

Draft Play Space Strategy 2024-2029

ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

WHEN: Wednesday, May 22 to Tuesday, June 11, 2024

ENGAGEMENT MEASURES

Reach	Actions	Engagement rate	Responses	Participation rate	Total activity rate
44,410	121	0.2725	7	0.0158	0.4295

ENGAGEMENT METHODS: To encourage residents to get involved, we promoted the opportunity for people to have their say through our communication channels, including public notices, emails, social media and a have your say page on makewodongayours.com.au.

COMMUNICATIONS

2979 emails

49.91% average open rate

58 click-throughs

6 Facebook posts

10,069 reach

5 likes and reactions

5 Instagram posts

576 reach

6 likes and reactions

1 public notices

ONLINE

121 website visits

95 unique pageviews

RESPONSES

4 submissions through Make Wodonga Yours

3 email submissions

CITY OF WODONGA VIC



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FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The *Draft Play Space Strategy 2024-2029* was available for public comment for 21 days. During this time, seven submissions were received.

Two submissions requested that more playgrounds be fenced to increase safety around roads and allow parents to relax within the play space. They felt that the use of fencing around play equipment made it more inclusive and accessible for carers of multiple children and the current lack of fencing is a 'missed opportunity'. Richardson Park was highlighted as a play space which would benefit from fencing.

One submission raised concerns of inadequate shade at playgrounds, with the belief that the strategy downplays the importance of properly shading childrens play equipment. They ask that the strategy commits to properly shading all childrens playgrounds with shade sails.

One submission referenced page 31 (Item 4.1) which outlines four locations that Council is considering for neighborhood level play spaces and sought clarification as to whether a playground would be constructed in the reserve area located at the corner of Cuthbert Street and Lukin Lane in Riverside Estate, Killara.

One submission asked that there be multiple larger 'playground hubs' at different locations within the city. They do not want to see all money committed to Belvoir Park Playground.

Three submissions requested upgrades to existing playgrounds in their area or asked that additional play spaces, a splash park and dog park be built. Playgrounds suggested for upgrades or improvement were Richardson Park, Quick Elfy Park and Valentina Gillard Park.



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FEEDBACK

Online submissions

- **Jasmine Healey**

  Hoping for some upgrades or an additional play space in the Country Club Estate, Brewer Dr area. The playground/ basketball court near Firestone Way (Valentina Gillard Park) is in desperate need of an upgrade and with the new houses going in on Brewer Dr some updates would be amazing.

  Even a dog park up this end of town would be amazing. Lots of dog owners around and driving down to Sumsion Gardens for a dog park can be slightly off putting. Would go a lot more if there was one in this estate I could walk to.

- Can we have a fence along Elgin Blvd from the playground behind Bean Station to the water feature. There is nothing stopping a child chasing a ball or wandering between parked cars straight on to the road
- We need a decent splash park (like Bright) given our summers are so warm. The little water park located in high street is not under cover and the ground gets too hot in summer. There should also be a playground at Junction Square to bring in more families to this space.

  Quick Elfy park near the golf course is outdated and old. Requires an update.

- Fences or “cages” as you call them also provide sanity for mums with small children or multiple children or children that are runners that may not go to the park unless they are fenced. Sometimes mums are tired and just want to be able to be and sit and watch their kids play. Very few parks in Wodonga are fully fenced and this is a missed opportunity for providing carers a safe place to bring their children. Maybe that’s why 38 per cent of people don’t get enough exercise.

  This is also not providing access to playgrounds and including all children because some days carers just can’t face the battle of an unfenced playground and their three kids by themself.

  Please fully fence more playgrounds.

  Please don’t put all your money into one playground. It could be great to see playground hubs across town with most of the facilities like Sumsion Gardens, Willow Park (needs a huge improve) and the other one in Whitebox. Lots of playgrounds is not necessarily best if there is only one or two things at each. It would be great to have multiple main playgrounds across town.

