



About this document

This document is the Rural City of Wangaratta Play Space Strategy.

It has been prepared by @Leisure Planners and Jeavons Landscape Architects

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1. Overview

Introduction

The Rural City of Wangaratta is located in the north east of Victoria in a geographically diverse and scenic landscape including native bushland, pastoral landscapes and mountains.

There are over 27,000 residents of which approximately 17,000 live in urban Wangaratta with the balance within a number of small rural townships.

There are 39 playgrounds within Wangaratta – 28 in urban Wangaratta and 11 in rural communities.

Scope

This project is limited to the assessment of public play spaces and does not cover early childhood centre-based play spaces, skate parks or public fitness stations.

This strategy is a high-level document and it is intended that each play space, particularly as it is due for renewal or upgrade, would be reviewed against the recommendations in this strategy. It is intended that consultation with the community be undertaken at that time.

Terminology

Play Space – Any purpose-built setting for children's play. Play spaces frequently include play equipment and their accompanying areas of impact absorbing surfaces, but they may also include, (or solely consist of) play elements such as trees, boulders and logs, sand, planting, earth-forming, sculpture, musical items or other natural or man-made elements provided for the purpose of play. The play space can be in open areas of lawn; a small forest; hard or soft surfaces for ball games, and include ping pong tables, and mounds or walls if these are provided in the context of a park or children's play setting.

Play Provision – A range of ways of providing for children's play in public spaces. It can include playground equipment, cubbies or sand play areas, ball courts and open grass areas, and may also include areas of planting and bush, water, hard surfaces, paths, art works and other landscape elements. These may have been purpose-designed or may be appropriated by children for their own purposes.

Play Elements – Includes man-made items such as play equipment, as well as natural items such as boulders and logs, sand, planting, earth forming, sculptures etc., designed and placed for play, which typically have other purposes and sources, but have been brought into a play space to support and enhance children's play. In this context they become play elements.

Play Equipment – Purpose-designed structures intended to support children's play. These may be custom-built or selected from a catalogue, but typically are recognised as purpose-designed and built for children's physical, creative, imaginative or social/dramatic play. In this context, this category does not include fitness equipment.

Nature Play Space – A purpose-built outdoor space intended for play and social interaction that is primarily made up of natural elements/materials.

1. Overview

Map 1 – Play Spaces in Urban Wangaratta

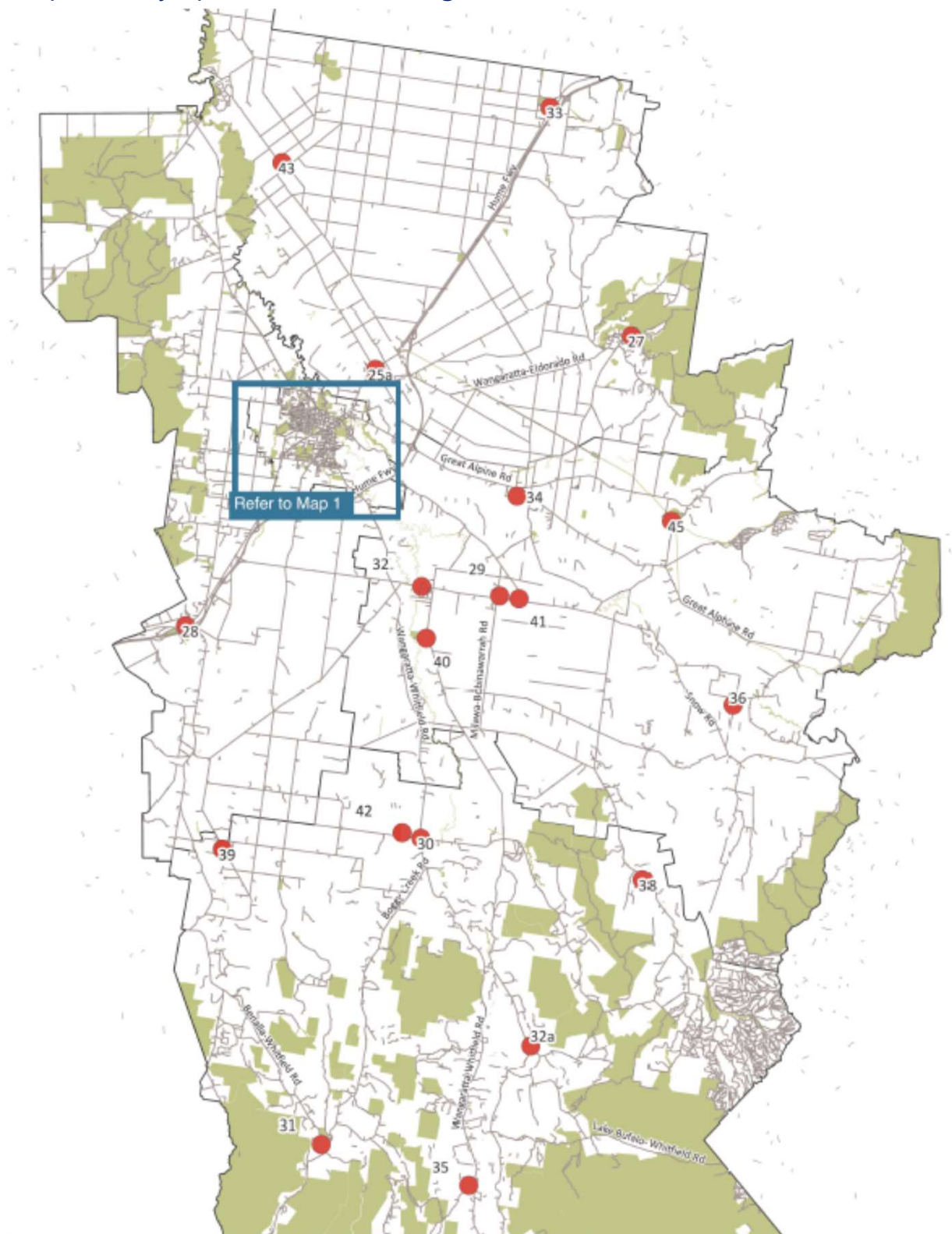


Legend

- Skate
- Playground
- District Boundary
- Open Space

1. Overview

Map 2 – Play Spaces in Rural Wangaratta



2. Planning and Policy Context

A number of Council plans reinforce the value of providing for children and the importance of play for social and physical development. Key statements of relevance to this strategy are detailed below:

Our Council Plan 2017 - 2021

- ❖ Non Negotiable – Our community can access recreation facilities and programs. We can all lead an active and healthy lifestyle
- ❖ Key Deliverable – We will plan, research and advocate for the future to ensure we are responding to the current and future recreation needs of our community and creating sustainable and quality recreation reserves throughout our municipality.
- ❖ Key Deliverable – We will create and deliver exciting and evolving play spaces in our city and rural areas that create opportunities for children, young people and their families to explore and interact
- ❖ Key Deliverable – We will create and deliver open spaces that allow everyone to enjoy our beautiful location and environment
- ❖ Key Deliverable – We maintain our parks and gardens, reserves and open spaces to ensure the safety and enjoyment of our people, and the protection of our spaces

2030 Community Vision

- ❖ Regardless of age, race, religion or ability, members of our community can access the places and spaces they need and want, in order to live fulfilling, happy and productive lives. There are no longer physical barriers that previously prevented sectors of our community from moving around and accessing different areas of the Rural City of Wangaratta
- ❖ Rural recreation reserves have played an important role in fostering social connections and the health and wellbeing of the community. Some key steps forward: continue to invest in public spaces in rural townships to improve local liveability and tourist appeal
- ❖ The provision of high quality, imaginative, interactive and attractive parks and playgrounds
- ❖ By 2030, there are no barriers to social participation

The Wangaratta Project – A Master Plan for the City (2016)

- ❖ Plan, design and develop a regional play space in an agreed location in central Wangaratta

Wangaratta Recreation Parklands Master Plan (2007)

- ❖ Develop more informal and unstructured recreation options
- ❖ Various small playgrounds were recommended throughout the Wangaratta Recreation Parklands
- ❖ There is a need to consider the provision of a larger, regionally significant playground

Recreation Strategy (2012)

- ❖ A range of accessible open space and recreation opportunities that are well planned and sustainable, and meet the health, social and environmental needs of a diverse community
- ❖ The Rural City of Wangaratta lacks a regional playground that is accessible to people with a disability
- ❖ Contemporary planning for play includes natural play, adventure and physical play, public art as play features, opportunities for all generations including young people and grandparents
- ❖ Develop a Play Space Strategy, which examines the distribution and diversity of the play network, play and recreation opportunities for young people and the development of a 'regional' play space

3. Community Engagement

The development of this strategy has been strongly guided by community engagement in order to align the direction of the strategy with the needs and wants of the community.

