CITY OF WODONGA VIC

2024-2029

PLAY SPACE STRATEGY



TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Wodonga Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of the Country. We also acknowledge them as Traditional Owners and Custodians across various lands. We pay our respect to their Ancestors, Elders, children and young people. We acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and recognise their continuous connections to lands, waters and communities across the country.

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GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
Accessible	Environments that are inviting regardless of level of ability.
Accessibility	Ease of access for users of a space that involves how they enter and move through a space - pathways, pram and mobility access without significant barriers.
Amenities	A desirable or useful feature or facility of a place.
BMX	A bicycle activity involving a purpose-built cycle that has the ability to perform tricks and stunts on either concrete skate parks or dirt tracks and mounds, such as a pump track.
Catchment	The geographic area from which people are likely to visit the play space. This defines the expected user group. Larger play spaces are expected to attract people from further away than smaller ones are. This system is used to ensure adequate levels of provision.
Children	Children aged 0 – 16
Community	Residents and visitors.
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a crime prevention strategy that focuses on reducing the incidence and fear of crime in planning and design of cities and neighbourhoods.
Public art	Public art enhances the quality of the built environment and the sense of place within the community. It can be artwork in any medium specifically created to be experienced in public space and can include sculpture, painting, installation, multimedia, sound or performance. It can also be integrated into architectural surfaces and landscaping.
Loose material	These are things that can be a manipulated or moved by the participant. These can include sand in boxes or trays and pebble areas, mulch or leaves and dirt in digging patches as well as water, and in more urban play spaces infrastructure that can be brought in and moved around.
Natural materials	Materials in their natural state such as rocks and timber logs natural materials.
Nature play	Play that occurs in the natural environment, and/or interacting with natural materials.
Open space	Outdoor spaces without built structures that are publicly accessible.
Parks	Most public provision for play typically takes 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. This document is therefore inevitably about both parks and play spaces.
Passive surveillance	An environment where people can see and be seen through casual observation
Play elements	Play elements include man-made items such as play equipment, as well as natural items such as boulders and logs, sand, planting, earth forming and sculptures, 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	Formal structures designed specifically for play such as swings and slides

TERM	DEFINITION
Play provision	Play provision is a term used throughout this document to encompass a range of ways of providing for children's play in public spaces. It can include play space equipment, cubbies or sand play areas, ball courts and open grass areas, and can 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 space	This strategy updates the terminology from playground to play space to better describe scope of play environments and broaden the definition from play equipment to the broader environment. In this report, "play space" has been generally applied to any purpose-built settings for children's play. Play spaces frequently include play equipment and their accompanying areas of impact absorbing surfacing but they can 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 also include open areas of lawn, a small forest, hard or soft surfaces for ball games, ping pong tables, and mounds or walls if these are provided in the context of a park or play setting.
Play space hierarchy	A system to describe the function, scale, quality, and provision of equipment and amenities at play spaces, in three categories: Regional: Significant level of highly complex, co-located play provision, access, inclusion and amenity that attracts people from all across the municipality and visitation from outside the city. A visit usually involves a long stay of up to a few hours. Neighbourhood: More complex co-located, intergenerational play provision and access, inclusion and amenity that attracts people from across a township or local area. Can involve a reasonable length of stay and also acts as a local level of provision as well for people who live closer Local: Good quality, smaller level of provision and access, inclusion and amenity catering for short duration visits by local community.
Recreation	An activity done for enjoyment.
Reserve	A park or public open space which are often community hubs and may include sporting facilities. A play space will often be an associated facility.
Risk Benefit	Rich and challenging play environments that allow children and young people to test and explore their abilities, which are managed to avoid the likelihood of serious harm.
Sportsground	More formal participation in active recreation through clubs and competition programs usually happens at recreation reserves.
Structured play	Activity that is undertaken for fun but has set instructions or rules.
Unstructured play	Activity that is determined by the individual child and has no set rules or direction from adults.
Universal design	Design that encourages use by people of all abilities and ages.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wodonga Council's community vision shows commitment to a healthy lifestyle, sport and recreation, easy access to services and open space, a balance of rural and city lifestyles, parks and bicycle tracks. Access to quality play spaces for the community will support the realisation of the community vision. As children grow, they require a variety of play opportunities that provide challenges and experiences that develop their cognitive, physical, emotional and social skills. Play that encourages interaction, exploration, risk taking and having fun, particularly in outdoor settings, enables development of children and fosters a connected, healthy and inclusive community.

This strategy guides the council's current and future investment in play spaces across the city. Since the last strategy undertaken in 2016, Wodonga has improved play spaces to provide greater play variety, interest, and comfort for visitors. This updated strategy will build on improvements over recent years and assist in prioritising renewal investment over the next five years and beyond.

This strategy sets the vision, objectives and principles for improving the play space network with clear connections to the community vision and partner documents. This strategy will also align with the *Open Space Strategy* to support high quality public open space allocations for the provision of future play spaces. These provide strategic guidance when prioritising renewals, upgrades and improvements.

Play Spaces are:

- Comfortable for everyone;
- Environmentally and economically sustainable;
- Within reach for everyone; and,
- Diverse with varied opportunities for play.

These objectives are then applied when prioritising renewals, upgrades and improvements across the play space network.

- Protect health and wellbeing (safety and access for all)
- Aligned with budgets
- Improve equity
- Improve diversity



OUR VISION

Everyone regardless of age, gender or ability is spending quality time outside having fun, engaging with nature and being physically and socially active at a variety of play spaces easily accessible in Wodonga.



INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Play Space Strategy* (the strategy) is to set the vision for the future of play spaces in Wodonga and outline the framework to meet the needs of the community over the next five years (2024-2029).

The strategy builds on the previous strategy (2016-2020) and the supplementary document *Play Environments in Wodonga*.

SCOPE

Wodonga has 79 parks with play spaces, 72 of these with traditional play equipment.

For the purposes of this strategy, the term play space refers to an area that provides dedicated play opportunities. The play space not only includes play equipment but also incorporates park surrounds and complementary elements such as seating, landscaping, and shade provision. Play spaces are categorised by their size and service catchment: Local, neighbourhood or regional.

The strategy addresses play spaces on land that is owned and managed by the council and are publicly accessible. It does not include play spaces provided by other organisations such as schools, kindergartens, and day care centres.

This strategy aims to address the needs of children including preschool, primary school and secondary school-aged children. The strategy also recognises that play spaces are often used by families and the provision and design of parks and play spaces needs to cater for a variety of age groups and appeal to children and adults of all ages. Children are often cared for by older siblings or grandparents and therefore access, comfort and appeal are crucial when designing for everyone.

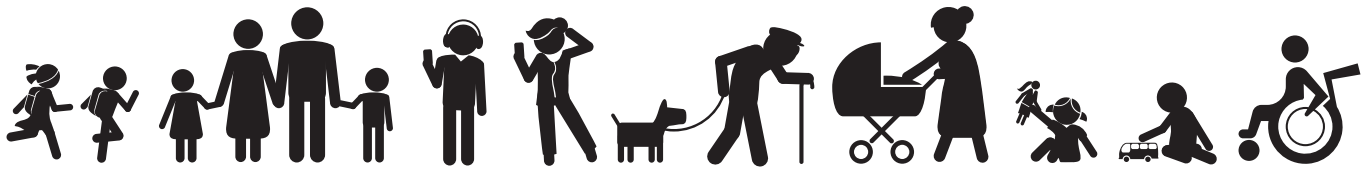
METHODOLOGY

The strategy, first developed in 2013, has been refreshed in 2023 to update:

- Overall approach, to reflect current best practice, trends, and community needs;
- Understanding of condition and performance of existing play spaces via comprehensive site assessments;
- Alignment with council policy, strategy, and guidelines;
- The action plan to plan for works over the coming decade; and,
- Quality of public open space in new sub-divisions.



Figure 1. Play spaces are for everyone.



VISION AND OBJECTIVES

PLAY SPACE STRATEGY VISION

Everyone, regardless of age, gender or ability, is spending quality time outside having fun, engaging with nature and being physically and socially active at a variety of play spaces easily accessible in Wodonga.

WODONGA COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 PRIORITIES



Healthy, Safe and Resilient Community



Sustainable and Forward-looking



Connected and Engaged Community

WODONGA PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN PILLARS

Improving mental wellbeing	**Increasing active living**	**Tracking climate change and its impact on health**

COMMUNITY VISION

We are an inclusive community built upon our commitment to health, social, cultural and economic equity.

We protect and maintain our natural assets and amenities for recreational opportunities, as well as tourism and event attraction.

We are also a well-planned city for residents and visitors, with access to green open spaces and an activated city centre precinct.

We are developing a powerful identity as a creative, passionate and diverse community, who are committed to health and wellbeing and our environment.

PLAY SPACE AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

Healthy and Safe	Sustainable and Conserved	Accessible and Connected	Equitable and Diverse

PLAY SPACE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

Play spaces meet the following objectives.

