



# Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011



# Glossary of Terms

| Term                             | Definition for the purpose of this document   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Amenities</b>                 | Features that make a play space a more pleasant place to be such as seats, tables, shade, water, barbecues and toilets.   |
| <b>Children</b>                  | Children aged 0-11.   |
| <b>Playground</b>                | An area that contains play equipment for children e.g. swings and slides.   |
| <b>Play space</b>                | A space that includes a range of play features and opportunities for children e.g. run-about areas, natural play elements, play equipment.  |
| <b>Play equipment</b>            | Play structures such as swings, slides and climbing frames.   |
| <b>Structured play</b>           | Any spontaneous activity that is undertaken for fun but which has some conditions or rules e.g. tag chasey.   |
| <b>Unstructured play</b>         | Any spontaneous activity that is undertaken for fun and has no specific requirements e.g. climbing, jumping.  |
| <b>Universal design</b>          | Design that encourages use by people of all abilities and ages.   |
| <b>WCC</b>                       | Whitehorse City Council.  |
| <b>Regional play spaces</b>      | These play spaces attract visits from a wide region because of the extensive variety of amenities and play elements for younger and older children. They are generally within a 30-minute drive of most households. |
| <b>Municipal play spaces</b>     | These play spaces are generally within 2km travel. They offer a wide variety of play opportunities for both younger and older children.   |
| <b>Neighbourhood play spaces</b> | These play spaces are generally within a 10-minute walk. They will generally include play equipment and opportunities for younger and older children.   |
| <b>Local play spaces</b>         | These play spaces are generally within a 5-minute walk. They are small and focus on play opportunities for younger children.  |
| <b>Small local play spaces</b>   | These are very small play spaces that generally provide for play in the natural environment.  |

Note: provision is dependent on appropriate open space being available in the area

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## 'Through play children develop the qualities necessary in adulthood, such as:

- Problem solving
- Self awareness
- Resilience
- Flexibility and ability to deal with change.'
- Independence
- Creativity
- Spatial knowledge

Reference: '*The Good Play Space Guide: I Can Play Too*', Victorian Government in conjunction with Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria (now Play Australia).

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# Executive Summary

The purpose of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* is to provide Council with a framework for the sustainable provision of its network of play spaces, and to more fully quantify the cost of maintaining and improving the network into the future.

Play is vital for a child's social, emotional and physical development. The provision of public play spaces is a highly valued local government service. These spaces provide not only play opportunities for children but they are important social meeting places which contribute more broadly to community wellbeing.

Council currently provides 169 public playgrounds, mostly in parks. The *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* has underpinned the development of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*. The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* focus is primarily on play spaces for children aged 0-11. It does not include play areas such as skate/BMX and hard surfaces, which are considered in other service planning.

The objective of the strategy is to provide a framework and principles for the planning, design and management of Council's network of play spaces. It will also provide the service framework for the assessment of play space provision on a site-by-site or area basis and the development of an asset management plan for play spaces. The plan will inform Council's future capital works priorities and will assist in ensuring that the service can be sustained into the future.

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* is a strategic document that considers trends in the provision of play spaces, guidelines, current standards and changes in the City of Whitehorse. Of note has been the international trend away from a dependence on modular play equipment and towards spaces which incorporate play in a more natural environment, and use of the term 'play space' rather than 'playground'. This broader context is particularly relevant to Whitehorse where the community highly values its environment and where there are significant areas of bushland and linear parks that enhance play opportunities. Traditional equipment such as swings and slides are still important. Whitehorse has a high number of play spaces at the local level, with an

average of 2.6 play spaces per square kilometre. By comparison, neighbouring councils average from 1.2 – 2.0 per square kilometre.

Residents also have access to a number of play spaces at regional parks within a 15-30 minute drive. One of these, at Wattle Park (managed by Parks Victoria), is located in the City of Whitehorse. A number of these are 'destination' parks with unique features which attract people from across the eastern region and beyond for extended visits. Most have a high standard of facilities including 'regional' level play spaces and associated infrastructure, which are accessible for children and adults with a disability.

The development of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* has identified opportunities for Council to improve its play space network. These include:

- the quality of a number of play spaces reflect their age in terms of design and condition
- there are some areas of overlapping supply but not necessarily with a diversity or quality of supply
- there are some gaps in local supply, mainly where open space is not currently available
- there is a need for play spaces and associated facilities to be designed and maintained to encourage use by children of all abilities
- at some parks the junior and senior play spaces are some distance apart and co-location would facilitate improved supervision by one carer
- play spaces serving broader catchments ('municipal' level) can be improved and associated park infrastructure at these sites upgraded to be easily accessible and to support longer stays
- a feasibility study could be undertaken for a 'regional' level play space.



The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recommends the following service hierarchy based on the catchment served:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Small local</b>   | Generally very small, serving a small number of households.                                       |
| <b>Local</b>         | Generally cater for a local area's households located within a 5-minute safe walk.                |
| <b>Neighbourhood</b> | Generally cater for a number of local areas' households and located within a 10-minute safe walk. |
| <b>Municipal</b>     | Generally cater for households located within a 2km travel distance.                              |
| <b>Regional</b>      | Generally cater for households located within a 30-minute drive.                                  |

It is proposed that play spaces with the larger catchment and higher community value will be resourced at higher levels. The strategy recommends that, where appropriate parkland is available, Council will aim for most households to have access to a variety of play spaces across all classifications.

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recommends the following principles to guide the planning, design and management of play spaces:

1. Play spaces will be planned, designed, managed and developed in accordance with the service levels defined for the different classifications of play space.
2. Where appropriate open space is available, Council will aim to provide a play space within a safe walking distance of most households.
3. Universal design principles that optimise access to play spaces and associated park infrastructure for the whole community will underpin the planning and design of play spaces.
4. The design of play spaces will take into consideration:
  - play features that support the physical, social, emotional and language learning in children
  - opportunities for children to experience stimulating, fun and, where appropriate, risk-taking challenges

- opportunities to encourage interaction with the natural environment
- relevant research on play space environments that support the growth and development of children
- opportunities to improve access to and within play spaces
- play space innovations
- play space safety guidelines and standards
- relevant legislation, including accessibility.

5. A variety of options may be required to achieve the desired number, quality and variety of play spaces within neighbourhoods and districts.
6. Play spaces will be equipped with infrastructure consistent with the classification and design framework in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*.
7. Council's play space upgrade and installation program will be subject to Council budget considerations.
8. Short term actions will focus on providing play spaces in neighbourhoods where there are identified gaps in provision and on enhancing 'municipal' level play spaces.
9. A focus will be on integrating play spaces with the site on which they are located.
10. Risk will be monitored and managed at play spaces.
11. Local communities will be encouraged to be involved in the design of play spaces.

