

## 11.2 Adoption of the Playspace Strategy

Reference:	6500/3.1
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Authoriser:	Manager Assets
Link to Community Strategic Plan:	Increase promotion of healthy lifestyle choices

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the public exhibition period of the Draft Playspace Strategy ('Draft Strategy') and to seek Council formal adoption of the Playspace Strategy.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. **THAT** the final Playspace Strategy including amendments be adopted by Council.
2. **THAT** the feedback received in response to the public exhibition of the Draft Playspace Strategy be noted.
3. **THAT** Council Officers write to Community Members who made submissions during the Public Exhibition and thank them for their participation.

### REPORT

#### **BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on 10 June 2020 Council approved the public exhibition of the Draft Playspace Strategy (MN 197/20) as follows:

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.*

The Draft Playspace Strategy was prepared with consideration given to Council's Parks Strategy 2016, Public Toilet Strategy 2017 and the NSW Government's 2019 Everyone Can Play Guidelines.

The Draft Strategy is a vision for play areas in the Shire and provides guidance for Council on the future provision, development and maintenance of its playgrounds. The Draft Strategy categorises each playspace to link with appropriate levels of service for the open space facility.

The purpose of the Draft Strategy is to provide the broader community with an understanding with respect to playspaces in relation to provision, quality and financial investment.

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It provides Council with a framework which can be used for decision making for the future development of playspaces that meet the community's needs; which are attractive, inclusive, safe and affordable.

#### **REPORT**

The Draft Playspace Strategy was placed on public exhibition from 10 June 2020 to 19 July 2020. Community engagement activities included a Your Say Wingecarribee webpage, notices posted at the Civic Centre and libraries, notification emails to high interest groups and posters at all playspaces within the Shire.

Submissions were invited via the online submission feature on the Your Say Wingecarribee website, via email and by post.

A total of 76 submissions were received. During the exhibition period the webpage was visited by 1,100 people with 602 downloading the Draft Playspace Strategy and/or the associated Council Report.

A summary of the community feedback received is provided as **Attachment 1** of this report.

Highlights of the community feedback include:

- The community has strong support for playspaces generally. Approximately half of the submission authors appeared to have read the information contained in the Draft Playspace Strategy. Comments were targeted at information presented in the Draft Strategy and were not of a general assumption nature. The other half of responses were general in nature providing feedback about the current state of the Shire's playgrounds and indicating desired improvements.
- 73% of the submissions support the intent of the draft Strategy, being to provide improved play value and amenity for Council's playspaces.

Highlights of the community feedback was also provided under several themes:

#### Play Experience

This theme was the most frequently raised throughout responses and included topics such as:

- the need for larger and better playgrounds within the local government area
- upgrades to outdated, unimaginative and sad looking equipment
- respondents need to travel out of the Shire to enjoy challenging and interesting playgrounds
- the area needs more age appropriate equipment along with playspaces that cater for more than one age group
- more supporting (ancillary) features e.g. toilets, shade, fences etc
- more natural play features, less plastic
- the need to keep kids active.

#### Destination/Adventure Playspace

This was the second highest response theme with comments relating to:

- the residents of the Shire wanting an adventure/destination playspace for the area

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- comments indicating residents do not want to wait 10 years for an adventure/destination playspace.

#### Proposed Removal of Playgrounds

This was the third highest response theme and included the following feedback:

- objection to possible sale of park land
- comments both related to the support of and objection to the proposed removal of playspaces
- references to specific playspaces identified for removal.

#### Inclusive Play

This theme supported upgrades to playgrounds to include inclusive play elements for the community.

#### Youth Facilities

A number of submissions referred to increasing facilities for youth including the possibility of bike tracks, skateparks, ninja warrior courses, pump bike tracks and learn to ride tracks.

#### General Comments

General comments received included:

- concerns for specific playgrounds not performing as a playspace or closed for maintenance
- feedback questioned the results of the projected population decrease as identified in the 2016 National Census
- specific comments related to the layout, content and information contained throughout the document.

## **DISCUSSION ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

### **Feedback Theme – Play Experience**

The Draft Playspace Strategy responds to the issues and objectives raised in the community feedback in relation to Play Experience. Key objectives of the Strategy include improving play values, catering to a wider range of ages and multiple age groups, providing appropriate ancillary facilities to encourage longer stays and placing an emphasis on natural play elements. The outcomes are expected to be increased utilisation, longer stays, higher quality play experiences and improved aesthetics.

### **Feedback Theme – Destination/Adventure Playspace**

The overwhelming community support for a Destination/Adventure playspace is acknowledged. Scenario 4 includes improved levels of service for Council playspaces, the addition of a destination playground and the progressive removal of 15 playspaces at their end of life. The exhibited Draft Strategy indicated Scenarios 3 and 4 as the preferred scenarios. The adoption of the Strategy to include a Destination / Adventure Playspace will support future grant applications for the construction works.