Council completed a Let's Play Week which provided residents with the opportunity to grab a 'Let's Play Passport' (see below) and visit play spaces in the municipality to provide feedback and also tell Council about how they used the spaces.



your say (On where you went)

How did you use the Play Spaces?

What improvements could be made?

Please return your Passport to your participating school or into one of the Let's Play Passport Return Boxes located at:

Rural City of Wangaratta Offices Corner Ford and Ovens St Wangaratta	Wangaratta Library 21 Docker St Wangaratta
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**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING
IN THE LET'S PLAY WEEK**

Prize Draw and Feedback to the Community
will be Thursday 22 December

CONTACT US
If you have any questions please contact the Projects and Recreation Team at Rural City of Wangaratta or Phone: 5722 0888

Privacy statement: The Wangaratta Rural City Council ensures that any personal information it collects is managed in accordance with the requirements of the Information Privacy Principles as set out in the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. If you are under 18 years of age, seek consent from your parent/guardian.

Let's PLAY
YOUR PASSPORT TO ADVENTURE

MON 12th TO SUN 18th DEC 2016

NAME: _____

TOWN/Neighbourhood: _____

Your Contact Details: _____

The purpose of LET'S PLAY week is to encourage you to get active outside with family and friends.
Let us know about a great play space that you could share with us online at www.oursay.org/wangaratta/letsplay

By having 'Your Say' you can enter the
PRIZE DRAW
and WIN a
***100 VOUCHER**

 RURAL CITY OF WANGARATTA

Council also hosted an online engagement through Our Say – Let's Play inviting respondents to post ideas, make comments and vote on ideas. A detailed report on this engagement is provided in the Background Reports to this strategy.

Key Findings from the Consultation

Distribution of Play Spaces

- ❖ More playgrounds in all different areas so people don't have to drive

Nature Based Play / Natural Elements

- ❖ Nature based play
- ❖ A children's garden, similar to that in the Botanic Gardens in Albury would be fantastic
- ❖ A sensory park or garden for children with learning/physical disabilities
- ❖ Please plant some trees and vegetation
- ❖ No little dirt patches, nice green grass
- Note: the demand for a children's garden received 38 votes as part of a separate consultation for the Yarrunga Pool site.

3. Community Engagement

Support Facilities

- ❖ More seats for parents
- ❖ Add some more outside gyms
- ❖ Bubblers for 3 – 5 year olds
- ❖ A café in one of our parks would be a winner
- ❖ Fencing at some parks
- ❖ Cleaner toilets, put rubbish bins and recycling bins around

More and Different Types of Play Elements

- ❖ Slides that are not too hot
- ❖ Have more swings and climbing equipment, more flying foxes
- ❖ Play sculptures – reflecting the town's history that is unique and not "off the shelf"

Provision for People of All Ages and Abilities

- ❖ Playgrounds need to be multi-age and appropriate with different areas for different ages
- ❖ Toddlers sized tabled nearby
- ❖ Drinking fountains that toddlers can reach

Other

- ❖ Indoor play centres and trampoline centre or somewhere to go in poor weather
- ❖ Enclosed off-leash dog park for exercise and socialisation
- ❖ Kids need a pool
- ❖ Fix broken equipment

The web link for the online community engagement was <http://oursay.org/wangaratta/letsplay>

Customer Feedback and Requests

Council regularly receives feedback and requests from the community in relation to the provision and management of play spaces. Where possible, these have been considered for inclusion into this strategy.

4. Values, Principles and Assumptions

Planning for Play

The Role of Play in the Healthy Development of Children

Play in its many forms is significant in the healthy development of children and young people. The location, planning and design of parks have a significant effect on how they will be used. Parks and play spaces play a vital role in encouraging children and families and other community members to play out of doors and thus make a considerable contribution to community health and wellbeing.

Parks vs Play Spaces

Most public provision for play typically take place in parks. The location, size and distribution of parks determine the availability of most play opportunities, so the two cannot be considered in isolation.

Play elements include man-made items such as play equipment, as well as natural items such as boulders and logs, sand, planting, earth forming, sculptures etc., designed and placed for play, which typically have other purposes and sources, but have been brought into a play space to support and enhance children's play. In this context they become play elements.

Play Provision as a System

Planning and designing places for play should not be seen as a one-off matter to be resolved on a single, park-by-park basis. Rather, each park and play space contributes to an overall 'package' available to the public across the open space network.

Play Space Users: Children, Teenagers, Adults

Play spaces are primarily needed to facilitate play in children – as there are specific benefits for young children in terms of their physical, neural and social development from being exposed to a wide range of play opportunities. That means they also need to provide for children's carers, siblings and other family members who support children, and who should be encouraged to be active participants in children's play.

Generally, it is not desirable to provide play equipment specific to only age group in a park. Nor is it desirable to separate equipment areas for different age groups as a family group may include different aged siblings and only one parent or carer who needs to supervise and play with both.

Parks with play equipment should always include other opportunities for social/family recreation, physical activities and environmental elements that can be used by people of any age. This should be irrespective of the local population profile and age structure of the immediate area.

To cater for everyone, play spaces should include:

- ❖ A diverse choice of activity types and settings for play and outdoor recreation
- ❖ Varying degrees of challenge
- ❖ Accessible and inclusive elements and spaces that have a multitude of functions and possibilities
- ❖ Design and furniture that encourages social interaction as well as physical and environmental activities
- ❖ High levels of landscape amenity and natural elements that create character, interest and aesthetically pleasing and comfortable environments in all seasons
- ❖ Canopy trees, paths and infrastructure designed to include people of all ages and abilities

Across all residential precincts, Council will be most likely to ensure that as young children become teenagers, adults and older adults, the network of parks and play spaces will continue to meet their needs.

4. Values, Principles and Assumptions

Definition of Residential Precincts

Precincts are the basic planning unit which have been used in this Strategy to map and play provision across the municipality. Precincts are residential areas contained by any physical or social boundary or barrier such as busy roads, railway lines or water bodies that might affect the easy independent movement of children on foot or bike. The precincts are shown below and will be explored in detail later in this Strategy.



Walking Distance to Social Parks from Residential Areas

All urban residents should ideally have access to a park within an approximate 10-minute walk, and desirably approximately 800m.

In rural localities, play spaces are best located with other community facilities and on the main road. In large lot residential areas, play spaces should also not be in the nearest small township rather than be provided throughout low density areas.

Where these distances are impractical, the quality and diversity of those play opportunities that do exist becomes more significant. Where residents only have limited options for access to parks or play spaces, those that are accessible need to be of a higher quality to make up for limits in choice.