The possibility of Council providing a 'regional' level play space within Whitehorse was raised during community consultation. The costs of providing a regional play space and associated infrastructure would be substantial.

It is recommended that a feasibility study to fully assess community need, potential sites and capital and recurrent costs, be referred for consideration in Council's 2012/13 budget.

The strategy recommends that:

1. Play spaces be planned, designed, managed and developed in accordance with the service levels defined for the different classifications in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*.





2. Where appropriate open space is or becomes available to meet a gap in local level service provision, that a new play space at that site is given some priority in the play space capital works program.
3. Universal design principles are applied to all new and play space renewal projects and that this is done on a 'whole of park' planning basis.
4. Opportunities for increasing access at existing play spaces be identified and implemented, particularly at 'municipal' level play spaces, and that this is done on a 'whole of park' basis.
5. More detailed condition, usage and play value assessments of existing play spaces be undertaken and, using the service level classifications of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*, an Asset Management Plan be developed to better inform Council's longer term financial planning.
6. A feasibility study is undertaken to fully assess community need, potential sites and capital and recurrent costs for the establishment of a 'regional' level play space and associated infrastructure.
7. Council substantially increase its budget provisions for expenditure on renewal and improvement of the play space network.

Changes would occur over time, as existing equipment reaches the end of its useful life, or in areas of overlapping supply, resulting from nearby play space improvement works. Any changes would be based on specific community consultation. A full improvement and renewal program over 15 years is recommended, dependent on available funding.

At today's costs, the 'like for like' replacement of Council's existing play spaces is estimated to be \$11.715 million. This includes consultation, design, site preparation, removal of old equipment and project management costs for the play space network. It does not include costs for provision of associated park infrastructure.

The life of a play space varies considerably, depending on factors such as usage, materials used, environmental conditions, quality of construction and maintenance levels. Generally, an average life of 15 years is applied to play spaces. Higher usage regional and municipal level sites are depreciated over a maximum of 10 years.

Nearly 70 per cent of Council's existing play spaces were installed or renewed between 1996 and 2003. Council is therefore entering a period of significant renewal expenditure for this class of community assets. Council will need to substantially increase its existing budget provisions to meet these renewal costs.

The \$11.715 million replacement value of existing play spaces equates to an average of \$781,000 per annum over 15 years. The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recommends that in the future there is a higher level of investment in play spaces with a larger catchment, that is 'municipal' level play spaces, and that these are easily accessible.

It also recommends some changes to the levels of service at other play spaces to better reflect the catchments served.

The latter would be based on community consultation on a site-by-site or area basis. While it could include consolidation or decommissioning of some existing play equipment, it would also include some new sites and increased levels of service at others.

The resulting capital cost of the network is estimated to increase to \$12.19 million over 15 years or an average of approximately \$815,000 per annum. The costs of a 'regional' level play space and associated infrastructure would be additional to these figures.

The proposal to include natural environment play elements in play spaces is likely to result in some decreases in capital costs but these would be partly offset by increased maintenance costs. Provision would need to be made in recurrent budgets to meet this higher level of maintenance.

It is recommended that a play space asset management plan based on the classifications contained in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* be developed. It will be informed by more detailed assessment of the condition, usage and play quality of play spaces, as well as specific site or neighbourhood consultation.

The asset management plan will enable a comprehensive and more even renewal program to be established to more fully inform Council's capital works programs and priorities.

A substantial increase in existing budget provisions is necessary to maintain and improve the play space network into the future.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 What is Council's Vision for Play Spaces and How Will We Achieve it?

The *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* established a number of principles that guide the planning and development of open space. These principles have been used to guide outcomes for the planning and management of play spaces.

### Council's Vision for Play Spaces

- > Our play spaces will be places that inspire children to spontaneous action, challenge, imagination, creativity, fun, and laughter.
- > They will be places where children love to go, to be with others or just to 'be'.
- > They will be places of surprise and difference.
- > They will be places that families and friends want to share with children because they are safe and great places to visit.



Table 1. Open Space Planning Principles as They Relate to Play Spaces

### The principles that guide the planning of open space

### What does this mean for our play spaces?

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Accessible:</b> the open space network is accessible for people of different ages, abilities, gender and cultures.  | This means we aim to provide play spaces that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are easily accessible for all children and their families, friends or carers</li> <li>• offer different and unique play opportunities</li> <li>• are attractive to different age groups</li> <li>• are accessed easily and safely and in different ways.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Diverse:</b> a wide variety of reserve types, sizes and character make up the open space network providing the community with a diversity of spaces to visit. | This means we aim to provide play spaces that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bring together different play opportunities, either on site or within neighbourhoods</li> <li>• are different from each other so they offer unique experiences and encourage different types of play</li> <li>• incorporate the unique features of the site</li> <li>• are in different environments</li> <li>• complement and are well integrated with their park setting.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Equitable:</b> the community has safe and easy walking access to open space.  | This means we aim to provide play spaces that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are distributed as fairly and evenly as possible throughout the city</li> <li>• are within easy walking distance of most households.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Connected:</b> open space areas include habitat, landscape and spatial links on public and private land.  | This means we aim to provide play spaces that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are easily and safely accessible along footpaths and trails</li> <li>• can be reached via safe road and rail crossing points.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Adaptable:</b> open space and its facilities are flexible and can be adapted to meet changing community needs.  | This means we aim to provide play spaces that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• can be used in different ways by different age groups</li> <li>• can be adapted if local needs change</li> <li>• are designed to complement their location.</li> </ul>   |

**Sustainable:** open space is well managed and maintained in line with available funding to meet community expectations, enhance biodiversity, achieve an ecological balance.

This means we aim to provide play spaces that:

- are designed and maintained so they meet all relevant standards and guidelines
- are designed to minimise the impact on the environment
- are planned and developed in consideration of all costs including costs associated with the installation and maintenance of the play space and associated infrastructure.

**Social:** open space provides the community with a meeting place that is accessible and safe.

This means we aim to provide play spaces that:

- encourage interaction between children and interaction between children and their families, friends or carers
- are attractive and valued community meeting places
- encourage different age, cultural and ability groups to play together
- include amenities appropriate to the classification of the play space
- are safe and comfortable places to be.

**Recreational:** open space encourages the community to keep fit and improve their health and wellbeing.

This means we aim to provide play spaces that:

- stimulate activity, learning and fun
- provide age-related risk-taking opportunities for children
- support the development of different skills and abilities in children
- encourage structured and unstructured play
- complement other open space opportunities in the neighbourhood.

