

Responsible Directorate	Community Development
Responsible Business Unit/s	Recreation and Leisure Services
Responsible Officer	Manager Recreation and Leisure Services
Affected Business Unit/s	Recreation and Leisure Services Parks and Sustainability

Objective

The playground policy has been developed by the City of Stirling to assist in the management of playgrounds and provide for current and future community needs in an equitable and sustainable manner.

Playgrounds are highly valued by the community and provide a number of physical, social and cognitive benefits. To ensure that our playgrounds meet community need and contribute to the development of a diverse and accessible network of safe play experiences the City is focused on:

- Ensuring our community are engaged and have an opportunity to participate in decision making regarding the provision of playgrounds in the City;
- Delivering playgrounds that meet, and are responsive to community needs and deliver an equitable distribution of playgrounds;
- Providing a range of playgrounds with a variety of play opportunities;
- Ensuring playgrounds are well located, provide safe and positive play experiences and integrate well with the surrounding environment;
- Ensuring high quality, well designed and maintained playground equipment that complies with Australian Standards;
- Ensuring the playground design integrates with the local characteristic of the area, considers existing provision and delivers differing and creative play across a broad age and demographic; and
- Addressing the importance of accessibility and walkability to playgrounds.

Scope

This policy applies to playgrounds provided by the City with play equipment specifically designed for use by children between 3 and 12 years (inclusive).

The City acknowledges that there is a need to provide a diverse range of play experiences for adolescents to ensure there is a broader play pathway for our younger community. Whilst not included in the scope of this policy, the City does provide for a range of outdoor recreational and informal sporting infrastructure in our public open space to better cater for this age group, including (but not limited to) outdoor multi courts, skate, BMX and mountain bike facilities.

The need for the provision of these amenities will be determined in accordance with the City's Public Open Space Strategy.

The City's Playground Management Practice provides guidance on the implementation of this policy.

Policy

1. Playground Hierarchy Classification

There are four (4) hierarchy classifications of playgrounds within the City. These are Regional, Major, Local and Centre playgrounds. The playground hierarchy classifications are defined by their attributes including intended catchment size, access, location and the intended primary role. The number and configurations of playgrounds/play equipment within each classification vary across the City.

- a) **Regional:** The regional playground serves all of the City residents and the wider community. It is the largest of the classifications and are generally located on a Regional Open Space, or on a reserve which serves a regional purpose where a regional reserve does not exist. The Public Open Space Strategy provides a definition of public open space hierarchy classification.

Their primary role is to support a wide range of diverse, imaginative and challenging play experiences. They are intended to support longer stay and play, will utilise a higher number and broader range of play infrastructure to meet a range of development play needs. They will have a unique design, have inclusive and accessible elements, and will generally have a combination of artificial and natural shade. They will generally be supported by infrastructure such as barbecues, drinking fountains, seating and access to public amenities.

- b) **Major:** These playgrounds are more evenly distributed across the City and are generally located in District and Community public open spaces. When there is limited District or Community open space available then Local open spaces will be considered. Their primary role is to support a variety of features to provide a valuable and safe play experience. They are intended to cater for residents living in approximately 800 metre walkable catchment and act as a destination for smaller groups.

- c) **Local:** Local playgrounds primarily cater for residents living within a 400-500 metre catchment. Situated on local open spaces, these playgrounds service the needs of the local residential population with the main form of access to the playground via walking. Other local level information recreation facilities may also be considered to support a local level playground.

- d) **Centre:** These playgrounds are usually attached to buildings and access to the broader community is usually limited. The size and design of the playground will be dependent on the role of the centre and the services being provided. Provision standards are usually to a local playground level.

2. Safety and Compliance

- Playgrounds are highly used and valued by the community. The City has a regular maintenance schedule to ensure safe and high quality playgrounds are provided. All playground inspections are completed by accredited playground inspectors. Regular maintenance is carried out, as required, as part of these inspections.
- The City has a long term refurbishment program which is reviewed annually. This program has been developed to ensure that playgrounds are safe and compliant with the relevant Australian Standards, and support the City's Public Open Space Strategy. The refurbishment program is reviewed and updated annually, taking asset condition inspections and asset life into account.
- Given the need to ensure that we prioritise safe play for our younger residents the City will remove all unsafe playground equipment immediately.