Diversity of Play Within Precincts and Parks

A diverse 'package' of play opportunities needs to be available within any one precinct (such as the parks, open spaces, play equipment, bushland, plazas, rivers or creeks, pedestrian zones and any other public spaces where children might play). This is critical in planning, design and management for play.

As some children and families will not have opportunities to move far afield, within each park there also needs to be some choice of opportunities and settings. The design of individual parks and parcels of open space needs to take this into account.

5. Classification of Play Spaces

Play spaces within the Rural City of Wangaratta will be broken into three distinct classifications. These classifications are based upon the catchment area that they are targeting and will have distinct design guidelines and levels of service.

The three classifications are:

- ❖ Local
- ❖ District
- ❖ Regional

Refer to Table 1 (below) for the description of various attributes related to these classifications.

	Local Play Spaces	District Play Spaces	Regional Play Spaces
Definition and Significance	The basic and possibly most important building block of the open space network. Serves homes within walking distance and unlikely to attract users from outside the local area.	Serves a whole residential precinct or collection of adjoining suburbs. These are typically larger and more prominent than local play spaces, with a distribution similar to local primary schools.	These are destination playgrounds that provide for high levels of use. Attracts people from throughout the municipality and visitors. May be located near another major destination or attraction or large regional park.
Role and Function	The primary purpose of this space is for play and social/family recreation. Important for children old enough to walk or cycle to playgrounds independently. Helps make up for a lack of private space. Important meeting places for local families, children and teenagers. Visits are likely to be of short duration.	Primary purpose is for play and social/family recreation. Visits are often connected to another attraction (i.e. to shops, schools, kinder, sports etc..) and for meeting socially. The role as a community-meeting place is a key feature. Visits will be of longer duration than local parks.	Provide a greater diversity, scale and quality of play experiences than is possible in local and district spaces. These spaces should have a higher degree of accessibility and inclusiveness and may include custom designed elements and special play experiences unlikely to be available or affordable to provide in local or district spaces. Visits are likely to be of moderate or extended duration.
Distribution and Catchment	In urban areas these parks should be distributed relatively equitably throughout residential areas.	Residents should have access to this type of park ideally within their suburb, rural locality or at a district park or community hub. Serves users that travel by foot or bike or by car.	Attracts visitors from outside the immediate suburb or locality and further afield by public transport, car, bike or on foot. Some likely to be used by groups and may be visited by buses.

6. Design of Play Spaces

Including natural elements in a play space

- ❖ Include natural materials such as durable timber, logs, rocks/stone, grass, trees, and other plant materials as well as variable terrain
- ❖ Is inherently open-ended and therefore adaptable for children's purposes
- ❖ Deliberately provides some loose materials with which children can engage (sand, pebbles, dirt, flowers, gum nuts etc.). Plants need to be selected for this interest.
- ❖ Encourages parents and carers to support and encourage children to develop their skills, self-reliance and adaptability and take on challenges.
- ❖ May receive less intense management (and commensurately reduces the expectations of the community for the more intense management found in other types of play spaces)
- ❖ Is managed with the expectation that children will interact with some loose materials and that this is an acceptable purpose of these spaces
- ❖ Could be back up by an education and marketing program by the Rural City of Wangaratta

Including amenities to ensure a play space is functional and encourages longer visits

In addition to specific play equipment, play spaces should include natural elements, paths and other amenities inline with their facility hierarchy. These include amenities such as furniture, barbecues, bins, lights, shade structures, toilets, drinking fountains, vegetation, paths and paving, fences and other items. These are typically provided for social amenity and frequently double up as play elements, such as:

- ❖ A path providing for hopscotch, textures for crawlers, and circuits for toddler bikes, wheeled toys, children with walker frames and mobility devices and skateboards
- ❖ Boulders and logs providing for both seating and balancing, as well as retaining walls
- ❖ Low walls for climbing and balancing, as well as for seating
- ❖ Vegetation including canopy trees, providing a source of play materials (such as gum nuts, colourful leaves and flowers), as well as shade, contact with nature and other environmental benefits
- ❖ A drinking fountain providing a source of water for play in a sand pit

Access and inclusion for users with a disability

There are many kinds of disability; each has its own design implications. Numerically, there are far more children with an intellectual disability however mobility issues affect more older people and hence physical accessibility is also crucial to inclusion. When the words access or inclusion is used in this context in this report, these terms are frequently aimed at providing inclusive physical access to parks, play opportunities and social spaces (such as a path and/or an accessible soft fall surface linking to the equipment). These will benefit not only users with mobility aids and especially wheelchairs but help define spaces and provide orientation for users with a vision impairment and/or intellectual disability.

Off-road connection

It is not intended that any park should be expected to (on its own) meet the needs of every resident. It is therefore assumed that residents will have some choice as to where they play, so they can select the setting that suits their needs best within their residential precinct. This also assumes that people will be able to move around their neighbourhood between choice of parks and play spaces.

It is therefore vital that there are safe routes for children to move around their neighbourhoods and between parks as they get older, via pedestrian and bike routes. Such routes are therefore an important factor in the assessment of the value and catchment of play spaces. The trails along creeks may be extremely valuable for such off-road movement.

Some small townships have access to rail trails and these may provide local children and adults with access to play facilities. Rail trail maps should also promote the availability of play spaces to visitors.

6. Design of Play Spaces

Basic functionality

The following are considered entry-level requirements for most play spaces, depending upon their catchment hierarchy and some other important factors about their location and role in their precinct.

- ❖ Do people with a disability have general access to parks and facilities?
- ❖ Is there a choice of types of amenities for users?
- ❖ Which ages and abilities/skill levels have been catered for?
- ❖ Is there a choice of settings for play, ranging from man-made/synthetic to the very natural?
- ❖ Are the elements placed in a way that encourages the play to flow naturally from one item to the other?
- ❖ Is there a choice of types of play activities/experiences and materials for play? For example:
 - ❖ Does the space provide for important forms of movement and physical activity?
 - ❖ Does the space encourage social/role/imaginative play?
 - ❖ Does the space have any loose elements for creative use by children?
 - ❖ Does the space encourage cognitive activity during play?
 - ❖ Are design elements and furniture placed in a way that encourages people to meet and interact?

The other subtle qualities that make play spaces work

Play spaces rarely succeed because of equipment alone, but because of some qualities about the whole space that are often difficult to quantify. These are elements often not planned, such as a child playing with a box rather than the toy or using loose leaves as cooking materials. These are the subtleties that create interest to children and enhance useability and play value. They are rarely connected to how a space looks to adult eyes. The qualities of the space itself are also important; large and small; open or contained; up and down; complex or inviting; or dull or exposed. The more children depend upon any space for all of their regular outdoor play experiences, the more important these subtle qualities are in any design.

Essential design attributes

The following attributes add a more subtle layer to the play experience and contribute to the value that can be derived from any play area. These have been used to assess the existing play spaces in the Rural City of Wangaratta.