**Cultural:** open space design reflects and celebrates the contemporary and historical indigenous and non-indigenous cultural values.

This means, that where appropriate, we aim to provide play spaces that:

- incorporate the locality's built, social, and natural history and cultural.

Reference: Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007.





## 1.2 What is the Purpose of the Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011?

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* has been developed to assist Council achieve its long term vision for the city by ensuring the city's play spaces are attractive, inviting and fun places for the city's children and their families, friends or carers.

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* provides a framework for:

- creating a variety of attractive, fun, challenging and innovative play spaces for children
- providing facilities that address the needs of carers
- enhancing the capacity of play spaces to cater for children of different ages, abilities and interests
- planning play spaces so they are appropriately located and offer a variety of play experiences for local communities
- the design and management of play spaces.

'Our vision is that Whitehorse will continue to:

- > be a vibrant, active community
- > boast a regionally significant economy
- > be recognised as the most liveable part of Melbourne and
- > become a leader in sustainable practices.'

Reference: Whitehorse Council Plan 2010-2014.

## 1.3 What is a 'Play Space'?

A play space is anywhere play can take place. This can be in the home, in the garden, at the local school, at the beach or in the park down the road.

'There is an increasing realisation that play does not just take place in designated play spaces, but in the whole environment that a child occupies.'

Reference: Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment, UK, Public Space Lessons.

The UK-based Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE Space) emphasises the need to identify opportunities to enhance the 'playability' of all urban environments, including residential subdivisions, streets, community hubs, and retail precincts.

For the purpose of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*, a 'play space' is a play area that:

- is on public land that is owned or managed by Council, such as parks, reserves, or plazas
- can be used at any time
- provides for the play needs of 0-11 year olds
- may include a number of different play features such as play equipment, ball play areas and natural play elements.

**Table 2. Where Children Play**

|   | Age Group |     |        |           |          |        |
|---|-----------|-----|--------|-----------|----------|--------|
|   | 0-2       | 2-4 | 5-7    | 8-11      | 12-17    | 18-24  |
| Built play spaces with equipment                | •         | ••  | ••     | •••       | ••       | •      |
| Open grassed areas                              | •         | •   | •      | •••       | •••      | ••     |
| Natural places - creeks<br>- trees              |           | •   | •<br>• | ••<br>••• | ••<br>•• | •<br>• |
| Trails  | •         | •   | •      | ••        | •••      | •      |
| Skate/BMX parks                                 |           |     | •      | ••        | •••      | •••    |
| Bounce courts/half court areas                  |           | •   | •      | ••        | •••      | •      |
| Schools (out of school hours)                   |           | •   | •      | ••        | •••      | •      |
| Public swimming pools                           | •         | •   | •      | ••        | •••      | ••     |
| Beaches   | •         | •   | •      | ••        | •••      | •••    |
| Commercial play spaces e.g. indoor play grounds |           | •   | ••     | ••        | •        | •      |
| Urban spaces e.g. shopping centres              |           |     | •      | •         | ••       | •••    |
| Streets   |           |     | •      | •         | •••      | ••     |
| Backyards                                       | •••       | ••• | •••    | ••        | ••       | •      |

• = Less relevant to the age group      ••• = Most relevant to the age group

Other types of play areas such as skate parks, half court/bounce ball areas, outdoor gym equipment stations, fitness trails and play equipment in facilities such as child care centres are addressed in other Council planning documents.

The strategy recognises the importance of play spaces provided by other organisations such as Wattle Park play space, private enterprise (including indoor playgrounds and shopping centre play spaces), some schools, and adjoining and nearby municipalities.

These play spaces are important because they provide alternative play opportunities for residents and visitors, and add to the variety of play spaces in the region that are available to residents of Whitehorse.



#### 1.4 What is Play and Why is it Important?

‘Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons’.

Reference: Play England, Practice Briefing Paper 1.

**‘Play is a physical or mental leisure activity that is undertaken purely for enjoyment or amusement and has no other objective.’**

Reference: Play Therapy Australasia website.

According to the International Play Association, play:

- develops independence and self-esteem
- encourages social interaction and respect for others
- supports wellbeing and healthy growth and development
- increases knowledge and understanding, and
- promotes creativity and capacity to learn.

**Play is ‘one of the best means to ensure the maximum potential development of every individual and the communities in which they live.**

**Play stimulates creativity and is essential to the emotional, cognitive and physical development of the whole child, regardless of their level of ability.’**

Reference: International Play Association.

Because play imposes no pressure or expectations on those engaged in play, it provides a powerful learning environment. Varied and rich play environments help children develop a range of cognitive, physical, social and language skills.

**Table 3: A Summary of the Key Learnings That Play Helps Develop in Children**

| Type of skill                          | Explanation  |
|--|--|
| <b>Intellectual (cognitive) skills</b> | <p>These are learnings relating to comprehending information, organising ideas, analysing information, applying knowledge, problem solving, choosing between alternatives, and evaluating ideas or actions.</p> <p>The type of play activities that encourage intellectual learning in children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• loose objects for building</li> <li>• up, down, over, through</li> <li>• different environments to explore</li> <li>• puzzle features</li> <li>• task related activities</li> <li>• flora and fauna</li> </ul>                                   |
| <b>Social and emotional skills</b>     | <p>These are learnings important to getting on with others, assessing and taking risk, compromise, being aware of the feelings and needs of other people, communicating with others, helping others and self control.</p> <p>The type of play activities that encourage social learning in children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• activities that require 'taking turns', sharing, working together, helping each other and competing such as with hopscotch, swings, climbing, pretend picnics, flying fox, ball games, creative games, and making cubbies.</li> </ul>        |
| <b>Physical skills</b>                 | <p>These learnings relate to movement. In particular they are about the control of small muscle groups such as hands and fingers and the ability to manipulate things; the control of large muscle groups such as legs and torso; and the ability to relate to space.</p> <p>The type of play activities that encourage physical learning in children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• falling / tumbling</li> <li>• rolling</li> <li>• balancing</li> <li>• climbing</li> <li>• pulling / pushing</li> <li>• skipping</li> <li>• running</li> <li>• jumping (heights)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Speech and language skills</b>      | <p>This is the child's ability to both understand and use language in its correct form e.g. feet instead of 'foots' and give names to objects and give expression to thoughts, feelings, ideas, frustration.</p> <p>The type of play activities that encourage the learning of language in children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• any activities that require communication with others, the need to describe things to ask questions or to seek assistance.</li> </ul>  |

The importance of play, as an essential part of a child's life, is acknowledged in *Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 31 supports a child's right to rest and leisure, and to participate in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child.