Comfortable for everyone	Environmentally and economically sustainable	Within reach for everyone	Diverse with varied opportunities for play
Play spaces are designed and maintained to provide reasonable safety and adequate access, shade and seating to ensure people of all ages, abilities, gender and cultural backgrounds are comfortable.	Provide value for money and protect the environment by prioritising efficient and effective play opportunities that are flexible, maximise facility use and consider impacts on and connections with the natural environment.	Provide play spaces within a short walk of all residents in urban areas, in convenient locations and a part of the connected open space network.	Provide diverse play opportunities within each precinct or neighbourhood including unique and site-specific designs and materials that represent the local environment.
Measure	**Measure**	**Measure**	**Measure**
Comfort score (measured by performance assessment results)	Measured by percentage of recommendations completed	Gaps in access to a play space with 400m (measured by provision analysis mapping)	Play performance for play spaces and precincts (measured by assessment results) score

WODONGA SNAPSHOT

OUR CITY

In 2021, 43,253 people lived in Wodonga (local government area). The city is located inland on the northern boundary of Victoria, on the southern side of the Murray River bordering Albury to form the larger Albury-Wodonga urban area.

Wodonga includes the central business district and suburban areas of Wodonga, West Wodonga and Leneva, as well as the outlying areas of Baranduda, Bandiana, Bonegilla and Killara.

In 2021, 11.5 per cent of the housing in Wodonga was medium density, which is slightly higher than the rate for regional Victoria as a whole, yet lower than Victoria wide and Australian averages.

OUR PEOPLE

Wodonga has a population skewed towards younger age groups, with consistently higher proportion of people in the population for all the five-year age groupings under 35 years compared to the whole of regional Victoria. Households with children comprise 39.6 per cent compared with 34.7 per cent of regional Victorian households but 41.1 per cent of households in all of Victoria. The ratio of single parent households is also higher in Wodonga than those of Victoria and Australia.



AGE IN THE YEAR 2021 (YEARS)	% OF THE POPULATION WODONGA	% OF THE POPULATION REGIONAL VIC
0-4	6.2	5.4
5-9	6.9	6.0
10-14	6.9	6.2
15-19	6.5	5.6
20-24	7.0	5.1
25-29	6.6	5.8
30-34	6.0	5.9

Wodonga (particularly for the inner urban areas) is also affected by higher levels of social disadvantage than both regional Victoria and Australia as a whole, as measured by the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). It has slightly higher levels of unemployment, lower levels of education attainment and higher levels of renting.

The demographic issues highlighted above have implications for play space provision, especially given the importance of outdoor play in child development and the importance of social interaction and recreation to communities.

The Wodonga population is forecast to grow to 61,400 by 2041. This growth will require 7000 new dwellings between 2021 and 2041 (based on the current 2.6 persons per dwelling). This is an increase of more than 18,000 people who will live and play in Wodonga.

The strategy has factored in this growth, when assessing the demand for play spaces into the future.

**All statistics referenced are from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021 and 2023a and profile.id Wodonga.*

WODONGA COMMUNITY VISION

In 2015, to prepare for the predicted growth of Wodonga, Council brought the community together to refresh and refine Wodonga 2033, which outlines the community's long-term aspirations for Wodonga.

The council is now undertaking the 2050 Vision which is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

High quality play environments will help achieve the following community aspirations.

WODONGA COMMUNITY VISION 2033	PLAY SPACE STRATEGY RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY VISION
Wodonga as a regional hub offering high quality services and facilities for North East Victoria.	High quality play spaces particularly regional and neighbourhood play spaces.
That we are developing a powerful identity as a creative, passionate and diverse community, who are committed to health and wellbeing and our environment.	Diverse play opportunities that encourage socialising and physical activity with unique features that celebrate Wodonga.
We are also a well-planned city for residents and visitors, with access to green open spaces and an activated city centre precinct.	Planned distribution and hierarchy of play spaces to ensure that everyone has access to play spaces within open space.
As a community we have a commitment to care for and support our most vulnerable, we have catered for diverse needs of all our people.	Accessible play and social environments within parks that attract people from all backgrounds, of all ages, genders and levels of ability.
We protect and maintain our natural assets and amenities for recreational opportunities, as well as tourism and event attraction	Design play spaces to respond to the natural environment and encourage the community to play in nature
We are an inclusive community built upon our commitment to health, social, cultural and economic equity.	Equitable distribution of play spaces that takes into account housing density and the specific requirements of the community.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN WODONGA

Wodonga's health and wellbeing pillars were outlined in the *Council Plan 2021-2025*.

The Play Space Strategy will respond to the following pillars.

Improving mental wellbeing	Increasing active living	Tracking climate change and its impact on health

The provision of a high-quality network of parks and play spaces can influence these pillars in the following ways.

- It is commonly accepted that play spaces designed to encourage play will provide varied opportunities for young people to develop emotionally, cognitively, and physically while socialising, exploring, taking risks and having fun. Play spaces for adults provide free opportunities to relax, socialise and have fun with their children during times that suit them.
- 38 per cent of people in Wodonga do not get enough exercise[1] and by attracting families to outdoor spaces to play and socialise, these rates could improve.
- By 2030, Wodonga's average annual temperature is anticipated to be about 0.9 degrees warmer.[2] By increasing canopy cover and providing well shaded, grassed and naturally landscaped play space environments, Wodonga can help provide the community with cooler play options, while tackling climate change.



1 Victoria Population Health Survey, 2017

2 Wodonga Heatwave Plan 2019

PLAY SPACE INVESTMENT

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The following diagram illustrates the strategic context for the *Play Space Strategy*.

The strategies and plans shown in the diagram are a selection of the key documents that overlap with and at times will need to be referred to alongside the *Play Space Strategy*.

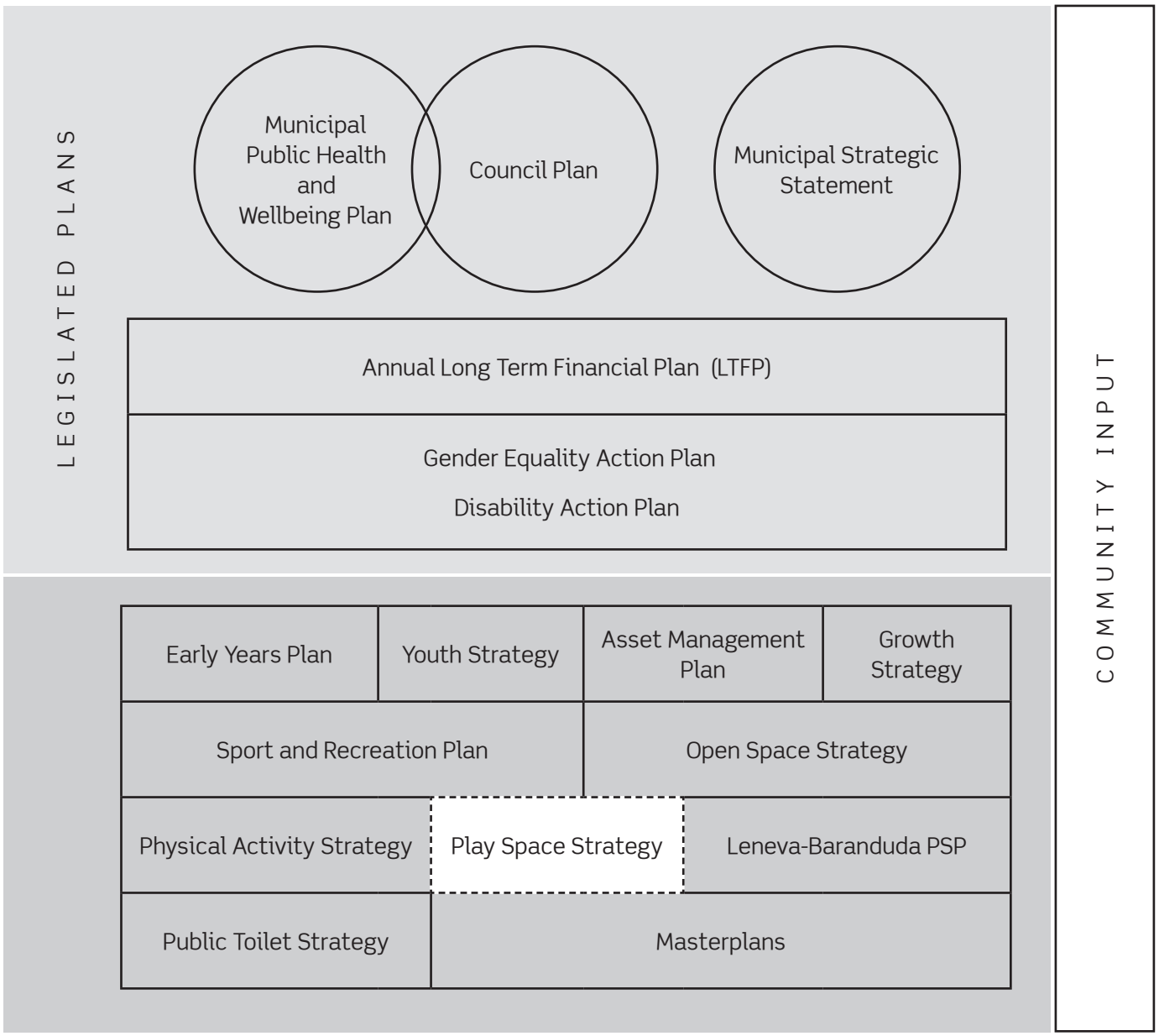


Figure 2. Local policies and strategies that influence and overlap with the Play Space Strategy

COUNCIL'S ROLE

The council's role in creating quality play spaces is to:

1. Provide best practice processes and standards for the delivery of high-quality play spaces and supporting infrastructure;
2. Influence the provision of play spaces and infrastructure to ensure equitable distribution and diversity of facilities where possible;
3. Engage with the community to understand their needs and vision for quality play opportunities that are exciting, engaging and sustainable;
4. Advocate for and promote the social, health and wellbeing outcomes that council is seeking through the provision of play spaces; and,
5. Ensure adequate and appropriate public open space for playgrounds and play space development.