1. General physical accessibility
2. Inclusive design elements and furniture placed to encourage people to meet and interact
3. Provision for a range of ages, abilities and interests
4. Inclusive, physically accessible design that stimulates play and social interactions between users
5. A choice of types of play activities, experiences and materials
6. A choice of movement and physical activity types
7. Opportunities for social/role/imaginative play
8. Multi-purpose/adaptable items that can be used by more than one group and for more than one purpose
9. Availability of loose materials that provide children with opportunities to manipulate the environment
10. Beneficial physical relationships/connections between elements
11. Spatial complexity
12. Design that encourages play to flow between areas
13. Opportunities to explore and discover beyond the boundaries of a designated play space and extend the play
14. The overall quality of the landscape setting
15. Diversity

6. Design of Play Spaces

	Local Play Spaces	District Play Spaces	Regional Play Spaces
Access and Inclusion	It is the intention that all play spaces are developed to an accessible standard, however it is acknowledged that financial limitations render this difficult. A number of play spaces within the play space network will be developed to maximise accessibility within the community, in particular district and regional play spaces should offer a higher level of accessibility.		
Path System	A path system is required into the space and linking shade/seating and play facilities to local footpaths.	A path system is required linking a good choice of social areas and key play areas to surrounding footpaths and car parks etc..	
Seats and Tables	All parks with play opportunities should have seats and tables, including some with shade.	Configuration of furniture needs to encourage and facilitate social interaction, such as seats facing each other.	A choice of accessible seating styles and picnic furniture including a BBQ is required.
Shade / Shelter	Tree shade required over seating and play areas.	Built shelter is negotiable. Tree shade required for seating and play areas.	Built shelter/s required as well as tree shade, if tree shade is not effective in summer.
Drinking Water	Preferred	Required. Fully accessible.	Required. Fully accessible.
Rubbish Bins	Required	Required	Required
BBQ	Not required	Negotiable	Required. Should be an accessible model
Toilets	Not required	Negotiable, must be wheel chair accessible if provided.	
Car Parking	Not required	Desirable	Required
Bike Racks	Desirable	Required	Required
Fences	Negotiable depending upon the site. A selection of fenced sites may be appropriate across Wangaratta, to support children with autistic behaviours.	Negotiable; a choice of fenced sited within each precinct is desirable. Any fenced space should include a broader area of parkland – not just items of equipment.	A choice of fenced sites across the municipality is desirable.

7. Key Issues and Recommendations

Avoid landlocked, small and poorly configured parks

The original design and layout of a residential subdivision permanently establishes the potential for play and recreation in a suburb, by establishing the relationship between homes, streets and open space.

The configuration and prominence of a park within its local area affects how much it is used, who uses it and how they know it exists; it also establishes the nature of use, community surveillance, whether it will become a favourite meeting place and issues such as vandalism, territoriality and other important factors.

Wangaratta has a number of parks that are links between cul-de-sacs. These reflect a relatively poor impermeable form of residential subdivision. This style of street pattern also largely determines the size and configuration of parks.

At least six parks in Wangaratta are poorly positioned in relation to housing and this is a problem for play provision, as in many cases these are the only parks available locally.

Apart from prominence and surveillance issues, this type of park limits the possibilities for play provision:

- ❖ Areas such as ball courts and some equipment may be considered too noisy
- ❖ Elevated play structures may be considered to invade privacy by overlooking private fence lines
- ❖ A sense of territoriality may deter outsiders who do not live in the surrounding houses
- ❖ Some residents may consider that planting presents a security problem along their fence lines
- ❖ Sometimes residents use these spaces as a private extension of their back yard, parking on them, storing trailers and the like, leaving rubbish and spoil, and generally deterring public use.

In existing suburbs this problem will need to be addressed in the best way possible, but most importantly Council needs to establish some clear rules for developers and to control the location and quality of open space allocation in new subdivisions to prevent the recurring.

In some cases, the acquisition of one or two house blocks adjacent to the park entry on a prominent street would open up the frontage to the park and solve the prominence/access problems and allow better investment in park infrastructure. This is a major budget item but in many cases will be well worthwhile as in some precincts there is no other available public open space.

Recommendations

- ❖ In the planning of play spaces ensure that parks:
 - ❖ Meet the standards in C13 of Clause 56-05-2 of the planning scheme
 - ❖ Meet prominence, access, distribution and size criteria
 - ❖ Are positioned with a minimum of two and preferably three sides abutting a street frontage
 - ❖ Are overlooked by the front of houses
 - ❖ Are designed and landscaped specifically as play environments
- ❖ Provide clear guidelines about the design of play spaces and new subdivision design, and discourage curvilinear street patterns and cul-de-sacs in new residential areas
- ❖ Work closely with other entities such as the crown and local committees of management in the development, management and promotion of play spaces through the City
- ❖ Consider reconfiguring some existing play spaces in consultation with residents and through a program of acquisitions and disposals and play space redesign
- ❖ Plan the development of play spaces as larger public spaces and as social spaces with play opportunities to include people of all ages and abilities, and not as single purpose child only spaces
- ❖ Adopt the essential design as the brief for all future play space designs

7. Key Issues and Recommendations

Distribution of Parks, Open Space and Play Spaces

In urban areas, it is desirable that all residences have some form of green space viewable within 300m for restorative values and contact with nature, and a space for play within 800m.

There are some areas of urban Wangaratta that do not have easy access to any parks or play spaces.

Recommendations

- ❖ Ensure that adequate open space is provided in every new subdivision to serve a diversity of play opportunities and that this land meets the criteria as outlined in Table 1 and 2 of this strategy.
- ❖ Plan for a good distribution of parks for play in the two development areas likely to be progressed on the outskirts of Wangaratta
- ❖ For existing urban residential communities, take steps to acquire land where necessary to provide a basic level of access to open space and public play opportunities, any land acquired for this purpose must meet the basic criteria of size, prominence, accessibility and surveillance
- ❖ The communities that have fewer options for play in private open space, and a lack of private gardens and open space (such as those living with social disadvantage and in areas of higher density housing) should be accorded a higher priority for provision of public play spaces

Distribution of Parks, Open Space and Play Spaces

Such an approach allows Council to streamline planning, design, management and budgeting for playgrounds across the whole municipality, to establish goals and consistent levels of service for each site, depending upon its local context and sphere of influence.

Recommendations

- ❖ Establish a catchment hierarchy for both urban and rural play spaces across Wangaratta
- ❖ Classify each park and play space in accordance with the hierarchy proposed
- ❖ Adopt core service levels for each catchment as a guide to the planning, design and management of play spaces

Marketing and Information

To assist the planning of play spaces an appropriate asset management system should be put into place. There have been several lists of play spaces available which are either incomplete or out-of-date. Having accurate and up-to-date information will enable more effective marketing of play opportunities. This will assist residents to have a better understanding of the choice of play spaces available and will enable them to make decisions that match their needs and interests.

Council has a role not only in providing infrastructure for play, but also in promoting the use and value of the activity and play spaces. Without marketing or promotion, use of play spaces won't be maximised, families won't feel they have choice, and a good return won't be made on Council's investment.

Families with different needs may seek different information before they visit. Examples of information commonly sought include whether a play space has a shelter and BBQ facilities, equipment for toddlers, older children and teenagers, and the degree to which facilities are accessible to people with a disability.

There may be opportunities for Council to encourage a greater sense of ownership of play spaces by residents by encouraging them to report issues, involve them in planting and design of sculptural elements, interpretation of environmental elements or similar activities.

7. Key Issues and Recommendations

Quality and play value of play spaces

With a few exceptions, many of the play spaces in Wangaratta are of very poor quality. A more strategic approach and a focus on planning and design of play spaces – as the impetus for this strategy suggests, is essential to realise the benefits to child development and social/family recreation.

Future planning needs to be based around the range of behaviours that constitute play and take into account the importance of site amenity and social interaction in outdoor play and recreation settings.

Where the landscape in a park is complex and interesting, it takes the pressure off the need to provide play equipment as the only way of catering for children.

Choice and graded challenges are required in play spaces or children will seek challenges elsewhere. A summary of the key issues observed relating to quality and design are as follows:

- ❖ Most equipment is targeted at the junior and senior primary age groups with very few items that would challenge or engage older children
- ❖ There are no hard courts or ball game spaces in association with play equipment in local parks that would attract older children and encourage more interaction between adults and children
- ❖ There are no sand pits in public parks in the City
- ❖ There are many playgrounds that incorporate one or two items of freestanding equipment. This type of play space provides very low play value and should be avoided.
- ❖ There are no open-ended customised items that contribute to the play setting or deliberate provision for nature play
- ❖ There are few sites with planting at all and none designed to enhance play landscapes, purpose designed
- ❖ There are only a few purpose-built opportunities for role play
- ❖ There are few larger/group carousels or rotating items and ones that are wheelchair accessible
- ❖ There are generally not enough swings in parks. It is often beneficial to provide a double junior frame as well as a double senior frame with adult sized seats. Swings are generally popular with people of all ages.

