

## 11.6 Public Exhibition of Draft Playspace Strategy

Reference:	6500
Report Author:	Project Officer
Authoriser:	Deputy General Manager Operations, Finance and Risk
Link to Community Strategic Plan:	Increase promotion of healthy lifestyle choices

### PURPOSE

To seek approval for the Draft Playground Strategy to be placed on public exhibition with the community invited to provide feedback and comments.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. **THAT** the Draft Playspace Strategy be endorsed for public exhibition for a period of twenty eight (28) days.
2. **THAT** the Draft Playspace Strategy incorporating community submissions be submitted to Council for adoption following the public exhibition.

### REPORT

#### **BACKGROUND**

In 2016 to compliment the Fit for the Future Improvement Program, Council endorsed the newly developed Parks Strategy. This high-level strategic document identifies current and future provision requirements, asset categories, levels of service and provides rationale for financial sustainability into the future for Council's parks network.

Subsequently, in 2017 the Public Toilet Strategy was added to this suite of documents, sitting under the Parks Strategy in line with parks levels of service and providing specific direction on the development and management of public toilet facilities.

Similarly, the Draft Playspace Strategy will form part of this suite of documents. Council engaged a specialist parks consultant, Xyst Pty Ltd, to assist in the developing this draft document.

The Draft Playspace Strategy has been developed to provide guidance on the current 48 playspaces located within the Shire. The document identifies categories for four levels of playspaces along with levels of service and financial sustainability of playgrounds.

#### **REPORT**

The Draft Playspace Strategy is a vision for play areas in Wingecarribee Shire and provides guidance for Council on future provision, development and maintenance of its playgrounds.

The purpose of this strategy is to analyse the current situation in terms of playspace provision, quality, and financial investment. It then provides a framework upon which to base decisions for the future development of playspaces that meet the community's needs for a sustainable network of playspaces that are attractive, inclusive, safe and affordable.

The Playspace Strategy will be used to provide an overall framework for the consistent management and maintenance of play areas including providing general development

standard guidelines, identifying appropriate levels of service for each type of playspace category and setting the capital, renewal and disposal program for the existing 48 playspace sites.

Council's playspaces have been categorised into four (4) categories:

- Destination
- Level One
- Level Two
- Level Three

Playspace infrastructure requires a higher level of maintenance than other items typically found in open space settings, such as park furniture. Further, a successful playground is generally supported by other infrastructure such as public toilets, formed pathways and bins. It is therefore not recommended to locate playspaces at parks with low service levels.

With industry trends for playgrounds evolving the Draft Strategy acknowledges the growing need for play value at our parks. Facilities are considered to have high play value when they can challenge and engage children for extended periods of time. Equipment that is functional but does not encourage different, innovative and challenging use will quickly lose attraction. Creating playspaces in which children can have a wide variety of play experiences and sensations is important.

Each playspace was assessed using the Playable Space Quality Assessment Tool used by park's consultant, Xyst. This enabled each facility to be evaluated using a structured process. The assessment tool focuses on three major aspects to children's outdoor play provision: the location of play areas, play value and ancillary facilities (such as shade, seating, toilets, etc.).

The most striking result is the low play value scores across all sites. This is generally due to equipment being installed prior to the availability of current higher play value designs, only catering to a narrow (relatively young) age range and offering little in the way of challenging or imaginative play experiences.

Another important aspect of playspaces considered by this Draft Strategy, is inclusive play. The Draft Strategy has incorporated the recent NSW State Government Guidelines 'Everyone Can Play'. A fundamental objective for playspace design and equipment provision is to ensure inclusive access is provided for all members of the community. The phrases *Can I Stay*, *Can I Play*, *Can I Get There* form the basis for the checklist for these guidelines.

The Draft Playspace Strategy also takes note of the community's feedback and expectations regarding Council's playgrounds.

Council undertook an online community survey from December 2017 to February 2018. There were 382 submissions with 961 views of this survey which was the third highest response to a Council survey using this methodology. This indicates a high level of interest in the provision of playspaces.

The survey asked a range of questions relating to frequency of use, travel methods, and preference for the mix of playspaces and invited comments about desired enhancements to improve their children's play experience.

The response to the Playspace Survey was very encouraging and provided meaningful and constructive feedback.

Overall, the community was divided on whether to focus funding on providing fewer playgrounds with high quality play value or providing a larger variety of playspaces with lower play values. When participants were asked their preference between maintaining the current mix of small and large playspaces or providing centrally located large playgrounds with better play value, the feedback was evenly balanced.

While maintaining the current number of playgrounds, and simultaneously improving play value and amenity may be desirable from a community experience point of view, it is also not affordable and not supported by Council's current strategic framework.