PLAY SPACE INVESTMENT SINCE 2016

Since 2016, Wodonga has made significant investment in play spaces across the city. The following table outlines key investment.



Figure 3. Wodonga play space investment highlights since 2016



Figure 4. Belvoir Park play spaces opened 2023 and 2009.

HOW THE FOCUS HAS CHANGED SINCE 2016

In setting the play space priorities for 2024-2034, the following more recent policy and planning focus areas have been considered and incorporated.

WHAT HAS CHANGED FOR PLAY IN WODONGA SINCE 2016?	
Urban growth	The number of households in Wodonga will grow to 61,400 by 2041. This will require 7000 new dwellings between 2021 and 2041.
Rising community expectations	With urban growth comes new play spaces delivered by developers with a focus on eye catching and monumental features to attract buyers. These play spaces may raise community expectations which are not achievable within council budgets.
New recreation trends	There are new play trends that have influenced community desires and demands. These include more natural play opportunities as well as options for more challenging activities including pump tracks and parkour.
Striving for equity	Wodonga Council *Gender Equality Action Plan 2021-2025* shows the council's commitment to social equality and ensuring that those who may be more vulnerable are supported to be equal.
Climate change action	Wodonga is undertaking a range of initiatives to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change and ensure operations are environmentally friendly.
Youth focus	The council has shown their commitment to young people with the endorsement of the *Youth Strategy* which acknowledges that young people are central to a vibrant and healthy community.
Focus on creative wodonga	The community identified the vision to be a creative, passionate and diverse community. Recent urban development has reflected that creativity with sculpture and creative design.
Community engagement	The *Community Engagement Policy* was endorsed in 2023 and sets out council's commitment to engaging and consulting the community with appropriate, timely, effective and inclusive practices.

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY SPACES 2023

TOP 3 HIGHEST PERFORMING PLAY SPACES

1



Belvoir Park: Built 2023

2



McLean Park: Built 2015

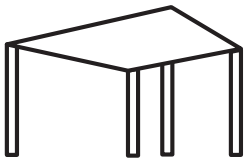
3



Richardson Park: Built 2019



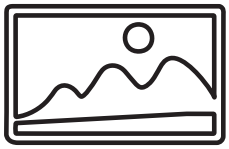
Wodonga Council has increased the number of natural elements in play spaces since 2016. There are still many opportunities to build on this.



Wodonga Council has improved shade at play spaces since 2016 with many shade structures and trees being installed to improve the comfort of users.



There are a number of play spaces that do not have path or trail connections, leaving them isolated and difficult to access for a broad section of the community including older adults, parents with prams and visitors with diabilities.



Wodonga has successfully included some unique and site specific elements in some play spaces such as Richardson Park and Belvoir Parks. Most other sites (more than 70 per cen) lack unique features or references to local culture or community.



Although there are several parks with great options for older children (12+) the majority of play spaces (70 per cent), have limited options for older children.



Wodonga has adopted a consultative approach to play space design via the Make Wodonga Yours page among other approaches for community engagement.

THE PLAY SPACE STRATEGY 2024

VISION

Everyone, regardless of age, gender or ability, is spending quality time outside having fun, engaging with nature and being physically and socially active at a variety of play spaces easily accessible in Wodonga.

OBJECTIVES

Comfortable for everyone	Environmentally and economically sustainable	Within reach for everyone	Diverse with varied opportunities for play
Play spaces are designed and maintained to provide reasonable safety and adequate access, shade and seating to ensure people of all ages, abilities, gender and cultural backgrounds are comfortable.	Provide value for money and protect the environment by prioritising efficient and effective play opportunities that are flexible, maximise facility use and consider impacts on and connections with the natural environment.	Provide play spaces within a short walk of all residents in urban areas, in convenient locations and a part of the connected open space network.	Provide diverse play opportunities within each precinct / neighbourhood including unique and site-specific designs / materials that represent the local environment.

*Refer to page 22 for a more detailed explanation of reasonable safety

PRIORITISING PLAY SPACE DEVELOPMENT

Framework

1 - Health & wellbeing	2 - Budget	3 - Equity	4 - Diversity
Safety and access is the highest priority. Refer safety audit to assess risk and refer to performance scores for access and comfort.	Understand the budget restrictions and opportunities (grants or aligned program streams). Take into account life cycle costs including asset renewal and maintenance.	Identify sites that provide an opportunity for residents to walk to a play space, where there is currently no other option.	Take into account that the existing play spaces may not provide quality play opportunities and consider diversity gaps.

Seek, consider and incorporate community feedback and requests.

Figure 5 - Prioritising Play Space Development Framework

1. PLAY SPACES ARE COMFORTABLE FOR EVERYONE

Play spaces are designed and maintained to provide reasonable safety and adequate access, shade and seating to ensure people of all ages, abilities, gender and cultural backgrounds are comfortable.

OVERVIEW

According to performance assessments, the play spaces across Wodonga are performing reasonably well when it comes to providing comfortable settings (shade, seating, and safety). On average, play spaces do not provide as well for people of all ages and abilities with a lack of accessible equipment and seamless pathways of travel. Recent play space developments with larger budgets such as Belvoir Park and Richardson Park, however, have incorporated universal design principles.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are many opportunities and challenges when striving to improve access and experiences for everyone with key topics listed below.

Fencing

Fencing a play space from the rest of a park is not only costly but can limit where play activities can take place. Fencing effectively "cages" play into a contained space. Fencing can, however, improve visitor experiences in the right location, particularly where there is immediate interaction with busy roads. In the instance of water bodies, it is recommended that where possible, a play space that attracts younger children is located at a suitable distance from the water body and sited and designed (consider signage) in a way that acknowledges the presence of water within proximity. Ongoing feedback and monitoring is built into the delivery of the play space program in Wodonga and this ensures that design solutions can be altered or updated in line with current use.

Shade

Expectations for shade structures at play spaces are growing and shade is a regular request from community members.

The establishment of long-term natural shade, in particular, the planting of open canopied trees to the northern side of a play structure and any seating or picnic tables is the best form of long term, sustainable shade provision. With larger neighbourhood or regional play spaces it is acknowledged that the community may spend longer periods of time at the facility, therefore a picnic shelter over barbecues, tables and seating or shade structures over equipment might also be provided in addition to natural shade. Shade sails might be deemed appropriate where trees are yet to mature.

The *Play Space Development Standards* outline the council's approach to provision of shade structure (refer page 35).

Access and inclusion

There are three essential factors which determine successful public play spaces.

- Play value
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Safety

A play space is more likely to be successful if all three factors are considered together. Universal design means that environments, services and products are useable and accessible for people of any age and ability. Universal design improves the quality of life for everyone. Conventional design caters for the average person, while universal design recognises that people have a range of capabilities.

Although providing access for all can be difficult with limited budgets, simple universal design inclusions can improve the experience for everyone. Refer *Play Space Design Guidelines*.

Inclusive design can also encompass simple design considerations to ensure spaces are welcoming for everyone. Examples include rainbow colours to welcome people of all genders; wayfinding signage in other languages to welcome people from all cultural backgrounds; and, signage in braille or audio signage to welcome people with sensory impairments.

Risk versus challenge

The council recognises 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 essential. Risk benefit analysis is a practice used by the council to look at a play space and identify all types of risks. Those risks are then divided up into those which represent good play value — such as tree climbing or scrambling over rock boulders — and those that constitute potential hazards — sharp edges, trip hazards, degraded equipment . This process 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 over time.

NO.	1. RECOMMENDATIONS	CATEGORY	RESPONSIBILITY
1.1	Ensure all new and upgraded play spaces follow design guidelines to prioritise safety and comfort for all.	Design Guidelines	Council Developers
1.2	Apply universal design principles where possible to make play spaces easy to access for everyone. Learn from successful outcomes at Belvoir and Richardson play spaces.	Design Guidelines	Council Developers
1.3	Continue shade tree planting program to provide additional shade trees in parks with play spaces	Parks maintenance	Council
1.4	Continue annual safety audit to prioritise safety and rectify hazards in a timely manner	Parks maintenance	Council
1.5	Apply a risk benefit analysis when considering challenging elements in play spaces to ensure that children in Wodonga don't miss out on developmentally appropriate play activities due to risk averse assumptions.	Policy / Guidelines	Council
1.6	Implement and support public open space standards as outlined in the *Open Space Strategy*.	Support	Council
1.7	Consider accessible and welcoming signage to assist people of all abilities, genders, and cultural backgrounds to participate and feel welcome.	Design Guidelines	Council

Measuring Outcomes

Average comfort score. Measured via park performance assessments. Currently: 62 per cent





Richardson Park

2. PLAY SPACES ARE ENVIRONMENTALLY AND ECONOMICALLY SUSTAINABLE

Provide value for money and protect the environment by prioritising efficient and effective play opportunities that are flexible, maximise facility use and consider impacts on and connections with the natural environment.