  Richardson Park - what a missed opportunity. You can only play in the water park 3 months of the year and the rest is aimed at a very narrow audience. Where is the play space in the CBD of town that is accessible, family friendly, relevant? Please develop this playground more.



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FEEDBACK

Email submissions

- I am hoping my request for Oakmont Circuits Valentina Gillard Park to receive some upgrades will be considered.

  As a family with a two year old we have found only one swing is appropriate for the 0-2yrs age group. The rest of the dated play equipment is appropriate for older children only. We recently visited Bill Black Park and appreciated greatly the variety of equipment which accommodated a wider variety of age groups, including 1-2 yr olds.

  The Oakmont Circuit BBQ area would see more use if cover over the tables and chairs existed. The summer heat and wet winter conditions sees ourselves, our neighbours and friends going else where for picnics with cover. A drinking water source would be appreciated also.
- We would like to reference Page 31 (Item 4.1) that outlines four locations that Council is considering for neighborhood level play spaces, being in West Wodonga (x 3) and Baranduda.

  Not included within this list is the long completed Stage 13 reserve area located at the corner of Cuthbert Street and Lukin Lane in Riverside Estate, Killara.

  In 2019 Council installed signage on the site confirming that a “recreation node with play equipment and seating” would be created within the reserve. The purpose of the signage, which was on full view to all residents, was to ensure that they were fully aware of what was intended to be developed in the reserve.

  Whilst a playground may not be installed tomorrow, we do ask for a clear indication of timing.
- **Alex Turini**

  See following three pages

Feedback to Wodonga's Draft Play Space Strategy 2024-2029

Prepared For	**Wodonga City Council**
Respondent	**Alex Turini**
Date	**10 June 2024**

The positive contribution that accessible play spaces have on the physical and mental health of children cannot be overstated[1]. Play spaces within residential areas also create opportunities for incidental exercise and social interaction for residents of all ages and serve to improve general neighbourhood cohesion. In a time where Australians are increasingly feeling divided and lonely[2], quality public spaces are more important than ever. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children states in part, that children are guaranteed the right to "…rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."[3] For all these reasons, Wodonga's demonstrated commitment to continually build new play spaces and improve existing spaces is both necessary, and positive.

While the contents of Wodonga's Draft Play Space Strategy 2024-2029 (DPSS) indicate Wodonga will continue in this positive direction, a notable concern is an under-commitment to constructing appropriate shade and shelter at all playgrounds within our city. At present, the DPSS favours trees planted on the north side of playgrounds to protect children from the sun. Fully grown trees can provide appropriate shade and additional cooling via evapotranspiration. It is also significantly cheaper to plant trees than to build shade structures and shelters.

Unfortunately, it can take decades for young trees to reach a size where they can provide appropriate shade and cooling for a playground. There is also no guarantee that trees planted for

[1] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2444866416301234
[2] https://www1.racgp.org.au/newsgp/clinical/loneliness-epidemic-plaguing-young-australians
[3] https://www.unicef.org.au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child

this purpose will end up overhanging the playground in a manner that provides appropriate shade, especially during summer when appropriate shade is most important. Even if this does occur, the overhanging branches could be seen as a hazard in certain conditions and could require removal. Where too much shade is provided by overhanging trees, it can also lead to too little sunlight reaching play equipment and walkways. This can cause mould and moss to grow, creating undesirable slip hazards.

A playground with too little shade is foreseeably dangerous for children. It is well established that excess sun exposure increases a person's chance of developing skin cancer. This is especially true for children, with "UV damage accumulated during childhood and adolescence [being] strongly associated with an increased risk of skin cancer in later life.[4]" Australia's age-standardised rate of cancer is amongst the highest in the world, and 64% higher than the world average.[5] Skin cancer accounts for 80% of all new cancer diagnoses in Australia, with more dangerous melanoma cancers being the 4th most common diagnosis.[6] Appropriately shaded playgrounds can reduce UV exposure to children using those playgrounds by up to 75%[7]. While it is desirable for parents to properly protect their children from the dangers of the sun, this is not an excuse for the City of Wodonga to minimise our collective responsibility for the children who live here.