### **Feedback Theme – Proposed Removal of Playspaces**

Regarding the objections raised with respect to the sale of parkland, it is important to note that the Draft Playspace Strategy does not recommend the sale of any land. Rather, it recommends the removal of 15 playspaces at the end of their useful life and returning the land to open space for continued use by the community.

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Playspace disposals were recommended based upon a combination of the following factors:

- over provision in close proximity
- duplication of assets where utilisation does not warrant it
- playspaces located at low level of service parks not appropriately sized or located to meet the level of service objectives of the Draft Strategy
- to support increased financial investment in the remaining playspaces.

Submissions were received in support of retaining the Berrima River Reserve Campground playspace. These submissions were further supported by Destination Southern Highlands as a desirable amenity for hirers of the campground and the township of Berrima being a tourist destination. The campground is also being promoted as the main trailhead for several Berrima bush walks in the Draft Walking Tracks Strategy.

Upon review, it is agreed there is sufficient utilisation and tourism drivers to warrant two playgrounds in the village of Berrima. It is not recommended to retain any of the other 14 playspaces planned for disposal.

#### **Feedback Theme – Inclusive Play**

The community feedback for this theme was minor with only two comments received. Inclusivity at Council facilities is supported by Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan in the following actions:

- Improve access and inclusion at Council's community facilities and open spaces
- Develop a play spaces strategy.

It is also supported by the NSW Government's Everyone Can Play Guidelines for inclusive play facilities.

The Draft Playspace Strategy has been developed in line with the above documents and promotes inclusive play through play equipment selection, parking and pathways and accessible supporting infrastructure such as park furniture and public toilets.

#### **Feedback Theme – Other Youth Facilities**

Youth facilities were intentionally omitted from the Draft Playspace Strategy, as their provision will be addressed as part of the Sports Facilities Strategy scheduled for development in the 2020/21 financial year.

#### **Feedback Theme – General Comments**

Twelve respondents questioned the correctness of the 2016 National Census prediction relating to the proportionate decrease of children within the Shire over the next 10 years. Council staff queried the information and received additional advice to verify the 2016 Census prediction. Whilst the total population is predicted to increase over the next 10 years, the proportion of children under the age of 15 is predicted to decline slightly (250 children). This population demand driver will be reviewed following future Census publications.

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## **AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT STRATEGY**

As a result of feedback received through the public exhibition of the Draft Playspace Strategy, the following amendments are recommended:

- The retention of the playspace at Berrima River Reserve (campground) as there is sufficient utilisation and tourism drivers to warrant two playgrounds in the village of Berrima.
- Scenario 4 is identified as the preferred option, including a destination/adventure playspace.
- The Strategy will be reviewed in 5 years (2025).

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## **COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION**

### **Community Engagement**

The Draft Playspace Strategy was placed on public exhibition from 10 June 2020 until 19 July 2020 (35 days). The exhibition period was extended from 28 to 35 days to coincide with the completion of the school holidays.

Community engagement activities included a Your Say Wingecarribee webpage, notices posted at the Civic Centre and libraries, notification emails to high interest groups, such as schools, and posters at all playspaces within the Shire.

Submissions were invited via the online submission feature on the Your Say Wingecarribee website, via email and by post.

### **Internal Communication and Consultation**

Assets staff have consulted with the following branches in relation to the draft document:

- Infrastructure Services
- Tourism and Economic Development
- Community Development
- Finance, Procurement, Fleet and Property.

A Councillor Briefing Session was held on 3 June 2020 providing information on the Draft Playspace Strategy. A second Councillor Briefing Session was held on 23 September 2020 providing information on the community feedback received during Public Exhibition.

### **External Communication and Consultation**

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

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## **SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT**

### **• Environment**

There are no environmental issues in relation to this report.

- **Social**

The adoption of the Draft 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 in relation to this report.

- **Culture**

There are no cultural issues in relation to this report.

- **Governance**

There are no governance issues in relation to this report.

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## **COUNCIL BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

The impact on Council's budget will depend on which scenario is adopted. The recommended scenario is Scenario 4 including the provision of a destination/adventure playspace.

The funding strategy for the adopted scenario will subsequently be considered during the annual budget review process and reported to Council. The adopted Strategy will also support future grant applications for playspaces.

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## **RELATED COUNCIL POLICY**

Asset Management Policy

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## **OPTIONS**

The options available to Council are:

### **Option 1**

THAT the final Playspace Strategy including amendments be adopted by Council.

### **Option 2**

THAT the final Playspace Strategy be adopted by Council with no amendments.

### **Option 3**

THAT the Playspace Strategy not be adopted.

Option 1 is the recommended option to this report.

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#### CONCLUSION

Adoption of the Playspaces Strategy will provide Council with a framework to guide the future provision, development and maintenance of the Shire's public playgrounds.

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#### ATTACHMENTS

1. Summary Sheet - Draft Playspace Strategy Public Exhibition Feedback
2. Draft Playspace Strategy - Version 1.6 - *circulated under separate cover*