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*promoting the value of play*

## **SLOPING SITES: HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM**

Very steep slopes can create problems for children's services and sometimes a very steep site may need to be rejected as unsuitable for a new centre, if the problems cannot be satisfactorily overcome.

Gentle slopes in appropriate places are acceptable for running up and down and for facilitating special play experiences. However some sloping situations can be both hazardous and a nuisance, particularly for under 2s and include:

- ◆ steeply sloping paths as access to the centre, or for bikes and wheeled toys, especially when they run towards verandah posts, walls, fences or gates;
- ◆ sloping paths near sand pits where sand makes a paved surface very slippery;
- ◆ play areas which slope toward the building, where pine bark and sand will gravitate indoors or be washed away;
- ◆ areas where the amount of flat space is insufficient for climbing equipment, block building or other ground-based activities;
- ◆ areas where babies and toddlers who are learning to walk cannot practise on a level surface; and
- ◆ grassed areas in excess of one in four gradient which are difficult to mow and slippery when wet.

Generally, some flat surfaces will be necessary to operate an outdoor play program. Flat areas may need to be created by terracing and the use of retaining walls in cut or fill situations. Keep in mind the following issues:

- ◆ children are often attracted to climbing up and down walls or edges, and falls are to be expected. Protective railings may need to be installed to prevent falls;
- ◆ low level changes (approximately 150 mm.) provide interest and challenge for toddlers, in relative safety;
- ◆ major flights of steps are inconvenient and possibly hazardous; and
- ◆ divisions - into terraces must create spaces large enough to be used for the intended purpose, especially for climbing activities and swings.

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