Recommendations

- ❖ Adopt a new approach to play provision that aims to broaden the range and quality of play opportunities that better meet the needs of the urban and rural communities
- ❖ Allocate sufficient funding to address these issues strategically, according to an established set of priorities over time
- ❖ Develop a program to introduce nature play elements and canopy trees into local parks, especially those with only play equipment
- ❖ As a priority, create well-sited parks with a good framework of suitable vegetation and a path system, before introducing play equipment elements. Focus on creating attractive, welcoming spaces with environmental, social and physical opportunities, and on the amenity and variety a space provides.
- ❖ In the design process, specify play elements that reflect specific development opportunities: including social, creative, cognitive and dramatic play, and provide for social, physical and environmental activities for people of all ages and abilities

7. Key Issues and Recommendations

Access and inclusion in play spaces

There are three urban and one rural play space designed to be wheelchair accessible. The effectiveness of this access has not been examined, and this is a welcome addition to the play opportunities locally. There could be many opportunities in smaller parks and play space to make some play elements more accessible without massive expenditure, and to enhance the accessibility of social spaces and seating areas. There are few paths in parks and these could be improved.

Recommendations

- ❖ Design all play spaces, paths and support facilities based on the principles of universal design
- ❖ Ensure all parks have a central social space that services play equipment and other recreation activities encourage interaction between people of all ages and abilities
- ❖ Provide opportunities in play spaces for children and accompanying adults with different abilities. These should include:
 - ❖ Play elements that can be manipulated by legs/feet, using fistful hands and steering wheels accessible from the front
 - ❖ Items that can be reached front on from a seated and standing position
 - ❖ Places where someone using a mobility device can go up-and-under
 - ❖ Spatial arrangement of items around a central social area with rideable surfaces can include most people, including older adults
 - ❖ Hand holds on equipment
 - ❖ Back supports and straps on swings
 - ❖ Play elements suitable for a group and also ones suited to individuals
 - ❖ Carousels that are flush with the surrounding area
 - ❖ Wheel stops on ramp and deck edges
 - ❖ Hammocks so children can swing and don't have to sit up
 - ❖ Sand play for seated children with adequate space to get their knees underneath
 - ❖ Space for multiple seats in items, that support social play and enable a person to assist
- ❖ In the provision of any future district or regional parks consider specifically designed equipment that enable children with a disability to access rocking, rotating, elevated items, cubbies/shops underneath decks, and elements such as speaking tubes, plant material, steering wheels and other movable and interactive items, alongside other children
- ❖ District and regional play spaces should include way-finding that facilitates people with low vision moving around parks and using play equipment safely.

Fencing for play spaces

Wangaratta has a number of playgrounds that are fenced. Many families welcome this, especially those with multiple children, or children with an intellectual disability or autistic behaviours. Every playground does not need to be fenced, however. Some fences are unnecessary and they often drive poor behaviour (people leaving children or dogs inside unattended). Fences can cut children off from the rest of the park and from enjoying open space, vegetation and the like. Many fences in Wangaratta do not have social amenities inside the fence such as at Ryan Avenue Reserve.

Fencing play spaces is a major cost. A fence may in fact cost more than the provision of play equipment. Fences may also be a potential maintenance headache with the maintenance of gates. The cost of fences can make their location somewhat arbitrary, with some equipment inside some outside the fence. This does not make supervision easy for parents. Only a selection of parks should be fenced, and desirably fences should be around the perimeter of parks and leave space for an extension of play and social activities within the enclosure. As some families rely on a fence, the promotion of where fences are located and at which play spaces is essential.

7. Key Issues and Recommendations

Social Spaces

Many play spaces in Wangaratta are not great social spaces, as they have limited play stimuli and provision of basic amenity value that will attract people to visit and stay any time in local parks. General encouragement of social interaction, via group seating, tables, shelters, shade and amenable outdoor spaces can be improved.

Recommendations

- ❖ Ensure all play spaces have social spaces
- ❖ Provide seats and tables in such a way that people can sit facing each other
- ❖ Ensure furniture is designed to meet a range of needs and all age groups
- ❖ Provide buffers between residents and social areas in parks from any loud and boisterous play of adolescents, or noise from babies and young children – that may discourage other age groups.
- ❖ Consider encouraging more adult adults to use play parks through providing:
 - ❖ Furniture – especially seats with backs and arms close-by to equipment, including that within any fenced areas
 - ❖ Enhanced sense of security through design
 - ❖ Large, clear signage, especially with directions to toilets
 - ❖ Features such as chess sets, bocce courts etc.. in select district social reserve where older people can undertake activities with children

Trees and Shade

Wangaratta does have play spaces with shade sails, which are welcome additions in the hot summers experienced here. While many sites do have excellent large canopy trees, many have few trees or none in the park.

Trees offer numerous other obvious benefits to parks in terms of amenity, environmental, play value and habitat. Tree shade is cooler and overall preferable for playgrounds. Shade sails are less effective, easily damaged and have shorter lives than canopy shade trees.

Recommendations

- ❖ Undertake a major tree planting and greening program for play spaces, in conjunction with the local community and schools.
- ❖ Select trees on the basis of suitability for the local environment as well as for good shade and lack of hazardous characteristics.
- ❖ Identify a preferred suitable species list for developers and consultants to use
- ❖ Consider utilising large specimen and other trees that offer:
 - ❖ play opportunities and play materials such as flowers, pods etc. that children can use in their play also contribute additional value to playgrounds
 - ❖ Good shade, are landmarks, and can facilitate climbing and other environmental benefits
- ❖ Plant trees in double rows, circles and patterns can create intriguing spatial effects that also enhance play value and amenity, and plant trees of either side of trails and paths
- ❖ Include trees in park asset management plans. Calculate the replacement value of landscape elements, trees etc. and budget for their replacement cost.

7. Key Issues and Recommendations

Nature play and garden spaces

For young children, nature encourages experimentation and a source of inspiration. The more opportunity for children to play with as many different kinds of things as possible, the more inventive they will be. Living things, colour, texture and movement, and changeability caused by weather and the seasons, for example, provide diversity, loose parts, collectibles, and the other sensory experiences. Nature brings access to unpredictability, loose materials, opportunities to learn about life stages, growth and decline, and diversity due to variations in colour, perfume, the positioning of elements and the presence of wildlife, that changes over time and in different seasons and weather patterns.

Recommendations

- ❖ In areas where parks with play equipment are close by, consider replacing play equipment in one park with natural play elements
- ❖ Consider developing a children's garden or major nature play space in a major public space in Wangaratta
- ❖ Ensure the design of all play spaces include hardy flowering plants, natural play elements, canopy trees and a strong landscape character that enhances amenity and play value and provides better opportunities for children to make contact with nature, and encourage environmental education and appreciation
- ❖ Seek to create different landscape settings across play spaces in the City to create diversity and range of play stimuli.

Play spaces in rural communities

Model of provision and distribution

In rural communities it is not cost effective or necessary to provide play spaces equitably across rural settlements as is the case in urban communities.