OVERVIEW

Wodonga Council operates in a rate-capped environment and play space development needs to consider value for money and weigh up benefits as part of any prioritisation process (refer Figure 5). Alongside budget restrictions, the council needs to consider impacts on the environment, whether it be opportunities to use more environmentally sustainable approaches or to educate and connect the community to natural spaces.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are many opportunities and challenges when striving to provide value for money and support the natural environment through the play space program.

Lifecycle costs

It is anticipated that the average lifespan of standard play equipment is 15 to 20 years, before a full upgrade will be required. Play spaces with complex custom design elements and landscaping will require more regular ongoing maintenance, to maintain this lifespan. It is important to factor in ongoing maintenance and asset renewal when prioritising spending.

Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability requires a balance between the delivery of new assets and the maintenance, renewal and disposal of existing assets. This strategy takes into account safety audits, budget constraints, fair distribution and a diversity of options to guide the council to strike this balance and deliver a successful play space program in line with the annual Long-term Financial Plan.

Play Space Development Standards

Wodonga Council has developed play space development standards (refer Figure 6) to assist in regulating capital and lifecycle costs and providing a more equitable distribution across the city. The standards provide a guide to assist in designing play spaces that suit the size and location of the site as well as the anticipated visitor catchment.

Play spaces provided by developers

In growth areas such as Leneva, the play spaces are often provided by the developer as part of the overall development process. It is important the council works in partnership with developers to ensure that expectations are consistent and play spaces are suitable for the new community as well as equitable when compared with provision elsewhere.

The *Play Space Development Standards* and *Play Space Developer Guidelines* have been developed to assist in a consistent approach that provides the best outcomes for the community within current budgets.

Climate change

The region is already experiencing the effects of climate change. In the past decade, Wodonga has seen increased average higher temperatures and reduced rainfall. Preparing for and responding to the expected impacts of climate change will be a challenge for the council and the community. When planning for new play spaces it is important to factor in the increasing need for shade along with the rising costs of park maintenance due to increased frequency of drought, flood, heatwave and fires.

Environmental sustainability

The following design strategies can help create more sustainable play spaces.

- Use of eco-friendly materials
- Energy-efficient manufacturing and installation
- Life cycle assessment
- Natural play space design
- Water conservation
- Educational elements
- Community engagement
- Use of local manufacturers

Sustainable play spaces not only benefit the environment but also offer benefits for children and the wider community. They can inspire children to care for the environment, stimulate their senses, encourage creative play and promote physical activity. They can also serve as community gathering spots, fostering social interaction and community bonds.

Community engagement

Wodonga Council has a strong commitment to community consultation and engagement with the intention of not only improving the design of play spaces but also understanding where upgrades or renewals should be prioritised. Ongoing community feedback is sought to provide essential information about the way the local Wodonga community uses play spaces and where improvements are required. The council's *Community Engagement Policy* and process allows for appropriate opportunities for the community to inform council priorities and spending.

NO.	2. RECOMMENDATIONS	CATEGORY	RESPONSIBILITY
2.1	Continue to engage in line with the Community Engagement Policy to ensure adequate and meaningful input from community	Engagement	Council
2.2	Develop a play space package for developers to assist in collaboration and play space equity across the city	Promotion	Council and Developers
2.3	Continue to follow design guidelines including those that relate to climate change, environment protection and providing value for money	Design Guidelines	Council
2.4	Consider life cycle costings when planning budget expenditure on play spaces ensuring a balance delivery of new assets and the maintenance, renewal and disposal of existing assets	Budget	Council
2.5	Apply *Play Space Development Standards* to guide development and promote equity and value for money across the city	Development Standards	Council
2.6	Implement and support public open space standards as outlined in the *Open Space Strategy*	Support	Council

Measuring Outcomes

Percentage of *Play Space Strategy* recommendations completed. Aspiration: 80 per cent. Currently: N/A



Consulting with children for Belvoir Park

3. PLAY SPACES ARE WITHIN REACH FOR EVERYONE

Provide play spaces within a short walk of all residents in urban areas, in convenient locations and a part of the connected open space network.

OVERVIEW

Wodonga has 79 play spaces located throughout the municipality. This includes one regional play space; three neighbourhood play spaces and 75 local play spaces. Most residents residing in urban areas live within 400m of a play space, which is council's desired service level and consistent with the desired service level for many Victorian councils.

While there is a relatively good distribution of play spaces in Wodonga, the assessments have identified opportunities for two additional sites to be developed over the next 10 years along with significant upgrades to about 20 play spaces.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are many opportunities and challenges when striving to provide play spaces within reach for everyone through the play space program.

Reasonable distribution

The Wodonga Planning Scheme sets the minimum open space provision standard for open space to be within a 400m radius of every residential property. In accordance with the scheme, it is recommended the council aspires to meet a minimum play space provision standard of within a 400m within a radius (as the crow flies) of 95 per cent of all residential dwellings. This can only be applied in residential areas within the city as rural areas don't have the population to support this level of provision and residents have large areas of private open space and environments for play.

Wodonga has an adequate spread of play spaces with some small gaps that this strategy will address where possible.

Gaps in access to play spaces are determined via analysis of distribution and walking distance gaps.

Consolidating or moving play spaces

There are eight play spaces that have been identified as small and in locations that have limited access. There might be opportunities to remove play equipment from some of these sites as it reaches the end of its life to allow nearby play spaces in larger and more accessible locations to be improved. Any plans to consolidate or remove play equipment will be discussed with local residents to ensure that decisions accurately reflect local usage patterns and result in net benefit for play in the precinct.

Locating parks and play spaces

When developing new sites or renewing play spaces it is important to recognise the importance of selecting appropriate sites, locations, layouts and designs to maximise recreation value and minimise environmental disturbance.

The *Open Space Strategy* sets out a number of standards and guidelines to ensure that land is suitable and safe for public use, provides a range of landscape opportunities and settings, sensitively responds to environmentally sensitive interfaces and vegetation and canopy protection. This guidance is particularly important when working with developer open space contributions and should be referenced together with the *Play Space Developer Guidelines*.

Refer Wodonga *Open Space Strategy*

- Appendix D, 2.2 Provide High Quality Land
- Appendix E, Wodonga Open Space Strategy Interface Guidelines
- Appendix G, Tree Canopy Analysis



NO.	3. RECOMMENDATIONS	CATEGORY	RESPONSIBILITY
3.1	Develop additional new sites across the city to provide local options for residents • Leneva/Baranduda growth corridor • Kinchington Estate • Gateway Island • Other activity precincts, opportunity sites or identified gap areas	Play space upgrade program	Council
3.2	Renew two to three sites annually (assessed to be high priority) to ensure play spaces within walking distance provide a quality experience	Play space upgrade program	Council
3.3	Prioritise new play space development and play space upgrades by following the prioritisation framework	Play space upgrade program	Council
3.4	Prior to planning for consolidating or moving play equipment consult with local residents to better understand local usage patterns and establish community priorities for the precinct	Play space upgrade program	Council

Measuring Outcomes

Identification and resolution of gaps in access to a play space within 400m of all residents.

Measured via provision analysis mapping. Currently: approx. 70%

4. PLAY SPACES ARE DIVERSE WITH VARIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY

Provide a diversity of play opportunities within each precinct or neighbourhood including unique and site-specific designs and materials that represent the local environment

OVERVIEW

Performance assessments indicate that there are opportunities to improve diversity. Many play spaces have only simple play equipment for one age group and some precincts have four or five of these types of play spaces without providing at least one challenging space for older children.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

There are many opportunities and challenges when striving to provide play spaces within reach for everyone through the play space program.

Nature play

Wodonga has many opportunities for children and families to explore and play in nature. Although this strategy focuses on purpose-built play spaces, it is important to consider opportunities to encourage playful activities in existing natural spaces. With meaningful collaboration, community groups and organisations can collaborate to establish and promote activities that complement the play space network across the city.

Public art

Public art, when integrated into the design of a play space (rather than as an afterthought) can be an important attractor and playful elements for the community. Art can also tell stories and provide connections to place and history. When public art is designed for play, the investment has multiple benefits. The sculptures at Richardson Park are a great example of integrating playful art in a purposeful way that generates playful interactions and a unique quality to the park. Similar playful public art should be considered for urban style parks and gathering spaces including Hyphen and Gateway Village.

Public art can involve the community at a hands-on level and there are multiple opportunities to engage the community in these activities. Community artists or school art teachers are often ideal community art co-ordinators and projects could include:

- Murals in skate parks;
- Ceramic paving inserts;
- Community planting; and,
- Mosaic patterns in concrete.