## 1.5 Play and Nature

Many studies highlight the benefit of play that occurs in the natural environment and the value that children place on nature, both in times of joy as well as in times of stress. Louise Chawla has reviewed some of this research and summarises the following key findings:

- Children who are confident physical risk-takers in the outdoor environment are more likely to take risks during indoor activities.
- Children relocating from run down to better residential environments with natural views and yards, have improved levels of concentration than children relocating into environments that do not have these features.
- Many children will go to natural areas after upsetting events.
- Regardless of a child's family's socio-economic status a child will be more resilient the greener the home surroundings.
- Children in stressful life situations are likely to reflect the protective effect of nature.
- Outdoor investigations of nature (rather than indoor) are the most effective way to increase children's knowledge of biodiversity.
- Children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are likely to show a reduction in ADD symptoms after a walk through a park or outdoor play in green settings. The greener the surroundings the fewer the symptoms.
- Children are smarter, more cooperative, happier and healthier when they have frequent and varied opportunities for free and unstructured natural play outdoors.

These are particularly valuable observations for communities that are becoming more urbanised and losing their ability to incorporate green spaces in both private and public places.

References: Benefits of nature for children, Louise Chawla; Outdoor play: 'Does avoiding the risks reduce the benefits?', H.Little/S.Wyver; Play Naturally.

## 1.6 What Are Play Space Trends?

Play space design trends are subject to emerging research on child development, the influence of play equipment manufacturers, adult perceptions about what constitutes a good play space and the resources available to build and maintain the play space. As a result, play spaces continue to change over time.

Research identifies:

- There is a trend towards incorporating multiple and different play spaces such as garden rooms, active play areas and reflective play areas in the play environment, and embracing opportunities provided by the wider park itself
- Traditional play features such as swings and slides and 'whizzy / spinning' features are just as important as always, and there is a need to cater for all ages including older age groups that want challenge
- Good play space design considers universal access for children and carers of all ages and abilities from point of arrival and within the play space environment
- Increased play opportunities can be achieved in by offering different play experiences at each play space
- There is a back to nature trend to connect children with the natural environment. This is being done through thematic gardens that encourage insects and incorporate smell and textures, environmentally-inspired structures, and play equipment that is imbedded in the landscape
- Educational and creative elements that teach 'understandings' such as those relating to numbers and letters, noise and music making, friction, and sound transmission
- Pathways that link spaces and provide additional play and learning opportunities relating to exploration whether on foot, on the bike or in the wheelchair
- Local parks are likely to be more important and more frequently visited than larger regional or adventure parks.

A more detailed summary of play space trends is provided in Appendix 4.



## 2. Considerations in the Planning and Design of Play Spaces

Council is constantly reviewing research, information and community feedback to ensure the planning and design of play spaces responds to changing community needs, trends and aspirations. This section provides an overview of the considerations Council will take into account when planning and designing play spaces.

### 2.1 The Adult and Child Perspective

Play Australia (formerly Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria) warns against taking an adult only view of play and the planning of play spaces.

Play Australia states that children have very different values to adults when it comes to play and play environments. They are more likely to appreciate the detail and the more subtle qualities of their play environment than adults. The adult is more likely to be impressed with the neatness and attractiveness of the play environment, and the presence of imposing play equipment than will the child.

It is important to note this significant difference between the perceptions of children and adults when it comes to the planning play spaces.

Reference: Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (now Play Australia) Information Sheet, Play Area Development Policy for Local Government p10.

Play features children say are important to them:

- > trees and rocks, small 'secret' spaces enclosed by branches
- > creeks and watery environments with live creatures
- > seasonal features such as flowers and fallen leaves
- > movable objects which can be adapted for play
- > cubbies built by children themselves
- > found objects or 'treasures'
- > sand, soil, mulch, long grass, fallen branches for digging, creating fantasy environments, for constructing.

Reference: Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (now Play Australia).

### 2.2 Walkability

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* has been prepared in line with the *Whitehorse Planning Scheme* and other industry benchmarks that aim for safe and walkable communities.

The Whitehorse Planning Scheme lays the foundation for a more walkable Whitehorse. The planning scheme standards for open space require a network of open space that includes:

- parks that are a safe walking distance of households, and
- small local parks in higher density residential areas and public squares in activity centres.

Reference: Whitehorse Planning Scheme, section 56.05-2, standard C13.

This is in line with industry benchmarks established as a result of *Melbourne 2030* and the *Liveable Neighbourhood Code* (Western Australia).

'Melbourne 2030' recognises that neighbourhoods are more 'liveable' if features such as parks and public amenities are located within a walkable distance of 400-500 metres of households. This figure is based on a comfortable walking distance for the majority of the population.

Reference: Melbourne 2030, pgs 101-103.

The *Liveable Neighbourhood Code* established it would take a resident approximately five minutes to walk to a destination within 400 metres of their household. Whether a destination can be reached within a five-minute walk will be influenced by how well streets, trails and footpaths are connected, how direct the route is and whether there are any barriers such as major roads and railway lines.



### 2.3 Universal Design

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recommends the application of 'universal design' principles when planning new play spaces or upgrading existing ones. Applying universal design principles will optimise the use of the play spaces and surrounding amenities by all ages and abilities.

Optimising access for all ages and abilities will be a core part of the planning and design process. The type and level of access to 'small local', 'local', 'neighbourhood', and 'municipal' level play spaces will be in line with guidelines established in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*. This is consistent with the *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* planning framework for all open space, including sporting grounds, trails, and nature reserves.

The following are examples of universal design considerations the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* will address in the planning and design of play spaces:

1. The right of all people, regardless of age or ability, to access play spaces and associated amenities such as toilets, seats and tables, and pathways in line with the requirements of the federal *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*.
2. Transport – opportunities to provide play spaces in easy reach by different modes of transport
3. Families, friends or carers of children of different ages – consideration of the mix of play spaces and amenities for different age groups.
4. Car parking – size and layout that allows easy access to cars for parents and carers with children and prams, people with mobility aids, or people with picnic equipment.
5. Safe road crossings – consideration of the barriers that busy roads without safe crossing points may present.
6. Play equipment that optimises opportunities for children of different ages and abilities and carers to play together.
7. Pathways and trails – consideration of trail and pathway upgrades needed to provide safe and easy access for people with different abilities, or using different modes of transport.

8. Directional and distance signage – consideration of signage requirements that will provide confidence to children and carers accessing play spaces along trails.
9. Areas of economic hardship – consideration of additional opportunities that may be required in or closer to these areas.