3. Playground Support Elements

Fencing

The City will generally consider installing fencing around playgrounds where, in the City's opinion, a hazard will be above the City's risk appetite.. This may include locations adjacent to major roads or water bodies.

- Fencing will be considered on a case-by-case basis to help deliver safe and vibrant playgrounds for the community. Alternative options such as fencing a portion of the reserve instead of the whole playground to mitigate access to the hazard whilst improving broader access to the rest of the public open space may be considered. Whilst the benefit of fencing playgrounds provides a positive response to mitigating risk to hazards, they are not a replacement for age-appropriate supervision. Consideration in regard to limiting universal accessibility and egress safety should also be considered.

Shade

- The City will only install shade structures over regional and major playgrounds across the City.
- Additional shade structures, other than major and regional playgrounds, are considered only in accordance with the criteria outlined below:
 - Where practicable and cost effective, temporary artificial shade structures may be utilised to supplement the planting of trees until such time that those trees provide adequate natural shade coverage.

Softfall

- White sand is the City's primary softfall material.
- Other softfall surfacing treatments such as rubber softfall will be utilised following a needs assessment and where there is a need to support accessible play provision and provide a diverse play experience within the community if there is already significant use of sand softfall in area. Consideration regarding cost, maintenance and environmental conditions such as heat effect will be considered.

3. Nature Play

Nature play elements will be incorporated in playground designs, where possible and in line with the Public Open Space Strategy, and Australian Standards for playgrounds.

4. Community Engagement

The City will engage and consult with the community with regards to the installation, upgrade or removal of playgrounds/play equipment in accordance with the City's Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy and Playground Management Practice.

5. New Playground Provision

The need to provide new playgrounds will be assessed utilising the City's Public Open Space Strategy and will consider current provision, access within the area, quality of existing play spaces, population, demography demand, and cost/benefit considerations. The needs assessment will also consider whether there is a requirement for a new playground, or whether an existing playground can be upgraded to meet any gap in provision.

Definitions

Playground is an area that is utilised for outdoor play and often includes equipment or infrastructure that stimulates movement or play. .

POS Strategy means the City of Stirling Public Open Space (POS) Strategy endorsed by Council in May 2022. The POS Strategy is the guiding document for the planning and management for all public open space and associated amenities for the City.

Compliant playground means playgrounds which comply with Australian Standards and provide valuable play opportunities to challenge children. All compliant playground classifications (regional, major, local and centre) cater for children within the ages of three (3) to twelve (12) years. In most cases these playgrounds align with the POS Strategy.

Softfall means the impact attenuating surface under a playground which complies with playground Australian Standards. Softfall aims to reduce injuries obtained in the playground.

Nature Play means playgrounds or spaces that incorporate designated play elements from the natural environment such as tree planting, mulching, creative landscaping and the use of naturally occurring elements and materials like logs and boulders to enhance the connection with nature, encourage outdoor play and foster healthier more sustainable communities. Nature play elements provide different play experiences for children and provide opportunities to enhance exploration, imagination and creativity. .

Unsafe play equipment means play equipment which is deemed unsafe/dangerous by an accredited playground inspector and does not comply with Australian Standards. The play equipment may contain head and neck entrapments, lack of compliant soft fall and/or other major potential injury risks which can cause serious injury. This play equipment will be removed immediately and the site will be assessed in line with the POS Strategy to determine if a new playground will be installed unless directed otherwise by Council.

Relevant management practices/documents

City of Stirling Public Open Space Strategy
Australian Standards for Playgrounds
Playground Management Practice
City of Stirling Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy
City of Stirling Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

Legislation/local law requirements

Occupiers Liability Act 1995
City of Stirling Dogs Local Law 2008

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Relevant delegations	Not applicable		
Initial Council adoption	Date 15 July 1997	Resolution #	Item 10.1/LS14
Last reviewed	Date 4 July 2023	Resolution #	0723/011
Next review due	Date 2025		