The council undertakes annual safety assessments for all sculptural installations to ensure community safety and enjoyment.

Cultural learning

Play spaces can provide a great opportunity for storytelling and education. The council's *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan* identifies opportunities that should be considered when designing and upgrading play spaces.

- Deliver cultural interpretive signage, where appropriate, which acknowledges local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history
- Continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to identify opportunities to incorporate local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and storytelling into public spaces and council-led events and initiatives.

Young people and play

It is a common perception that skating and BMX cover the full provision requirements for young people in public open space. While they are valuable contributors to play spaces, young people also enjoy the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities including informal sports, socialising and more rigorous, challenging play.

Council recognises that open space settings offer many different opportunities for young people, some of which are listed for consideration below.

- Settings to gather, socialise, participate, and observe (seating, mounds). Activities that allow them to participate with friends (basket swing)
- Challenging, risky play opportunities (a ropes course or climbing wall)
- More informal elements, informal structural elements to practice sporting and physical skills (half basketball or netball court, hit-up walls and incidental opportunities for skating)
- Flexible spaces that allow for social and cultural events (stage areas, picnic facilities)
- Opportunity to engage with technology such as augmented reality apps

Intergenerational spaces

A simple definition of intergenerational is different generations (children, young people, parents, carers and older adults) considered together. An intergenerational space is one that provides genuine and relevant opportunities for people of all ages to participate. Intergenerational design of parks and play spaces does not imply that all ages will be using the same space at the same time.

The council recognises, however, that different community dynamics can produce additional benefits for wellbeing when different age groups come together to recreate and play.

Hierarchy of play spaces

Provision of play spaces requires a balance of quantity and quality. Large spaces can cater for many ages and interests at once, while smaller spaces can be provided more often, allowing for distribution throughout neighbourhoods and creation of local places.

The strategy outlines a hierarchy of play spaces (refer page 34), which describes the scale of equipment and the required associated amenities expected at regional, neighbourhood and local play spaces.

As populations increase in size or diversity sometimes it is necessary to elevate a play space (from local to neighbourhood, for example) to allow for a wider variety of equipment and experiences to be offered.



NO.	4. RECOMMENDATIONS	CATEGORY	RESPONSIBILITY
4.1	Look for opportunities to increase neighbourhood level play spaces and elevate local play spaces from local to neighbourhood when scheduled for development and consider additional play elements that cater for a broader age group and provide challenge. Consider these opportunities in the following areas. • West Wodonga 1 • West Wodonga 2 • West Wodonga 4 • Baranduda	Play space upgrade program	Council
4.2	Consult with young people to review the existing provision of active recreation facilities to determine any priorities for neighbourhood level upgrades. • Skate facility • BMX track • Pump track • Dirt jumps • Half- court basketball Consider all Albury Wodonga[1] offerings and opportunities to avoid duplication.	Planning	Council
4.3	Apply risk benefit lens when considering more challenging opportunities for larger play spaces.	Design Guidelines	Council and developers
4.4	Partner with community groups (play groups) and kindergartens to investigate playful opportunities in existing natural settings such as Wattle Park and Baranduda Regional Park.	Partner	Council and broader community
4.6	Consider commissioning playful sculpture to build on success at Richardson Park (*Droving* by Xavier Pinard) and Ludlow's Reserve (Cockatoo Climber) for key locations in key civic and cultural precincts.	Public art program	Council
4.7	Work with local schools, local artists and community groups to consider the inclusion of community art into play space renewals.	Community program	Council & broader community
4.8	Integrate the landscape into play space settings where appropriate to create a more attractive environment and enrich play opportunities.	Design guidelines	Council
4.9	Partner with the *Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP) working group to identify opportunities to include interpretive signage and art into play space and park design to support story telling and acknowledges local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history.	RAP	Council and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives

Measuring Outcomes

Average play performance score measured via assessments. Currently: 45 per cent

1 Albury Wodonga Community Strategic Plan 2022-2025 (Two Cities One Community)



THE PLAY SPACE FRAMEWORK

PRINCIPLES

The following principles align with the *Open Space Strategy* and more specifically the POS Standards and provide the basis for play space provision and guide decision-making.

Healthy and safe	Play spaces promote active lifestyles and provide numerous health and well-being benefits. Spaces are safe for all users and designed and managed according to best practice standards.
Sustainable and conserved	The play space network contributes to local biodiversity and ecological outcomes. Sustainability and resource efficiency is considered in play space planning, design, construction, management and use. Parks and play spaces will help mitigate climate impacts and build community wellbeing and resilience through ecological services, shade, urban cooling and opportunities to connect with nature.
Accessible and connected	Play spaces are easily reached by the Wodonga community including all ages, abilities, gender and cultural backgrounds.
Equitable and diverse	The play space hierarchy provides a variety of sizes and functions, equal distribution and funding across the municipality. Sites are flexible and appeal to all users, including consideration of changing and emerging play trends and universal design principles.

HIERARCHY

The following hierarchy characterises the size, role and function of play spaces in Wodonga, this tool is helpful to plan for an equitable distribution of play spaces.

PLAY SPACE HIERARCHY			
	LOCAL PLAY SPACES	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAY SPACES	REGIONAL PLAY SPACES
Definition and significance	Local play spaces are generally within walking distance. They are unlikely to attract users from much further afield unless located on a trail.	Neighbourhood play spaces serve a whole residential precinct. They are typically larger and more prominent than the local play space, with a distribution similar to local primary schools.	Destination playgrounds that provide play experiences that draw visitors from all over Wodonga and beyond. They might also be located near another major destination and provide tourism opportunities.
Role and Function	Important meeting places for local families, children and teenagers and can make up for a lack of private space. They create opportunities for children to walk or cycle to play independently. Visits are likely to be of short duration (30 to 60 minutes)	A community meeting place for play and social or family recreation. Visits are often connected to another attraction (shops, school, kinder, sports and social gatherings). Visits are of of longer duration than local parks (one to two hours).	Regional play spaces provide high quality, diverse play experiences unlikely to be available in local or neighbourhood spaces. They provide for family outings to destination areas. Visits are likely to be of moderate or extended duration (more than two hours).
Distribution and Catchment	Residents should ideally have access to a park within about 10 minutes walk or up to 400m in walking distance. Ideally, the path of travel should not be interrupted by a major barrier such as a busy road or waterway.	Residents should have access to a neighbourhood park within their suburb. Frequently located near a node such as a shopping centre, school or community centre, or a sports facility. Travel to neighbourhood play spaces is by foot, bike or car.	Attract visitors from across suburb boundaries and further afield who travel by by public transport, car, bike or on foot. Public transport to regional play spaces is very important as are long stay facilities such as toilets, shade, seating and barbecue facilities.



PLAY SPACE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Based on the play space hierarchy, the development standards describe the expected users, features and provision of equipment and amenities at play spaces.

PLAY SPACE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS			
HIERARCHY	**LOCAL**	**NEIGHBOURHOOD**	**REGIONAL**
Age range	May focus on a narrower age group - preschool or primary school age	Focus on a broader age group - preschool to secondary school age	Intergenerational
Play features	Basic (2-5 features)	Med-large (5-10 features)	Complex (10+ features)
Access paths	From footpath to play space	Connecting from carpark and access roads to play space and between key play features / seating areas	
Landscaping	Trees	Trees Limited mulched beds (low maintenance)	Integrated landscaping opportunities for nature play
Seats	at least 1	2-3	4+
Tables	0-1	2-3	4+
Shade trees	✓	✓	✓
Shade structure	✗	0-1	1+
Shelter	✗	0-1	1+
Barbecue	✗	1	1-2
Rubbish bins	✓	✓	✓
Drinking water	0-1	0-1	1+
Toilets	✗	Not specifically for play space	✓
Car parking	✗	Not specifically for play space	✓
Bike racks	0-2	2-4	4+
Signage (place name/ wayfinding)	If required	✓	✓
Fencing/ barrier	Refer to fencing policy. Depends on site and design requirements.		
Maintenance access	✓	✓	✓
Fitness equipment	✗	If suits site/design	If suits site/design
1/2 ball court	If suits site/design	If suits site/design	If suits site/design