### 2.4 Challenge and Risk Taking

**'While safety issues need to be addressed, avoiding all risk is not the solution, as doing so limits children's participation in worthwhile experiences that promote their optimal health and development.'**

**'On the contrary, failure to provide children with stimulating and challenging experiences through which they can engage in positive risk-taking exposes them to different risks that compromise their health and development.'**

Reference: Outdoor play: 'Does avoiding the risks reduce the benefits?', H.Little/S.Wyver.

Challenge and risk taking are an important part of children's play and their physical, intellectual, and emotional development.

There is growing concern among child education and growth and development specialists that adults are removing all opportunities for children to engage in challenging, adventurous and positive risk-taking play.

**'Risk-taking is an essential feature of play provision and of all environments in which children legitimately spend time playing.'**

Reference: European Standards for fixed play equipment, BS EN 1176-1 Playground equipment and surfacing, Part 1.

Effective play space planning should incorporate age appropriate opportunities for children to explore and master their abilities and extend their limits. This can be achieved in outdoor play environments where the risks of serious injury are minimised, but not to the point where creativity, challenge, and excitement are lost.

A number of factors have contributed to minimising risk-taking play opportunities in public environments. Key among these is the fear public authorities have of litigation and a lack of understanding by adults, including parents, of the importance of exposing children to risk-taking activities.



As a result, there are fewer opportunities for children to develop resilience that comes with physical and boisterous play; to make decisions about taking risk; and to experience the emotions that come with confronting challenge.

If too much challenge and adventure is removed from the public play space there will be a greater tendency for some children to seek adventure in potentially unsafe environments.

A lack of exposure to risk-taking environments has the potential to significantly impact on children's decision making later in life. For example, in terms of the ease with which they engage in different types of physical activity; their willingness to try different or challenging activities; and confidence in dealing with risk situations.

References: Outdoor play: 'Does avoiding the risks reduce the benefits?', H.Little/S.Wyver; Good play space design: I can play too, PRAV (now Play Australia) / DPCD.

Play England recommends play space providers apply (safety) standards within the context of their local play policy, and in consideration of the needs of local children. It discourages a total dependence on industry guidelines or standards when making decisions about inclusions and exclusions in adventure and challenging play spaces.

Play England recommends breaking down the task of managing risk into four steps – three of which are relevant to the management of public play spaces:

- Develop a **policy framework**. This will provide the context in which any risk evaluation is conducted. A play policy that supports risk-taking elements and outcomes in play spaces will result in different play environments to those that are underpinned by a more conservative approach to play space design.
- Undertake a **risk-benefit assessment**. This should bring together an analysis of both risks and benefits for a play space or feature, and should provide a reasonable and transparent means of describing decision-making and judgments. 'This process should not be about creating a risk-free society, but about ensuring that reasonable precautions are taken to avoid injury.'
- Perform **technical assessments**. This is the ongoing and routine monitoring of play spaces for soundness, wear and tear, maintenance

requirements, and cleanliness. Technical assessments should be informed by the play policy and the risk-benefit assessment.

Reference: Play England: Making space for play.

Whitehorse City Council undertakes three independent safety audits on play spaces each year in addition to regular maintenance inspections.

The UK-based organisation Children's Play Advisory Service (CPAS) suggests there is a fundamental misunderstanding of parents when they say they want 'a safe place' where their children can play. Detailed research undertaken by CPAS shows that most parents are referring to 'social safety' rather than 'physical safety' in relation to the playground. That is, they want playgrounds to be places where children can see and be seen. Their consultation revealed that it is likely to be less than five per cent of parents who see playgrounds as unsafe. In fact most parents, as with most children, reported playgrounds as being boring and not exciting or adventurous enough.

Reference: Children's Play Advisory Service (CPAS) consultation with LGAs in the UK, *Urban Myths About Children's Playgrounds*, Feb. 2011 Edition.

## 2.5 Planning for the Whole Park

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recognises the need to ensure the planning and design of play spaces takes into account surrounding parkland. This will ensure play spaces are more easily accessed; appropriately located in relation to other activities on the site; have easy access to ancillary facilities such as seating and at larger parks, toilets; and have the space around them to incorporate landscaping features and natural shade.

It will also ensure that play spaces are developed in consideration of local demographics, the demand for alternative uses for the parkland and the most appropriate type of play space for the reserve.

Whitehorse City Council has developed master plans to guide the development of some parks. Most of these include the provision of formal play spaces. If a master plan has not been developed then planning guidelines included in relevant planning documents, such as the *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007*, will guide the planning and development of the park or reserve.



## 2.6 Opportunities to Enhance Benefits for the Natural Environment

Council acknowledges the community's aspiration to continue to develop strategies that enhance the city's natural environment. This is recognised in a number of Council's planning documents including the *Council Plan*, the *Municipal Strategic Statement*, the *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007*, the *Community Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013*, and the *Sustainability Strategy 2008-2013*.

These documents include a range of objectives relating to the natural environment and strategies to achieve these objectives. Most relevant to the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* are objectives relating to:

- protecting and enhancing the natural environment
- reducing negative impacts on the environment
- implementing more environmentally sustainable practices
- increasing community awareness of environmental issues and opportunities to address these
- protecting significant trees and enhancing the city's tree canopy.

As part of the implementation of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*, Council will identify opportunities to support wider Council objectives relating to enhancing natural environments.

## 2.7 Varied Play Opportunities

Not all play spaces will be the same, even if they have the same classification as other play spaces. The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* aims to provide a variety of play opportunities within local neighborhoods.

To achieve this Council will work with local communities, using the play space design framework, to design play spaces that offer a variety of built and natural play spaces for local children.

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recognises the important health and wellbeing outcomes that are achieved through play, and that children will be encouraged to play if they have easy access to a range of play opportunities.

## 2.8 Amenities

It is important to consider the appeal of the play space and its environs to carers as well as children. Parents and other carers are more likely to take children to play spaces if they too can have a pleasant time while there.

Council research for the *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007*, as well as site visits conducted as part of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*, highlighted the need to enhance the provision of:

### Seating

Future provision of seating should give consideration to the location (e.g. shade, sun), configuration (e.g. with a view to the play space, in L-shape conversation configuration), and style of seating (e.g. back rest, hand holds), and to ensuring seat installations cater for the needs of children and adults.

### Shade

The *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* specifically recommends an increase in shade tree plantings for protection from the sun where it is demonstrated this can complement existing and planned future use. The strategy also recommends locating playgrounds near existing shade trees, the planting of new trees, and the installation of shade structures where appropriate.

Reference: *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007*.

### Toilets

The *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* and site observations undertaken as part of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* identify the need to review the criteria that determines how and where public toilets are provided. This will ensure toilets are provided at relevant sites, are appropriate to the use of the site, and are designed in line with current legislation and guidelines.