As well as increasing the chance of a child suffering sun burns, improperly shaded play equipment increases the chance of a child receiving thermal burns on hotter days. Even when ambient temperatures are not extreme, unshaded playground equipment can reach extraordinarily high temperatures in Australia. In April 2019, researchers found the surface temperatures of unshaded rubber swing seats exceeded 75°C when ambient temperatures were under 32°C [8]. Such temperatures are hazardous, especially for children.

Children's skin is delicate, with toddlers able to suffer full thickness burns if exposed to substances or surfaces exceeding 60°C for over one second[9]. Without shade, the surface of darker coloured play equipment can exceed 90°C on hot days. Even lighter coloured rubber surfaces can exceed 50°C on days where ambient temperatures are moderate[10]. A child who sits or is placed on excessively hot playground equipment is at risk of suffering genital burns. Such burns are complicated to treat and come with an increased chance of death compared to burns elsewhere on the body[11].

As with addressing any hazard, systemic safety improvements are exceptionally more effective at reducing risk than placing the onus of responsibility on individuals to "be safe". While parents should take care to ensure a playground is safe for their children to use, a situation where a sleep

[4] https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/skin-cancer-children#skin-cancer-and-children
[5] https://www.wcrf.org/cancer-trends/global-cancer-data-by-country/
[6] https://www.cancer.org.au/about-us/policy-and-advocacy/prevention-policy/common-cancers
[7] https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9577442/
[8] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360132322007314
[9] https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/burns-and-scalds-children
[10] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360132322007314
[11] https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32098711/

deprived parent forgets to check the surface temperature of a rubber swing before placing their infant into it, is an entirely predictable event. While it is not possible to prevent a sleep deprived parent from making mistakes, it is possible for systemic steps to be taken to ensure the outcome of such mistakes do not include severe burns to an infant.

Children who visit improperly shaded playgrounds on hot days are also at risk of suffering general heat related illnesses, even if their parents have taken steps to protect their child from dangerous UV rays. To address all the known risks associated with poorly shaded playgrounds, many families will simply opt not to use the equipment on hotter days. Not only does this result in the playground becoming an underutilised asset, but children who rely on that playground "to engage in play and recreational activities" (per the UNCRC) would be unable to do so for considerable periods during our hot summer.

Even in the absence of child safety considerations, appropriately shading a playground could be a good investment from a facilities management perspective. Playground equipment that is not properly shaded will degrade considerably faster due to increased UV exposure. By shading playground with shade sails, it is possible the cost of routine maintenance and repair of the play equipment will be reduced.

For all the reasons above, the DPSS needs to place considerably less reliance on trees to provide appropriate shade for play equipment. Rather, shading of play equipment should be carefully controlled via shade sails installed directly over the equipment.

Summary

Wodonga's Draft Play Space Strategy 2024-2029 is indicative of a Council who views public and accessible playgrounds as an important asset and resource for our community. Unfortunately, the draft strategy downplays the importance of properly shading children's play equipment, and significantly downplays the health risks of failing to do so. It is an unfortunate reality that the installation of appropriate shade sail or other shelters will add considerable cost to a playground installation. Though I firmly believe that if all information above were to be presented to the Wodonga community, the resounding preference from citizens would be to construct shade sails over all play equipment in Wodonga, even if this comes at the expense of installing or upgrading fewer playgrounds overall. For these reasons I ask Council not to endorse Wodonga's Draft Play Space Strategy 2024-2029, until the strategy commits to appropriately shading all children's playgrounds with shade sails.

Thank you for your time.

I declare no conflicts of interest and will not financially benefit from Council investing in shade sails for Wodonga's play spaces.