Accessible for people of all abilities

Figure 7 Play Space Development Standards

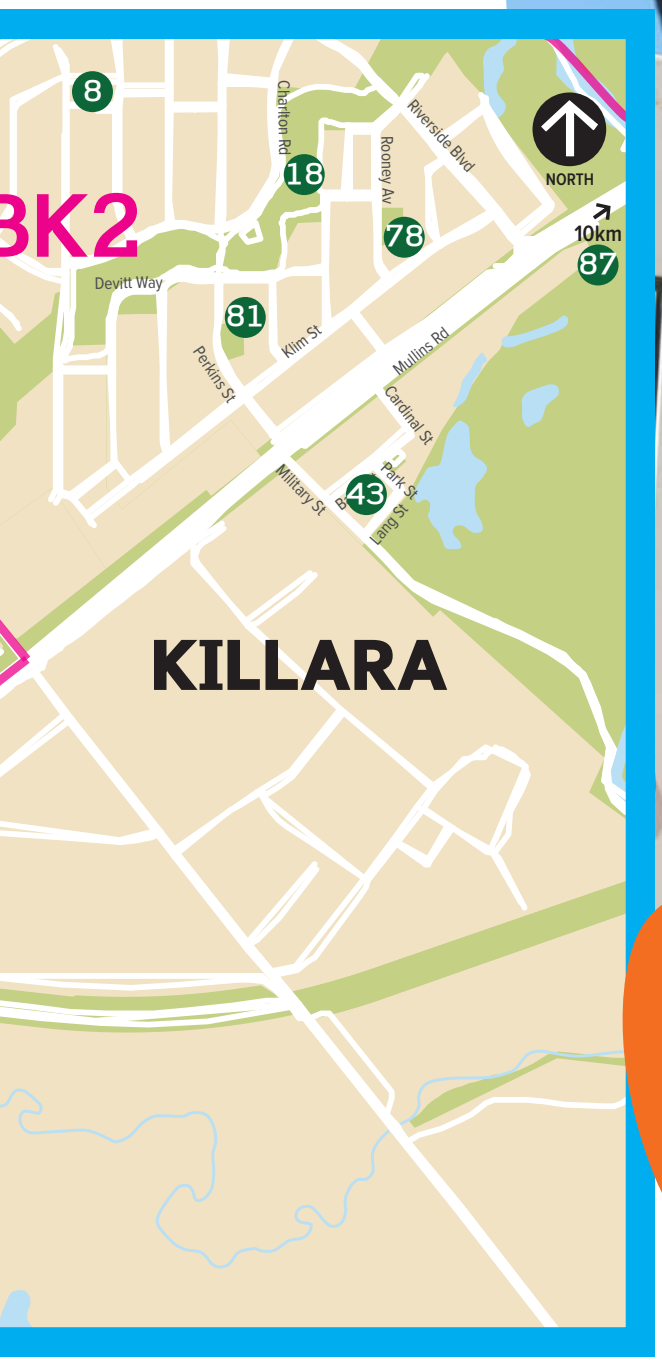
PLAY SPACE PRECINCTS

To assist with analysis and identifying priorities, Wodonga has been divided into play space precincts. These precincts are designed between major roads and waterway barriers to ensure that play space provision is accessible and does not require residents to traverse major roads or rivers.

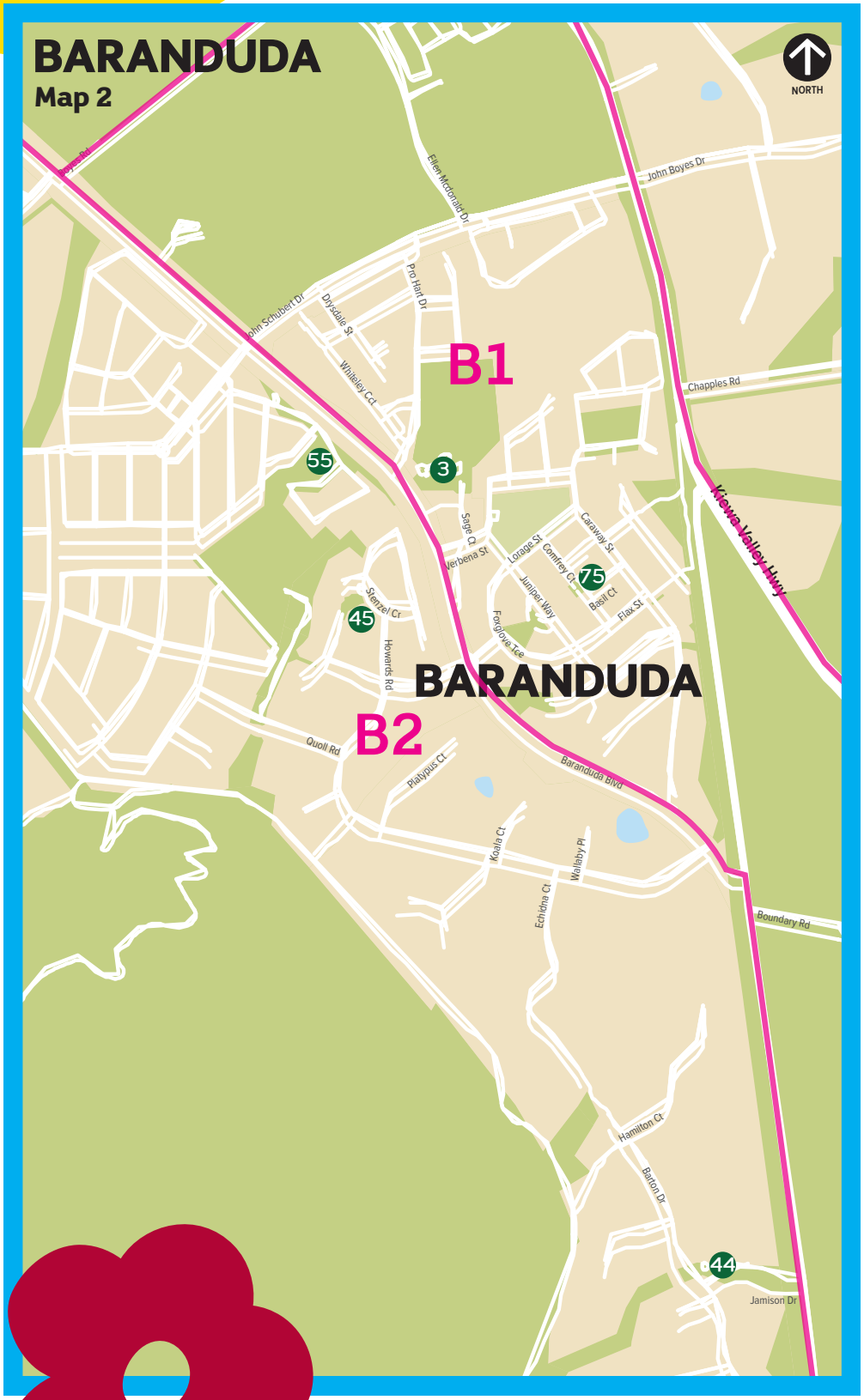
The precincts have been named to coincide with existing suburbs. For example, W1-W13 are all located within the suburb of Wodonga.

The precincts are set out on the maps in the following pages. New precincts in Leneva, Baranduda and Bandiana and Killara will be added as these areas develop.

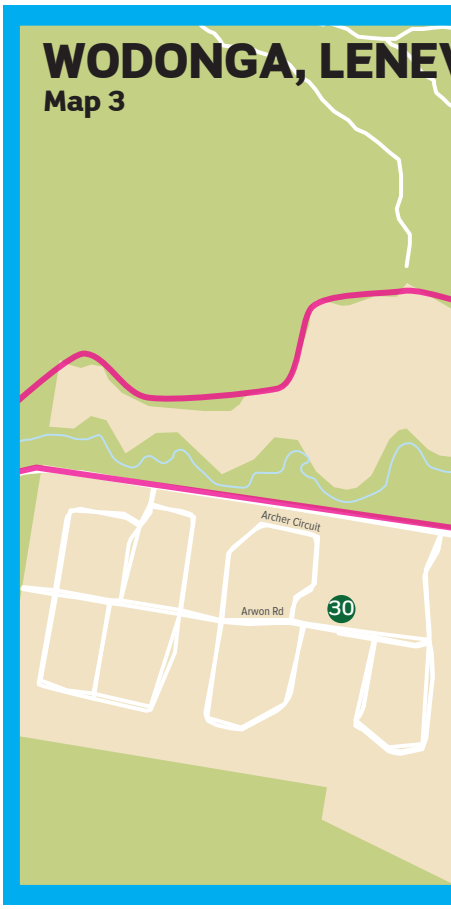



8
Charlton Rd
18
Riverside Blvd
Rooney Av
NORTH
78
10km
87
BK2
Devitt Way
81
Klim St
Perkins St
Mullins Rd
Cardinal St
Park St
Military St
43
Lang St
KILLARA