In rural areas children may have a good contact with nature, opportunities to have pets, grow food and other plants, ride motorised recreation equipment, run and cycle and explore the outdoors. They may not however had access to hard surfaces for ball play and skating for example, or facilities for social gatherings. Generally play spaces should be provided in one central location, which is the community meeting place. Play spaces in rural settings are generally provided at halls and sporting facilities which attract the local community and visiting teams, or in town parks or main street locations that provide opportunities for visitors as a way side stop. In many cases, only one play space per rural locality is desirable and is more easily maintained to a high standard. However, it is common for a play space to be desirable at the sports reserve where children are required to wait for siblings or parents play space, and yet this may not be central to the community or any shopping strip or highway that is central to and services the broader community and visitors.

There are play spaces on a number of non-Council reserves in rural localities including:

- ❖ Boorhaman Recreation Reserve
- ❖ Carboor Hall Reserve
- ❖ Everton Upper Recreation Reserve
- ❖ Greta Sporting Complex
- ❖ Merriwa Park
- ❖ Myrree Recreation Reserve
- ❖ Oxley Recreation Reserve
- ❖ Tarrawingee Recreation Reserve

7. Key Issues and Recommendations

Other Council reserves such as Whitfield Recreation Reserve and Milawa Recreation Reserve are also managed by a committee. Some issues have arisen because play spaces have been purchased and installed by volunteer committees. Council in several instances has had to make major adjustments to these to ensure they are compliant for a public setting, and have taken on their maintenance.

It is not generally desirable for local committees to be funding, designing and maintaining play equipment – for risk management purposes and to ensure these are suitable for public use and fit for purpose.

Several rural areas have more than one play space which may be costly to maintain for a locality with a population under 500 people. These are:

- ❖ Oxley
- ❖ Moyhu
- ❖ Milawa

Questions were raised about who owns the land and who manages the rural recreation reserves. It is reasonable that Council provides and manages one play space at a community hub in each of the main rural towns if these are required. Due to the specific nature of the planning, design and management of play spaces it isn't desirable that a local reserve committee have to be responsible for play spaces.

Design and opportunities

Play spaces should complement rather than duplicate what opportunities there may be available for play in the environment where children live. For this reason, parks for play in rural settlements should be different to those in urban areas.

The exact mix of activities and settings needs to respond to the physical environment and the community's needs. Children growing up in a bush setting often miss out on highly social spaces and hard surfaces to bounce balls on, and play with wheeled toys. Likewise, children in urban or higher density environments lack access to nature; peaceful contemplative settings with high environmental quality loose found materials, as well as places to ride bikes safely. Play spaces can and should be designed to make up for inadequacies in the local environment, and extend the range of play stimuli available to children.

Care needs to be taken to clearly identify the objectives for the space; as this will dictate the design, and to clarify how it can be adequately maintained to minimise risk and maximise its social, recreational and economic value.

For example:

- ❖ Some of these patterns of use need to accommodate only a quick visit and may want to focus on physical activity and movement (as a break from the car).
- ❖ Others where the rural residents might meet regularly, visits may be on longer duration and need to accommodate different types of play, group and social interaction, access and inclusion, and provision for a wide range of ages such as older kids and teens (ball courts) and younger children (sand, role play elements etc.). These playgrounds need to provide different experiences from those children find in their local primary school and at home.
- ❖ The number of children that need to be accommodated at once needs to be established. In some popular destinations the number of visitors could be high at peak period. Design needs to include items that can absorb a number of children at once without conflict.
- ❖ In the case of playgrounds at tennis courts and sports grounds, it is likely that young children might be relatively unsupervised. Play opportunities such as shaded sand and cubbies that will accommodate play of longer duration with fewer opportunities for falls and injuries may be more appropriate here.

7. Key Issues and Recommendations

- ❖ Loose materials such as plastic cups and bowls and cooking equipment can be provided with storage nearby to enhance the play
- ❖ In all cases, access and inclusion needs to be designed in from the outset
- ❖ The location of play spaces at sports grounds should be away from internal road ways and car parks, adjacent to tennis/netball courts to assist parents when competing and in view of the main oval and pavilion

Typically, Councils determine which localities are feasible for the provision of a public play space or sports reserve based on population size, proximity to other play spaces, the nature of the specific site and associated support facilities, use of the reserve.

Council should discuss the implications of providing play equipment with Committees in terms of cost, risk management and ongoing responsibilities, in addition to the Australian Standards, as well as the value of consolidating equipment onto one central site.

In some cases, where there are multiple play spaces in a rural locality these may be best consolidated, or the focus shifted to natural play elements or sand play for example.

Recommendations

- ❖ Consider Council taking responsibility for the planning, design and management of one play space in each of the key rural communities
- ❖ Investigate the most suitable form of play provision given the lack of supervision, relatively low budget and resources to manage these.

8. A Regional Play Space for Wangaratta?

Benefits of having a regional play space in Wangaratta

The benefits of providing a new regional play space include:

- ❖ Social benefits – for local families to stay and play together for longer
- ❖ A new accessible play facility will provide higher levels of accessibility and inclusion than existing play spaces to serve people with a disability and their families
- ❖ Play benefits – an opportunity to provide experiences not currently available locally and to a higher standard of design and play value
- ❖ Economic benefits for the City, as more families may be attracted to visit and stop in Wangaratta and promote the City as a Family Friendly or Child Friendly City.
- ❖ Local benefits – it could be used as a catalyst to invigorate an existing area
- ❖ There are likely to be opportunities to fund such a development outside the usual Council budget process

What is the most suitable location for a regional play space?

A suitable site for a regional play space would be:

- ❖ A large site in a prominent location
- ❖ A significant site, suitable for a high level of infrastructure development and promotion to visitors
- ❖ In a park with a catchment already designated as a regional space, and a consistent catchment hierarchy to any adjacent facilities
- ❖ Be served by a shared trail, car and bus parking and suitable for development of a “changing places” toilet and potentially access to food and beverages
- ❖ An existing regional facility that could benefit from the addition of play opportunities.

A range of previous studies and plans has identified the community’s desire for a regional level play space. These have identified a range of potential locations including Apex Park, Batchelor’s Green, Merriwa Park and the Wangaratta Recreation Parklands.

It is considered, without undertaking a full feasibility study, that Apex Park is the most suitable location for a regional play space given its size, location and prominence for the community and incoming tourists. This development of Apex Park into a regional play space is consistent with the recommendation contained in The Wangaratta Project – A Master Plan for the City which is the most recent planning document to consider the matter.

Is it the right time for a regional play space in Wangaratta?

There are a number of reasons why the development of a regional play space should not be a priority for Council at this time. These are:

- ❖ Existing play facilities need a significant amount of work due to their condition and will need an increased budget to bring most of the existing facilities up to an acceptable standard
- ❖ The importance of play opportunities being accessible to all residents
- ❖ A regional play space would require considerable planning and investment in design and construction
- ❖ Destination play spaces need a very high level of service to keep them in good condition and will cost significantly more than a local play space to maintain.

8. A Regional Play Space for Wangaratta?

Plan for the cost of a new destination play space

There is a considerable capital cost involved in developing a play space to a regional standard that may be in the order of \$700,000 or more for the play elements alone. Amenities such as accessible toilets, car parking etc.. would also be required but are not included in this figure.

The cost in ongoing maintenance will be higher than most existing play spaces, due to the high volume of expected use, and general wear and tear. Such a facility should not be developed without this level of maintenance and a budget being allocated.

Council is unlikely to be able to fund the capital cost of a regional destination play space from its rate base. Therefore, if Council is to pursue such a project it will need to seek government grants and funds through other partnerships and philanthropic sources.

Recommendations for a destination play space

- ❖ Ensure that in the event that resources are allocated to a regional play space development, that additional funds necessary for the improvement of existing play spaces are allocated for: landscape improvements, canopy trees, accessibility and equipment renewals.
- ❖ Consider the provision of additional play improvements at an existing facility prior to developing a new regional play space.
- ❖ Consider the provision of a children's garden in Wangaratta in the long term

9. Asset Management

Staff indicated that a major issue was the inability to fund necessary repairs and asset renewals when required. It was also noted that some play spaces with funds for renewal were spaces which were not suitable locations for play equipment or suitable for social/family recreation.