The Draft Strategy seeks to maintain a good level of distribution of playgrounds across the shire, while improving play value and accessibility. The Strategy includes reducing the overall number of playspaces while increasing the play value and amenity of those retained. The sites identified to be disposed, at end of life, were determined taking into consideration the amenity, distribution and location of playspaces within the Shire.

### **Options Considered**

To determine the preferred approach, four funding scenarios were considered as part of the Draft Playspace Strategy's preparation. These included:

- **Scenario 1** - Continuing to operate within the current allocated budget, disposal of 24 playspaces at end of life.
- **Scenario 2** - Maintain current level of service with play equipment largely being replaced like for like, with no increase in LoS or play values, disposal of 15 playspaces at end of life.
- **Scenario 3** - Implementing the recommendations and level of service proposed in the Draft Playspace Strategy, *excluding* the development of a Destination playground, disposal of 15 playspaces at end of life.
- **Scenario 4** - Implementing the recommendations and level of service proposed in the Draft Playspace Strategy, *including* the development of a Destination playground, disposal of 15 playspaces at end of life.

The preferred scenarios are Scenario 3 or 4. This level of service is designed to meet a reasonable balance between affordability and meeting current and future playspace needs for residents and visitors to the Shire.

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## **COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION**

### **Community Engagement**

Community Engagement for the Draft Playspace Strategy was conducted at the beginning of the playspace journey in January – February 2018 and assisted in guiding the finalised draft document. Engagement at this early stage included an initial face to face intercept survey at a number of playspace facilities. The face to face informal chats were conducted by Council Officers and were in conjunction to an online survey through Council's 'Your Say' platform. The response to this survey was overwhelming with submissions totalling 382, the third highest response to a Council survey to date.

## AGENDA FOR THE ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

Wednesday 10 June 2020

### REPORT DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER OPERATIONS, FINANCE AND RISK



Following approval from Council the Draft Playspace Strategy will be placed on public exhibition for a period of 28 days. The public exhibition of the Draft Playspace Strategy will include newspaper advertisement, social media and other engagement tools on the Your Say Wingecarribee platform.

The Strategy will be promoted on social media and other engagement tools utilised, such as Your Say Wingecarribee, in accordance with Covid-19 Regulations.

Notices will also be posted at all Council playspaces encouraging users to participate in feedback.

Once the exhibition period has closed, a report will be provided to Council for consideration.

#### **Internal Consultation**

Parks & Buildings Asset Team have consulted the draft document with Infrastructure Services, Tourism & Economic Development, Strategic Planning, Community Development, Finance and Executive Staff.

A Councillor Briefing Session was held on 3 June 2020.

#### **External Consultation**

Council Officers engaged in consultation with the NSW Government 'Everyone Can Play' team, Livvie's Place and South Western Sydney Local Heath District.

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### **SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT**

- **Environment**

There are no broader environmental implications associated with this report.

- **Social**

The adoption of the Playspace Strategy will promote Council's capacity to provide sustainable outdoor recreational spaces for the community. This will include active, passive and social use of playgrounds that offers associated health and wellbeing benefits.

- **Broader Economic Implications**

There are no broader economic implications associated with this report.

- **Culture**

There are no broader cultural implications associated with this report.

- **Governance**

There are no broader governance implications associated with this report.

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### **COUNCIL BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

The impact on council's budget will depend on which scenario is adopted. This will be determined following the exhibition period. The funding strategy, for the adopted scenario, will subsequently be considered during the annual budget review process and reported to council.

## AGENDA FOR THE ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL

Wednesday 10 June 2020

### REPORT DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER OPERATIONS, FINANCE AND RISK



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#### RELATED COUNCIL POLICY

The Draft Parks Strategy refers to the following Council policies:

- Asset Management Policy

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#### OPTIONS

The options available to Council are:

##### Option 1

1. THAT the Draft Playspace Strategy be endorsed for public exhibition for a period of twenty eight (28) days.
2. THAT the Draft Playspace Strategy incorporating community submissions be submitted to Council for adoption following the public exhibition.

##### Option 2

THAT Council does not place the Draft Playspace Strategy on public exhibition.

Option 1 is the recommended option to this report.

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#### CONCLUSION

Placing the Draft Playspace Strategy on public exhibition and providing further opportunity for community feedback will enable the final Strategy to be submitted to Council for adoption.

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#### ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Playspace Strategy for Public Exhibition V1.5 - *circulated under separate cover*

Richard Mooney

**Acting Deputy General Manager Operations, Finance and Risk**

Thursday 4 June 2020