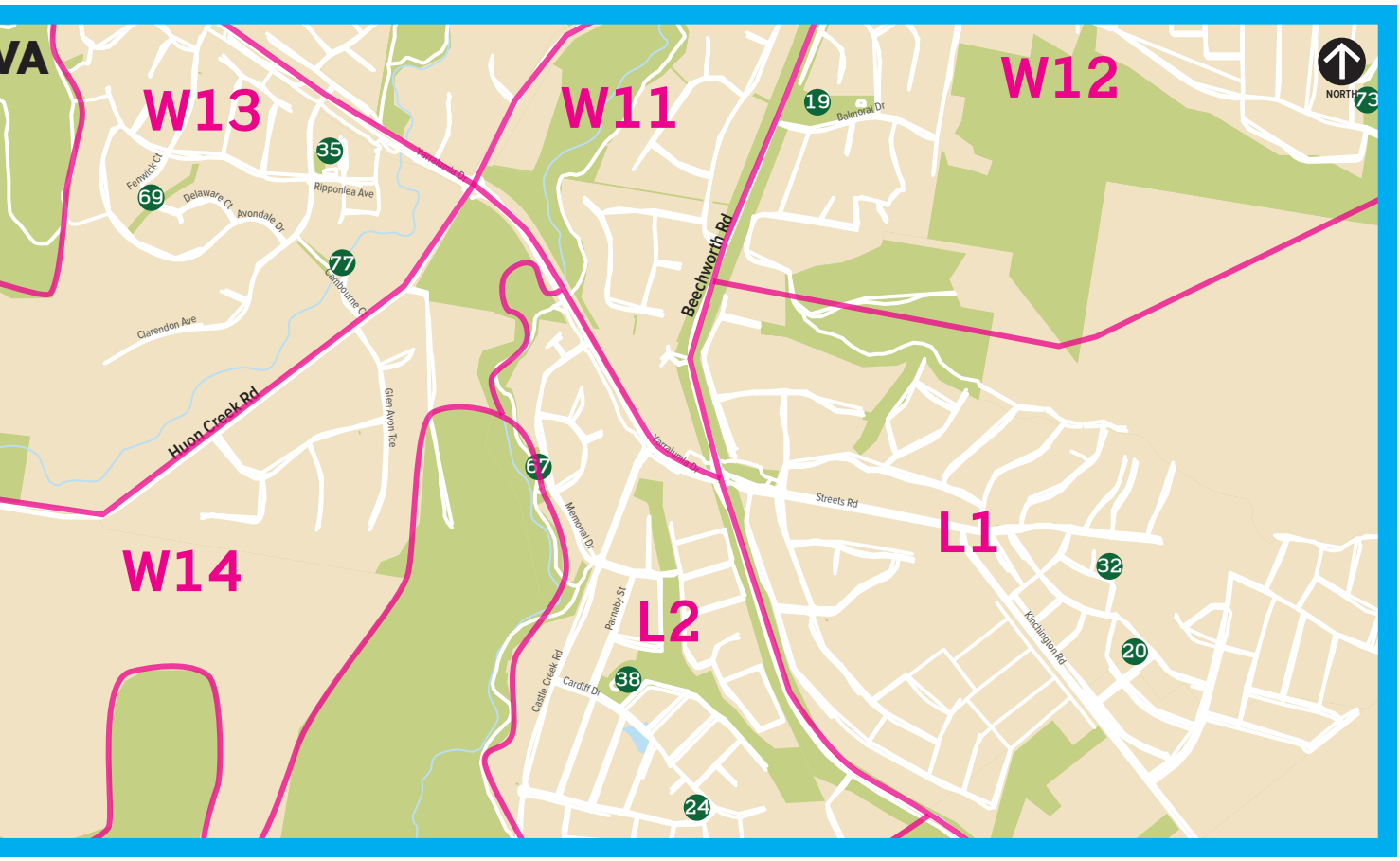

player 2


BARANDUDA
Map 2
NORTH
John Boyes Dr
Ellen Mcdonald Dr
Pro Hart Dr
John Schubert Dr
Dryadale St
Whiteley Cct
B1
Chapples Rd
55
3
Sage Ct
Verbena St
Lorage St
Comfrey Ct
Caraway St
75
Basil Ct
Flax St
Juniper Way
Foxglove Lee
Kiewa Valley Hwy
45
Skenzel Cr
Howarths Rd
BARANDUDA
B2
Quoli Rd
Platypus Ct
Baranduda Blvd
Koala Ct
Wallaby Pl
Echidna Ct
Boundary Rd
Hamilton Ct
Barton Dr
44
Jamison Dr

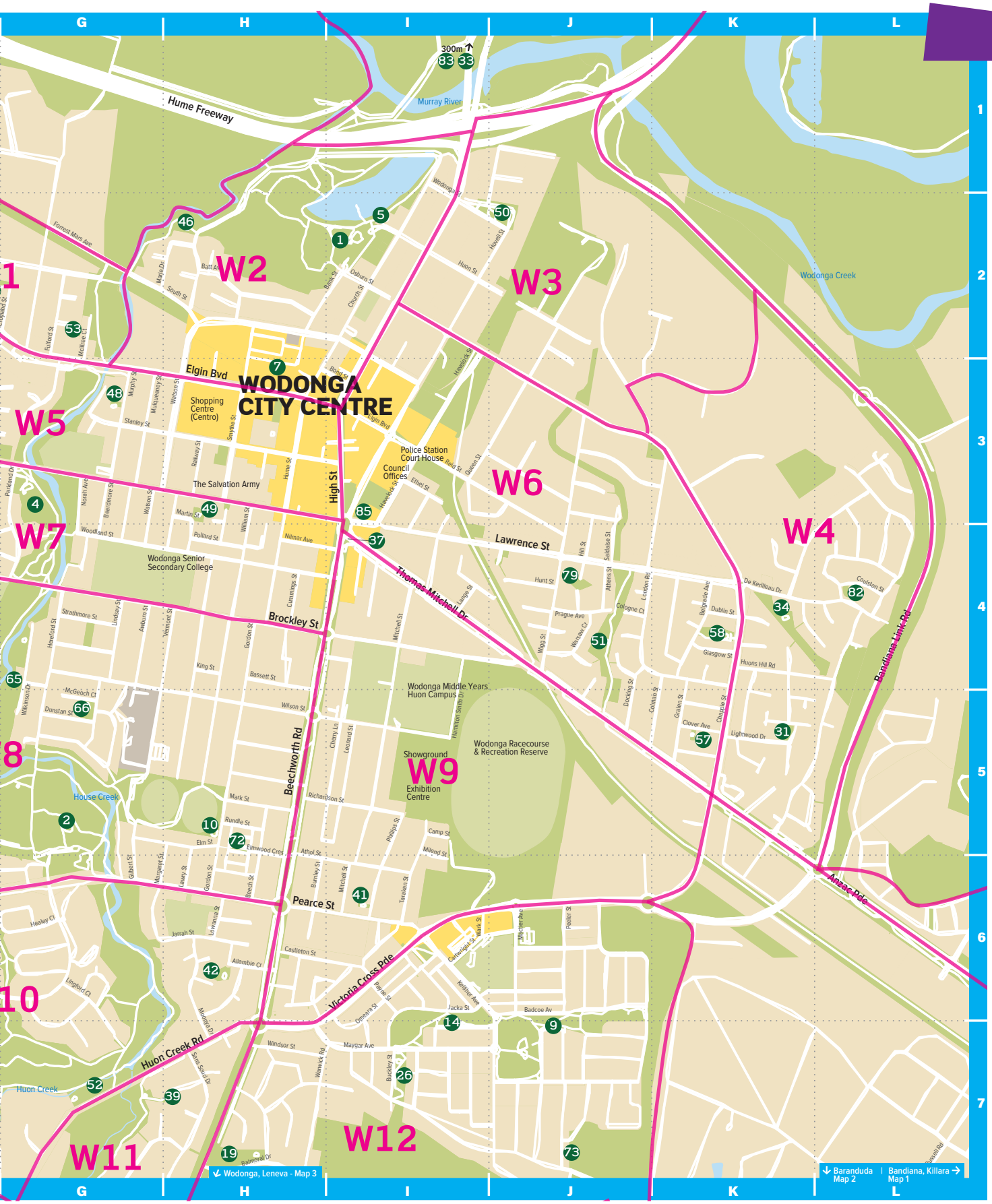



WODONGA, LENE
Map 3
Archer Circuit
Arwon Rd
30




W13
W11
W12
W14
L1
L2
Beechworth Rd
Huon Creek Rd
Streets Rd
Balmoral Dr
Ripponlea Ave
Fenwick Ct
Delaware Ct
Avondale Dr
Clarendon Ave
Glen Avon Tce
Memorial Dr
Parnaby St
Castle Creek Rd
Cardiff Dr
Kirkham Rd
NORTH
19
35
69
77
67
38
24
32
20
73


WODONGA
Playgrounds map
Parks and playgrounds
WEST WODONGA
WW1
WW2
WW3
WW4
HUON CREEK
W13
La Trobe University
Wodonga Institute of T.A.F.E.
Golf Course
Wodonga Country Golf Club
Wodonga Tennis Centre
Wodonga Middle Years Felltimber Campus
Baseball
BMX
Hockey
Lawrence St
Melbourne Rd
Brockley St
Felltimber Creek Rd
Melrose Dr
Golf Course
NORTH
0
0.5
1 km
CITY OF WODONGA VIC


