priorities are recommendations to be addressed in 1-3 years, medium 4-7 years and low 8 years+. To support these potential directions, Council will develop a Capital Works Plan.

ISSUE / OPPORTUNITY	DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY
Hierarchy	Adopt the new play space hierarchy as outlined in this document.	HIGH
Play value	Ensure that as play spaces are developed and renewed, that consideration be given to maximising play value and creating a diverse range of play opportunities throughout the municipality, including incorporation of nature-based play, challenging play, intergenerational play, social play, etc.	ONGOING
Supporting infrastructure	In accordance with the play space hierarchy, install infrastructure in play spaces to provide a more comfortable environment for visitors, e.g. shade, paths, water bubblers, etc.	ONGOING
Accessibility	Where possible include accessible components in play spaces, as per the play space hierarchy and utilise Universal Design Principles.	ONGOING
Environmental sustainability	Where possible utilise locally sourced materials in play space design.	ONGOING
New play spaces	Work in partnership with developers (using the Open Space Strategy, Open Space Asset Management Plan, and the Developer Contributions Policy as a guide) to install new play spaces in the following residential areas at the appropriate time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>North Dennington</li> <li>South Dennington</li> <li>North of the Merri River</li> <li>North-East</li> <li>Hopkins Heights</li> <li>East of Aberline Road.</li> </ul>	ONGOING
Play space renewals	Undertake renewals of existing play spaces as per condition assessment information collected periodically.	ONGOING
Maintenance	Continue to maintain play spaces, with urgent upgrades from the annual audit taking priority, followed by high priority works and then medium level priorities (as per priority program)	ONGOING
Staff	Consider the FTE (Full Time Equivalent) required to effectively monitor and maintain the current and increasing number of playgrounds through the municipality.	HIGH
Promotion	Explore opportunities to more effectively promote play spaces via Council's website.	ONGOING
Activation	Explore opportunities to better activate play spaces.	ONGOING



# Glossary

Term	Meaning
<b>Play space development</b>	Development of a play space refers to the construction of a new play space where there is currently none. Generally new play spaces will be constructed by residential developers in growth areas of the municipality, or potentially at-ached to new facilities, e.g. recreation reserves, kindergartens, schools, etc.
<b>Play space replacement</b>	Replacement of play equipment essentially means replacing like-with-like. For example, if a slide is removed, it will be replaced with another side, usually in the same location.
<b>Play space renewal / upgrade</b>	A playground renewal or upgrade involves potentially redesigning the entire play space and removing some or all of the existing play equipment / opportunities and replacing it with new equipment / opportunities. A renewed / upgraded play space may be larger, may be located in a different part of the park, may offer more activities and may be more accessible than the previous play space. It is essentially a new play space at an existing site.
<b>Return of play space to open space</b>	Return to open space refers to the removal of play equipment from a play space and conversion of the site to open space. This action needs to occur on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the local community. The 'open space' area could feature paths, seats, shade trees and nature-based play opportunities such as logs, rocks, etc. Alternatively, it may simply be reverted back to an area of open space that can be used by the community for ball games, picnics, events, dog walking and other passive recreational activities.