The *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* recommends toilets be provided in reserves that attract people for longer stays, such as at municipal and regional level reserves. Reserves that include toilets will generally have a greater range of play opportunities, facilities such as walking trails, barbecue facilities, open play areas, undercover picnic areas, and car parking.

Reference: *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007*.



## Paths

*The Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* provides guidelines for the provision of access paths and trails. The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recommends that consideration be given to enhancing access particularly at longer stay parks.

The second recommendation relates to footpath and trail networks that connect local communities to parks. Local footpaths and trails should provide safe and easy access to parks and play spaces. In addition, they should be well sign posted in a manner that is clear to children.

Reference: Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007.

## Play Space Under-Surfacing

A variety of play space under-surfacing will be considered to provide for a range of age groups, play and access requirements.

## Other Infrastructure

Other infrastructure such as picnic and barbeque facilities and drinking fountains will generally only be provided at municipal and regional level reserves because they attract people for longer stays.

Reference: Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007.

## 2.9 Trails and Pathways in Play Spaces

The incorporation of trails and pathways with robust surfaces into play spaces adds another play and learning feature. They provide opportunities for young children who are learning to propel toys by pushing and pulling or peddling.

Older children have the opportunity to learn new bike riding skills within the confines of the play space while still under carer supervision. Trails also provide opportunities for both children and carers with special mobility needs. Trails with different surfaces provide the opportunity for children to learn about different surfaces, how they feel, how they sound, and how they perform.

Play Australia (formerly Playgrounds and Recreation Association Victoria) makes the following recommendations about trails in play spaces, particularly where bikes are likely to be used:

- Place trails away from other play spaces. This will minimise conflict between different activities and will retain the integrity of play spaces. For example, it would not be appropriate to site a trail through a space where children sit quietly.

- Create trails that traverse through points of interest to make the trail interesting and to provide 'destinations' for the child to achieve.
- Consider making the trail one-way to minimise potential for collision.
- Consider incorporating line markings, crossing points, speed humps to introduce educational elements.
- Select surfaces that reduce heat radiation and provide different surface experiences e.g. rumble slats.

Reference: Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (now Play Australia) Information Sheet – Bike Tracks.

## 2.10 Fences

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recommends fencing of play spaces be minimised. There will be occasions where fencing is required for safety but this will generally only be if:

- the play space has to be located close to a road because there is no other option on the site
- there is a need to separate the play space from other activities or facilities on the same site e.g. bicycle riding/trails, dog activities
- if the play space is specifically designed to cater for children with additional needs.

**> The safety of the child is the responsibility of the parent or carer and councils should remind the community of this responsibility regularly.**

Reference: Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (now Play Australia).

Play spaces will be designed and sited to minimise the need for fencing. Full fencing of playgrounds will generally not occur. Instead preference will be given to using landscaping and vegetation plantings to designate playground environments.

Play Australia (formerly Playgrounds and Recreation Association Victoria) does not encourage the erection of gates and fences if they are for the purpose of confining children to a play space. Rather, Play Australia reinforces the need for carer supervision of children in play spaces and the provision of amenities that encourage carers to do this e.g. comfortable seating, shaded areas.

Reference: Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (now Play Australia) Information Sheet – Fencing and Lockable Gates.

## 2.11 Dogs

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recognises the importance of the pet dog in the lives of many Whitehorse families. For these individuals and families there is often the desire to share the family outing to the park with the family pet. The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* also recognises there are individuals and families that do not want to interact with dogs as part of their visit to the park.

Council has an order (Order No.6, under the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*) in place that requires dogs to be on a lead at all times in public places unless in a designated off-lead park.

The order also requires that dogs remain under the effective control of their owners. When in designated off-lead areas, dogs must be within 25 metres of their owners and no closer than 2.5 metres of a playground. Council has a number of play spaces that are located in environmentally sensitive areas. Dogs are not permitted in these areas at any time.

The order acknowledges the nature of dogs and children, particularly when in a public place that might be unfamiliar to the dog and the child, and where there are unfamiliar people and animals. Dogs can intimidate children particularly those not familiar with dogs and conversely, the excited nature of children's play can be intimidating to dogs and may lead to defensive behaviours such as jumping or barking.



Play Australia's (formerly Playgrounds and Recreation Association Victoria) position on dogs near play spaces is that dogs must be on a lead, and under the supervision of the dog owner in public play spaces and/or within 50 metres of a public play space. Play Australia says this 'recognises that dogs play an important role in the social and community infrastructure, particularly at a local level.'

Reference: Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (now Play Australia) Information Sheet – Dogs and play spaces.

## 2.12 Other Open Space Design Considerations

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recognises the need to apply open space planning and design principles that optimise the safety of anyone using public places, including play spaces. 'Healthy by Design: A Planners Guide To Environments For Active Living' includes a comprehensive discussion of design considerations that assist to enhance the amenity of public spaces and to create safe environments.

Of particular relevance to the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* are recommendations relating to enhancing opportunities for:

- passive surveillance by residents and people travelling past the park
- people using the park are able to observe activities and people in the wider park
- reduction of visual barriers such as solid fences and shrubs that can provide a visual barrier, planting more canopied trees instead
- multiple entry and exist points
- encouraging people to gather together by clustering amenities and activity spaces.

## 3. The State of Play for Whitehorse

In Whitehorse, there are 169 Council-owned public play spaces that include playground equipment. There are an additional 166 parks and reserves that offer opportunities for play but which do not have play equipment.

### 3.1 The Current Situation

#### 3.1.1 Provision Overview

Reports and visual observation of play spaces in Whitehorse reveal that the primary feature of play spaces is off-the-shelf modular play equipment designed for 3-8 year olds. The standard of play spaces varies greatly in terms of the age of equipment, the value of the play experience, the use of the wider site to enhance play opportunities, and the amenity of the site. Some reserves have play spaces larger than the function of the reserve.

Some of the older sites also include small standalone features such as rockers and modular cars with components added over time to expand play opportunities. Some play spaces include older style timber structures. At some parks the junior and senior play spaces are some distance apart and co-location would facilitate improved supervision by one carer.

More recent installations generally include a combination unit with climbers, slides and a bridge structure and are generally accompanied by a swing set. Some parks include swings suitable for children with restricted mobility.

Basic amenities such as seating for adults are provided at most play spaces. Other play spaces have additional facilities that are consistent with the type and level of use of the wider park.

Some suburbs have a far greater supply of play spaces than other areas. Most of these play spaces are in suburbs located in the south-east corner of the municipality where the provision of play spaces was driven by 1980s development.