G
H
I
J
K
L
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
300m
83
33
Hume Freeway
Murray River
Wodonga Creek
W1
W2
W3
W4
W5
W6
W7
W8
W9
W10
W11
W12
WODONGA CITY CENTRE
Shopping Centre (Centro)
Elgin Blvd
Police Station
Court House
Council Offices
The Salvation Army
Wodonga Senior Secondary College
High St
Lawrence St
Thomas Mitchell Dr
Brockley St
Pearce St
Victoria Cross Pde
Huon Creek Rd
Beechworth Rd
Wodonga Middle Years Huon Campus
Showground
Exhibition Centre
Wodonga Racecourse & Recreation Reserve
House Creek
Huon Creek
Bandiana Link Rd
Anzac Pde
Forrest Mars Ave
Fulford St
McDiarmid Ct
Batt Av
Maple Dr
South St
Oaburn St
Church St
Baker St
Bond St
Hovell St
Huon St
Hawdon St
Murphy St
Mulqueeny St
Watson St
Stanley St
Smythe St
Railway St
Hume St
Reid St
Queen St
Ethel St
Portland Dr
Norah Ave
Beardmore St
Martin St
Woodland St
Pollard St
William St
Nilmar Ave
Strathmore St
Lindsay St
Avoca St
Vermont St
Hereford St
Gordon St
Cummings St
King St
Bassett St
Wilson St
McGeoch Ct
Dunstan St
Wilkinson Ln
Mitchell St
Hamilton Smith Dr
Cherry Ln
Leonard St
Richardson St
Mark St
Rundle St
Elm St
Elmwood Cres
Athol St
Camp St
Milend St
Phillips St
Barnley St
Tarakan St
Gilbert St
Margaret St
Lawry St
Beech St
Jarrah St
Lowanna St
Castleton St
Allambie Cr
Lingford Ct
Moodna Dr
Salvia Square Dr
Windsor St
Maygar Ave
Warwick Rd
Buckley St
Onneya St
Barrie St
Jacka St
Badcoe Av
Kelliher Ave
Mark St
Peeler St
Carter Ave
Cartwright St
Hill St
Saldaise St
Athens St
London Rd
Cologne Ct
Prague Ave
Wenaw Cr
Wigg St
Docklig St
Colman St
Grailes St
Chisholm St
Clover Ave
Lightwood Dr
Hunt St
Langs St
De Kerrilleau Dr
Belgrade Ave
Dublin St
Glasgow St
Huons Hill Rd
Couldon St
Russell Rd
Balmoral Dr
Wodonga, Leneva - Map 3
Baranduda Map 2
Bandiana, Killara Map 1

FACILITIES

1 Belvoir Park Playground H2



2 Willow Park G5



3 Baranduda Community Centre Reserve Map 2



4 Les Stone Park G3



5 Sumsion Gardens I2



6 Julia Ronan Park E5



7 Richardson Park H3



8 Cuthbert St Park Map 1



9 McLean Park J7



10 Martin Park H5



11 Daintree Way Park B2



12 Kelly Park F3



13 Valentina Gillard Park B2



14 Jack Dunstan Park I7



15 Kosovar Park Map 1



16 Henry Nowik Park D2



17 Gayview Park D3



18 Henrika Kuljurgies Reserve Map 1



19 Castle Heights Park H7



20 Kinchington Estate Map 3



21 Tooley Park F3



22 Isdell Place Reserve B1



23 Gordon Craig Park C2



24 Glamorgan Crt Park Map 3



25 Bill Black Park D3



26 Dr John Moran Park I7



27 Wiggy Jackson Park D5



28 Lou Lieberman Park F6



29 Marimba Park E3



30 Arwon Rd/Archer Cct Map 3



31 Ernie May Park K5



32 Leneva Views Map 3



33 Diamond Park I1



34 Jack Maher Park K4



35 Bernie Cox Park Map 3



36 Max Gray Park F4



37 Southside Terrace Playground I4



38 Whenby Grange Reserve Map 3



39 Gordon Hartsman Park H7



40 Max Beck Park A4



41 Branko Palavestra Park I6

42 Alan Cracknell Park H6

43 Barry St Reserve Map 1

44 Ida Schubert Park Map 2

45 Mel Read Park Map 2

46 Felix Grundy Park H2

47 Rex Chamberlain Park E2

48 Dr Bill Grant Park G3

49 Robert Prentice Park H3

50 Walter Cottrell Park J2

51 Arthur Dunstan Park J4

52 David Bayne Park G7

53 Russell Cochrane Park G2

54 Ernest Condon Corridor F5

55 Glenwood Estate Reserve Map 2

56 Jim Costelloe Park F2

57 Bradbury Park K5

58 Graeme Sutherland Park K4

59 Elfy Quick Park C4

60 Peter Frawley Park F6

61 Alan Goyne Park C5

62 Herb Harris Park D5

63 Thomas Reidy Park E5

64 John Schwind Park C5

65 Carl Fietz Frontage G4

66 Dr John Schlink Park G5

67 Ewart Brothers Reserve Map 3

68 Jim Matthews Park E3

69 John Potter Park Map 3

70 Alma Rogers Park E3

71 Hicks Reserve C5

72 Brian Callanan Park H5

73 White Box Rise Pump Track J7

74 John Byrne Park D4

75 Bidgood Park Map 2

76 John Aney Park D6

77 Veronica Egan Park Map 3

78 Rooney Ave Reserve Map 1

79 Sister Willet Park J4

80 Jenny Elford Park F4

81 Schorobura Park Map 1

82 Peg Spry Park L4

83 Gateway Village I1

84 Birallee Park D4

85 Hyphen I3

86 Wattle Park C6

87 Ludlow's Reserve

PLAY SPACE DESIGN GUIDELINES

PLAY VALUE

It is important to convey the idea that quality play provision is not simply about play equipment.

Some play activities are inherently higher quality than others as they engage children at a deeper level and contribute to their development with communication and language, social and physical skills, cognitive engagement and problem solving, creative and sensory exploration, alongside testing resilience, persistence and other personal qualities.

Valuable play environments strike the right balance between challenge and risk, equipment and landscape, supervision and adventure, independence and social as well as access and imagination.





High quality play environment at Belvoir Park

Side by side swing options for all ages and abilities

KEY DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The following are considered requirements for most play spaces, depending upon their level in the hierarchy and some other important factors about their location and role in their precinct. These are recommended to ensure that most basic community needs are being provided for and apply not only to children but to families, carers and grandparents.

All ages and abilities

Play spaces should cater to the broadest range of ages, abilities and skill levels that the site and budget allows. Neighbourhood and Regional play spaces have more opportunities and justification to cater to a broader age and developmental range.

Play elements that can be accessed by children who use a mobility aid are a good addition as they allow children of all abilities to play alongside each other. It is also important to consider access for carers of all abilities.

Play elements that can be used by children of any age or ability deliver good value to the community. Some activities need to be provided at a range of heights and degrees of challenge so that both younger and older children can use them comfortably. It should be noted that not every play space can deliver access for all age groups but access at the precinct level should be considered.



Play equipment at Castle Heights Reserve provides graduated challenge options for different ages and abilities.

Choice of settings and activities

Provide a choice of settings for play, ranging from man-made or synthetic to natural opportunities including landscape elements and loose materials for creative play. Provide a choice of play activities, experiences and materials for play including activities that:

1. Provide for important forms of movement and physical activity; and,
2. Encourage social, role playing and imaginative play.





Water play at Richardson Park provides endless play opportunities.

Layout and flow

Play spaces should encourage play to flow naturally through the space with pathways, stepping stones, surfaces, decks and bridges providing links within play. For example, swings should be positioned to ensure children don't run across the path of a swinging child.

The positioning of complex larger and smaller spaces next to each other and underneath a structure encourages more creative and imaginative play.



Belvoir Park layout links children through the site with stepping stones and balancing logs and positions swings away from traffic flow.

Social interaction and comfort

Design elements and furniture should be placed in a way that encourages people to meet and interact, while ensuring there is adequate shade and shelter to encourage visitors to stay for an extended period.



Daintree play space provides accessible and sheltered picnic area as well as benched with arm rests.

Multipurpose and adaptable

Items that can typically be used by a broad range of people (ages and abilities) and for more than one purpose provide value for money. Play elements do not need to be complex or sophisticated to encourage playful interactions and could include simple additions to broaden opportunities such as climbing trees, balancing logs, stepping stones, small platform or stage.



Belvoir Park offers great opportunities for accessible group playing including this spinner set flush with the ground surface.



Children playing together at Les Stone Park.

Spatial complexity

A complex landscape for play encourages children to explore, stimulates a variety of games and activities, and provides children with elements to hide behind and use in chasing games. It provides a variety of scales of space that suit a more complex range of play behaviours. Complexity can be created with planting, terrain and site levels, and by including some solid sections of equipment and structures.



Belvoir Park offers a complexity of play element types and landscape settings.

Opportunities to explore and discover beyond a play space

Landscape treatments outside the equipment areas can extend the value of the play space by inviting children to explore the nearby environment.

The play space itself might need to include "designed" nature play elements to familiarise urban children with the appeal of natural settings.

The interface between the designated play space, and the surroundings, can be used to encourage children to link their play into the broader environment.



A Wodonga Bush Kinder Program in operation.

A high-quality play space network

This strategy acknowledges that it is unlikely that any one play space, on its own, will meet the needs of every resident, as peoples' needs and interests vary from time to time and from person to person.

It is assumed that residents need to have some choices 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 choices of parks and play spaces.

A diverse spectrum of types of spaces for the purposes of play and recreation, as well as for habitat and amenity, will allow children to experience a range of types of space. The showcased examples indicate some of the many ways play spaces could be developed for different communities.

By assessing play opportunities across suburbs and precincts, the council can spread activities, settings, and levels of challenge across a region and select diverse elements that might not be available in neighbouring play spaces.



Ninja course at Belvoir Park.





CITY OF WODONGA VIC