When existing playgrounds are due for renewal, equipment is frequently replaced like-for-like, without investigating whether this is most appropriate for any specific site. In future, larger more prominent sites that can be made more accessible and developed for the whole family, or co-located with other community facilities and those that children are dependent on – due to physical barriers to movement in a suburb, should be a priority for redevelopment and renewal.

A group of internal stakeholders representing various Council department including parks, access, recreation, family services, maintenance etc.. should consider local issues and plan a redevelopment – based on the assessment of the capability of the site, priorities for the suburb and the nature of opportunities available locally, as well as detailed provided in this plan. Following high level strategic priorities being set around resources, the local community should be engaged about how they currently use the park and attributes to be changes and enhanced.

Prioritising play space upgrades

The priorities for play space development should be:

- ❖ Where the condition of the existing equipment has been identified as needing to be addressed
- ❖ Where there is an identified gap in provision
- ❖ Where there is poor quality or distribution of play spaces
- ❖ Where there are residents with a high degree of dependence upon due to physical barriers
- ❖ Where there is a likely high demand from a target group such as a high level of social disadvantage
- ❖ That currently have few or poor quality existing play spaces
- ❖ Where development is able to add considerable value to existing opportunities

Key priorities in terms of type of works for play spaces include:

- ❖ Provide canopy trees, natural play and landscape elements, paths, works that enhance access and inclusiveness of the space and enhances play value

Recommendations for Replacement and Renewal

- ❖ Consider the following works as priorities in play spaces:
 - ❖ Provide canopy trees, nature play and landscape elements, paths, works that enhance access and inclusiveness of the space and enhances play value.

9. Asset Management

2018	2019	2020	2021
Dodsworth Reserve Rangeview Avenue Smith Reserve Kendall Reserve Whitfield Recreation Reserve Evalyn Reserve	Glenrowan Lions Park Murdoch Reserve Dundas Reserve Burns Reserve Jaycees Park	Myrree Recreation Reserve Burke Reserve Moyhu Lions Park Carboor Hall	Brien Park Apex Park Whorouly Recreation Reserve
2022	2023	2024	2025
Dalton Court Reserve Mitchell Avenue Reserve Springhurst Recreation Reserve Oxley Memorial Park	Wenhams Lane Reserve	Baroona Reserve	Merriwa Park Tarrowingee Recreation Reserve John McAleese Park
2026	2027	2028	2029
Batchelors Green Kiwamis Park	King George V Gardens		West End Gathering Space Ryan Avenue Reserve North Wangaratta Recreation Reserve
2030	2031	2032	2033
Gun House Park Eldorado Edi Upper Hall	South Wangaratta Reserve Pelican Court Playground	Swinburne Drive Reserve	Baltimore Park Playground

10. Recommendations – Urban Play Spaces

A number of Council plans reinforce the value of providing for children and the importance of play for social and physical development. Key statements of relevance to this strategy are detailed below:

Precincts

Precinct 1 – Consider building a well-designed social/family park with a play space custom designed for Chick Reserve on the northern edge of the precinct. This needs to be accessible, to cater for a range of ages, and have a good central social, gathering space.

Precinct 1B – Consult residents and investigate options for play provision in this precinct.

Precinct 1C – Create a new, relatively central, prominent, accessible and good sized (min 75m in any direction) space be allocated within the new developments.

Precinct 1E – Consider locating a new play space for a range of ages on the corner of Cusack St and Clark St (in Precinct 2C). This is a prominent location where there is a footbridge across the creek and accessible to residents from this precinct.

Precinct 2C – It may be feasible to locate a new play space for ranges of ages in the south of the precinct on the corner of Cusack St and Clark St. This is a prominent location where there is a footbridge across the creek and is accessible to residents from Precinct 1E.

Precinct 2D – Investigate options for parkland development to include play opportunities.

Recommendations for Current Play Spaces

Baroona Reserve

Remove equipment at the end of its useful life, consider the need to retain the play space and if it is required then prepare a plan for the whole park. Ensure that the park has a range of activities. Ensure activities are distinctly different from the nearby Jaycees Park. Develop the park with trees and plantings to create an attractive environment. Consider prominent artistic elements at the three entrances to highlight the presence of the park.

Jaycees Park

Prepare a planting plan for the whole reserve including some planting for play, screening fence lines and additional shade trees. Review the accessibility of the path system and make sure there is good accessible social space near the playground in shade. Consider adding a new double swing or ricking/swinging apparatus in to addition to the existing seagull swing. Add some open ended play elements such as low boulders and narrow runways through planting.

Rangeview Park

Prepare a new design for this part of the park and design a space with higher amenity. This part of the park would have been preferable for the development at West End Gathering Space. If moving that is not feasible, create a green amenable space with trees and grass but no play equipment.

10. Recommendations – Urban Play Spaces

West End Gathering Space

Highlight the street entrances with signs/artistic gateways. Install a path system providing an accessible path of travel across the park to the social space and to some activities. Make some play activities accessible via a rubber access path into the equipment zone. Plant more shade trees and add some landscape elements for play and amenity.

Evalyn Reserve

As a temporary solution, utilising pop-up type play elements such as logs, sand, hay bales and some loose inexpensive and easily available materials arranged with high input from the local children. Consider experimenting with a play worker on the site.

Brien Park

Before the equipment is due for replacement prepare a master plan for the park that revises its design approach. Design to make the space more welcoming. Add a paved gathering space, a path system, some horticultural spaces, possibly a pergola and a kick-a-bout space. Maintain the green lawns, protect the trees and add more; add some visual containment. Local the play elements closer together where better value can be gained from the mulch surfacing and from shade. Once the location of future elements is determined, in the short term: add a new item of equipment not found locally for older children such as a large carousel or a series of playground trampolines. Add a large double senior swing with adult sized seats. As the perimeter for the space is very open, plant some very large canopy trees in a circle or in lines to create an interesting shady corner. Make sure that all design ideas and additions differ from Dodsworth, Evalyn and Burns Reserves.

Dodsworth Reserve

Consider creating a landscape zone for play such as rocky sand 'stream' closer to the casuarinas; relocate the digger and add some logs and rocks, bridges etc. and a small accessible gathering space nearby to create a nature play zone. The spaceship could be refurbished and relocated to compliment this space. Add at least one double swing. Plant fence lines with screening/habitat vegetation. Ensure that all design ideas differ from Dodsworth, Brien, Evalyn and Burns Reserves.

Burns Reserve

Consider improvements to the visual amenity of the park itself and the play value afforded by more interesting planting and landscape features. Consult immediate residents regarding whether a ball court could be beneficial in this reserve (or whether it would be too noise). If feasible make this as close as possible to full size and make sure it has an accessible path and social space adjacent. Alternatively, investigate other ideas such as: a bike riding circuit for younger children; a tree house or more interesting customised play setting.

Swinburne Drive Reserve

Provide more landscape amenity to encourage social interaction and general outdoor play. Enhance the design of this space by adding: some new accessible furniture; a central lawn not compromised by a path or planting; new tree planting around the perimeter and in some clumps for play and amenity; a new path linking the furniture, play opportunities and the drink fountain. Consider adding a low climbing log or other natural open ended play feature. If a fence is required, fence the street frontage so that the whole park is enclosed within the fence.