In other areas of the municipality, such as the south-west sector, there is an under supply of parks and associated play spaces. In the 1950s when this area was undergoing rapid development, there was not the same understanding of the need for public open space possibly influenced by the large residential blocks being established at the time.

The city has a number of significant physical barriers that impact on the ease with which people can access play spaces. A number of arterial and secondary roads intersect and abut the city, which together with the rail line can make it difficult for residents to access some play spaces.

On the other hand there are a number of linear parks that provide safe off-road access between play spaces in some areas. Council has an increasing number of demands being made for use of the city's open space areas. These demands need to be managed to minimise impacts on play space environments.

As well as Wattle Park in Burwood, Whitehorse residents have access to a number of large regional parks within a 15-30 minute drive of the municipality. A number of these are 'destination' parks with unique features which attract people from across the eastern region and beyond for extended visits. Most have a high standard of facilities including 'regional' level play spaces and associated infrastructure, which are accessible for children and adults with a disability.

Further information on these play spaces is provided in Appendix 5.

Within Whitehorse, Halliday Park's play space in Mitcham and Parks Victoria's Wattle Park in Burwood attract visitors from across the region. Blackburn Lake Sanctuary also attracts visitors from across the region but primarily because of its unique character rather than for its play space.

#### 3.1.2 Financial Overview

At today's costs, the 'like for like' replacement of Council's existing play spaces is estimated to be \$11.715 million. This includes consultation, design, site preparation, removal of old equipment and project management costs for the play space network. It does not include costs for provision of associated park infrastructure.

The life of a play space varies considerably, depending on factors such as usage, materials used, environmental conditions, construction quality and maintenance levels. Generally, an average life of 15 years is applied to play spaces. Higher usage regional and municipal level sites are depreciated over a maximum of 10 years.

Nearly 70 per cent of Council's existing play spaces were installed or renewed between 1996 and 2003. Council is therefore entering a period of significant renewal expenditure for this class of community

assets. Council will need to substantially increase its existing budget provisions to meet these renewal costs.

The \$11.715 million replacement value of existing play spaces equates to an average of \$781,000 per annum over 15 years. The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recommends that in the future there is a higher level of investment in play spaces with a larger catchment, that is 'municipal' level play spaces, and that these are easily accessible.

It also recommends some changes to the levels of service at other play spaces to better reflect the catchments served. The latter would be based on community consultation on a site-by-site or area basis. While it could include consolidation or decommissioning of some existing play equipment, it would also include some new sites and increased levels of service at others.

The resulting capital cost of the network is estimated to increase to \$12.19 million over 15 years or an average of approximately \$815,000 per annum. The costs of a 'regional' level play space and associated infrastructure would be additional to these figures.

The proposal to include natural environment play elements in play spaces is likely to result in some decreases in capital costs but these would be partly offset by increased maintenance costs. Provision would need to be made in recurrent budgets to meet this higher level of maintenance.

It is recommended that a play space asset management plan based on the classifications contained in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* be developed. It will be informed by more detailed assessment of the condition, usage and play quality of play spaces, as well as specific site or neighbourhood consultation.

The asset management plan will enable a comprehensive and more even renewal program to be established to more fully inform Council's capital works programs and priorities.

### 3.2 How We Compare

In comparison to adjoining municipalities, the City of Whitehorse, with 169, has the second highest number of playgrounds overall and the highest number of playgrounds per square kilometre. The municipality with the largest number of playgrounds

– the City of Knox with 198 – covers an area nearly twice the size of the City of Whitehorse.

Whitehorse has the highest number of play spaces per square kilometre and the second highest number of playgrounds per head of 0 to 14 year olds. Whitehorse also has the highest number of play spaces for each square kilometre of public open space, at 25 compared to the next highest, Maroondah and Boroondara with 18 play spaces per square kilometre of public open space.

In addition, Council aims to provide Whitehorse residents with greater access to play spaces than most adjoining municipalities. The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* is based on providing most households with access to a play space within a five-minute easy walk. Four adjoining municipalities aim for households to have access to a play space within a 500 metre radius and the fifth municipality aims for access within a 400 metre radius. This data examines statistical information only, that is, numbers of play spaces and numbers of people. It does not provide any evaluation of the quality of the play spaces, the range of ages and abilities the play space caters for, the ease with which people can access play spaces within a designated catchment, and amenities at the play space. Nor does it consider gaps or overlaps in provision.

Other councils in the region have developed strategies to improve the quality of play opportunities in their municipality. These strategies include upgrading play equipment, upgrading surrounding parkland to incorporate additional play opportunities including nature-based play, removing play equipment from small parks, and amalgamating play spaces where there is an oversupply.

References: various documents such as open space and play strategies and information from neighbouring council staff.

### 3.3 The Challenges

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* has identified a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve Council's and the community's objectives for play spaces over the next 15 years. These challenges relate to:

- ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of play spaces across the city and addressing issues of over-supply in some areas and undersupply in others



- improving the quality of play experiences through design of creative play equipment and play environments and applying universal design principles to design
- replacement of outdated play equipment
- establishing a hierarchy of play spaces that provide a variety of destinations for short and extended visits
- changing community expectations about what play spaces should include and who they should provide for
- the impact of the changing population structure and new housing environments such as higher density residential areas
- addressing areas of under supply of public open space and associated play spaces
- the need to address sustainability considerations as they relate to play spaces. This might mean a priority to use sustainable materials in the construction of play spaces, encouraging 'active transport' such as walking and bike riding rather than a reliance on motorised transport to access play spaces, and minimising the economic costs associated with the maintenance of play spaces where possible
- balancing the need for expanded play spaces with the needs of other parkland users.

### 3.4 The Future

#### 3.4.1 Focus

Findings from research conducted as part of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*, the *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* and other relevant documents indicate the following priorities for play space planning and development:

- develop play spaces in line with an agreed planning framework that is applied consistently
- use the features of each site to the best advantage in the design of play spaces so they are as unique as possible
- make better use of the natural environment, landscaping and natural features to enhance play opportunities
- decrease the dependence on off the shelf modular equipment
- increase the variety of play equipment across similar types of play spaces
- incorporate play spaces that stimulate exploration, imagination and creative play and are accessible and inclusive
- play spaces for 0-11 year olds
- add or upgrade accompanying amenities such as shade, seating, paths and toilets in line with the classification and design framework in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*
- identify existing play space sites that should be reviewed in consideration of their proximity to other play spaces, opportunities to provide a greater diversity of play spaces within neighbourhoods, and their appropriateness as a play space site
- the need to fill gaps in existing service provision
- the need to upgrade some municipal level play spaces in particular and for them to be accessible.