10. Recommendations – Urban Play Spaces

Dalton Court Reserve

The play and social value of this space could easily be extended by adding some landscape based open ended play features just outside the fall zones such as some ground level tussock planting and rocks; a rock table; a carved out log; a small play car or boat hewn out of a log – locate these close to the cubby/tunnel and they will magnify the play value of both; adding an adventurous senior swing such as a large swivel birds nest swing; adding an accessible picnic table and a path; link to stepping stones or other sculptural elements into the bushland and add some bush play features for children to explore. Consider adding an artistic gateway/signpost indicating the location of the playground at the end of the street.

Dundas Reserve

Enhance the character of the site and protect the existing vegetation. Consult local children about what they do and how they play there. Prepare a sketch master plan for the site taking into account these factors. If appropriate remove the equipment and enhance the natural qualities of the site for play such as big climbing logs and rocks, narrow dirt paths through vegetation.

Murdoch Reserve

Remove the equipment from this site. The open space should be retained and planted with high amenity trees.

Kiwanis Park

Undertake a whole park upgrade. Incorporate the new equipment into a better designed grouping of play elements. Undertake tree planting. This must be integral to the design.

Mitchell Avenue Reserve

Undertake a minor review of this space. The positioning of the fence should be reviewed and opportunities to make some of the other equipment accessible explored.

Wenhams Lane Reserve

Undertake tree planting on this site as a minimum to enhance the amenity of this space.

Pelican Court Playground

We recommend preparing a low key master plan for Albert Court Reserve to locate key elements that may be required in the future such as: a path; social gathering space; possibly a play space; ball play space; tree planting; and vegetated natural zone. In the short term, plant the trees so that there is a high degree of amenity for the future.

Ryan Road Reserve Playground

Modify the fence to encompass some planting, seats and furniture, a path system and place trees outside the perimeter. Add a feature for older children such as a senior birds nest swing.

Smith Street Reserve

Undertake a complete refurbish. Redesign the space for a range of ages and some accessibility, to some natural play and must be completely different from the Burke St Reserve playground. Given the presence of the Scout Hall, the design should be based on logs and rocks with a specially designed natural/adventure character.

10. Recommendations – Urban Play Spaces

Kendall Reserve

Consider redesigning this space into an attractive green park with large trees, consider other types of play provision here instead of high maintenance equipment, consult the community regarding other provision such as a low key children's bike track, a community garden, flower or wildflower gardens, a hard court, a forest or a social/meeting space for immediate residents.

Burke Reserve

Add a large canopy of trees to the reserve in general and creating a better, central gathering/social space with a picnic table and possibly a shelter or tree planting. Consider adding a challenging senior item of equipment (different from anything else locally). The existing equipment could then be removed at the end of its useful life.

King George V Gardens

Consider making the ground level flower/speaker tubes wheelchair accessible and link a path to the picnic setting. Consider adding a double senior swing into this park.

Apex Park

Undertake a short term minor upgrade of this space to include a planting and landscape overlay to improve the play value, amenity and sensory qualities inside the fence line and consider adding some wheel stops along the main ramp. Provide additional opportunities for older children and adults. In the long term, when the playground reaches the end of its useful life, design a more customised accessible play space that better responds to the landscape setting and is completely different from King George V Gardens.

Merriwa Park

When this play equipment is due for replacement – provide a new custom play space with a high degree of accessibility designed to specifically suit this parkland setting. This should cater well for inclusive social interaction and gathering within the design, and should offer a unique setting not found anywhere else in Wangaratta.

Batchelor's Green

Provide a path system and some elements to attract older children and parents/care givers. Consider creating links from the play space in the adjacent shrubs and add some small sculptural/open ended play elements.

South Wangaratta Reserve

Consider enhancing the site and the play value with a few open ended items such as a low large deck around the multi trunked eucalyptus tree. Provide additional trees and landscape elements. Investigate the provision of additional furniture such as a table and seats and a path.

11. Recommendations – Rural Play Spaces

Boorhaman Recreation Reserve (Boorhaman)

Plant new shade trees. Add seating with backs that would be more socially amenable. Maintain the surfacing under the swing.

Glenrowan Lions Park (Glenrowan)

Consider planting a flowering hedge or similar along the edge of the railway fence but leave some peek-through spaces so children can see the trains. Plant some trees around the perimeter.

Gun House Park (Eldorado)

Consider adding a ground level cubby preferably near or around the tree and aim to make it wheelchair accessible. Add more flowers for children to pick and use in their play.

John McAleese Community Park (Milawa)

Consider adding some more vegetation especially with play value (e.g. a living willow cubby or similar). If this becomes the only play space in Milawa add a feature not found locally such as a large carousel preferably a wheelchair accessible design.

Milawa Recreation Reserve (Milawa)

Extending the fence, incorporating more open-ended opportunities such as sand, lawn and planting, and some seating to encourage adults to play with and supervise children.

Moyhu Lions Park (Moyhu)

If older children need to be provided for, consider adding a swivel birds nest swing. Locate out of the main pedestrian area. Check the maintenance commitments prior to installation.

Moyhu Recreation Reserve (Moyhu)

This equipment is ageing and judging by the weed growth is not used or maintained. It should be removed.

Myrrhee Recreation Reserve (Myrrhee)

Check the wheelchair accessibility of the shelter and tables. Consider adding a big log on a soft fall surface for a bit more challenging climbing. Anchor securely. Add tree shade to the open mulched area.

Edi Upper Hall (Edi Upper)

Prepare a sketch design for the space and consider: a seating area; pavement for bouncing balls; and above all shade tree planting around perimeter. Replace the equipment at the end of its lifespan with a better cubby/slide, a two or four seat rocker and a double swing.

Oxley Memorial Park (Oxley)

Consider adding some low key play sculptures or similar under the trees at the back of the space to extend the play.

11. Recommendations – Rural Play Spaces

Oxley Recreation Reserve (Oxley)

If Council is maintain the Oxley Memorial Park Play Space it may be cost effective to also take over the management of this equipment. The steel slide is likely to require removal. If the site is well used, consider adding another swing with a different seat type, a birds nest or swivel swing may be welcomed.

Springhurst Recreation Reserve (Springhurst)

Budget for a refurbishment and:

Tarrawingee Recreation Reserve (Tarrawingee)

Add seating inside the fence line. Add tree planting along the fence (either inside or outside, depending upon the space).

Whitfield Recreation Reserve (Whitfield)

Undertake tree planting. If there is room, add a branched tree log in good condition, placed with adequate fall zones and anchored relatively securely into the ground to enhance the play.

Whorouly Recreation Reserve (Whorouly)

Create a small nature play zone here with planting, a ground level timber cubby, stepping stones etc. outside the fall zones on the equipment to enhance the play.

Carboor Hall (Carboor)

In the long term this space would benefit from: a simple design that connects the indoors and outdoors and encourages outdoor activity; a paved outdoor space with seating and shade trees (or a pergola); include a double swing located out of the path of movement. If a climbing structure/slide is required, select a design that has a good ground level cubby.

North Wangaratta Recreation Reserve (North Wangaratta)

Modify the equipment to include a stair or easier access to the junior slide and or add an attractive junior sand play area nearby in shade. Plant some attractive deciduous trees and adding seats.

Greta Recreation Reserve (Greta)

It may be preferable to plan a space where children can dig in sand or a 'designed' creek bed, bring their toy trucks and enjoy some creative activities rather than depending upon equipment. If equipment is to be provided here it must be designed to accommodate a group (rather than require turn taking) and not place young children at risk.

Everton Upper Community Centre (Everton Upper)

If this equipment and its surface cannot be properly maintained it should be removed. If there is an inspection and maintenance plan in place, inspect the base of each steel support for corrosion, if it is in good condition, then install a good impact attenuating surface underneath.

Peechelba Community Centre (Peechelba)

Continue to improve the integration of the play equipment, hard court, public toilet and community hall.