The possibility of Council providing a 'regional' level play space within Whitehorse was raised during community consultation.

As well as Parks Victoria's Wattle Park in Burwood, Whitehorse residents have access to a large number of regional parks within a 15-30 minute drive of the municipality. Most have a high standard of facilities including 'regional' level play spaces. The costs of providing a regional level play space and associated infrastructure is substantial. It is therefore recommended that a feasibility study to fully assess community need, potential sites and capital and recurrent costs, be referred for consideration in Council's 2012/13 budget.

#### 3.4.2 Population Overview

Whitehorse is a relatively affluent community as indicated by comparatively high levels of education, income and car ownership. There are however small pockets of disadvantage.

A 5-6 per cent population growth is expected for the period 2006 to 2021 followed by smaller increase to 2031, taking the population to 162,170. This will result in an overall population increase of 7.7 per cent or 11,636 people on the 2006 population figures.

The number of children aged 0-11 in 2031, however, is forecast to remain very similar to 2006 figures.

Most of the population growth will occur in the suburbs of Box Hill, Burwood East, Mitcham and Burwood. The number of children 0-11 in these suburbs is forecast to increase by 395, 237, 163 and 82 respectively over the 25-year period from 2006 to 2031.

Most other suburbs will experience a modest increase in population with the exception of Blackburn South, Blackburn North and Vermont South. These suburbs are expected to have a decline in the total population as well as a decline in the population of children 0-11.

Except for Box Hill, changes in the total population and in the number of children 0-11 to 2031 are not sufficient to warrant changes in play space provision. Demographics and trends may however influence play space priorities across the city.

### 3.4.3 Key Direction Statements

The following outlines the principles that will guide the planning, design, and management of play spaces.

**1. Play spaces will be planned, designed, managed and developed in accordance with the service levels defined for the different classifications of play space.**

All play spaces will be classified either 'small local', 'local', 'neighbourhood', 'municipal' or 'regional' according to criteria provided in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*. Requests for new or upgraded play spaces will be considered within the planning and design frameworks in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*.

**2. Where appropriate open space is available, Council will aim to provide a play space within a safe walking distance of most households.**



3. Universal design principles that optimise access to play spaces and associated park infrastructure for the whole community will underpin the planning and design of play spaces.

4. The design of play spaces will take in to consideration:

- play features that support the physical, social, emotional and language learnings in children
- opportunities for children to experience stimulating, fun and where appropriate risk taking challenges
- opportunities to encourage interaction with the natural environment
- relevant research on play space environments that support the growth and development of children
- opportunities to improve access to and within play spaces
- play space innovations
- play space safety guidelines and standards
- relevant legislation, including accessibility.

This recognises the need to balance a number of benefits and risk management considerations in order to optimise enjoyment and learning outcomes for children.

5. A variety of options may be required to achieve the desired number, quality, and variety of play spaces within neighbourhoods and districts.

Options may include the addition of play equipment, the enhancement of natural play features, relocation of play features, or a change in the type of play environment provided.

6. Play spaces will be equipped with infrastructure consistent with the classification and design framework in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*.

Each play space will be classified.

Some play spaces will have additional amenities such as drinking fountains, picnic facilities and toilets. The type and level of amenities will be determined in accordance with the distribution

and design framework established in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* and guidelines contained in the *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007*.

7. Council's play space upgrade and installation program will be subject to Council budget considerations.

8. Short term actions will focus on providing play spaces in neighbourhoods where there are identified gaps in provision and on enhancing 'municipal' level play spaces.

9. A focus will be on integrating play spaces with the site on which they are located.

This means consideration will be given to incorporating existing landscape features, linking play spaces to other play spaces and reflecting local history or culture.

10. Risk will be managed and monitored at play spaces.

This recognises that play spaces, as with other places children play will not be risk-free environments, particularly if they are designed to expose children to age appropriate learning environments.

11. Local communities will be encouraged to be involved in the design of play spaces.

This will be in accordance with the planning and design guidelines established as part of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*.

#### 3.4.4 Classification of Play Spaces

Play spaces will be classified according to the role of the play space in the overall play space network. The classification framework builds on the hierarchy of open space developed in the *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* by defining service levels specific to play spaces.

Where there is appropriate parkland available Council will aim to provide most households with a variety of play spaces across all classifications. Where this cannot be achieved because of a lack of parkland, Council may consider increasing the quality of provision at nearby sites.

**Table 4 – Classification of Play Spaces**

**Play space classification**    **An overview of the play space features that will be considered**

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>Small local</b>   | Generally these play spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are very small and serve a very small area</li><li>• will have seating, natural shade and natural landscape features</li><li>• will have natural play elements rather than play equipment.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Local</b>         | Generally these play spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are small and focus on play opportunities for younger children</li><li>• cater for a local area's households and are located within a 5-minute safe walk</li><li>• are on a site that is between 0.25 and 1 hectare in size</li><li>• will have play equipment</li><li>• will have seating, natural shade and natural landscape features</li><li>• are used intensively by small numbers.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Neighbourhood</b> | Generally these play spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• offer a variety of play opportunities that focus on younger children but provide opportunities for older children</li><li>• cater for a number of local areas' households and are located within a 10-minute safe walk</li><li>• are on a site that is between 1 and 3 hectares in size</li><li>• will have play equipment, open run about areas, and bounce-ball areas</li><li>• will have seating, natural shade and natural landscape features</li><li>• will have on-street and may have off-street car parking.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Municipal</b>     | Generally these play spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• offer a wide variety of play opportunities for both younger and older children</li><li>• cater for households located within 2 kilometres travel</li><li>• are in a park that includes a significant number of parkland features</li><li>• will have play equipment, open run about areas, and bounce-ball areas</li><li>• will have seating, natural shade and natural landscape features</li><li>• have access to picnic and barbeque facilities, toilets, drinking fountains, and off-street car parking.</li></ul> <p>Visits to these play spaces are generally planned.</p> |



|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Regional</b>          | <p>Generally these play spaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• offer a diverse and well integrated range of play opportunities for both younger and older children incorporating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• play equipment that encourages exploration and challenging of physical, sensory and emotional abilities using play equipment and the natural landscape</li> <li>• creative / imaginative garden 'rooms'</li> <li>• a range of opportunities for children and carers with disabilities</li> <li>• interactive artistic features</li> <li>• educational activities and story telling via signage and displays.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• will have fully accessible under surfacing and pathways linking play space features and amenities</li> <li>• will incorporate picnic and barbeque facilities, toilets, drinking fountains within the play space</li> <li>• will have a 'theme' and feature/s that make it very unique and different to other regional play spaces</li> <li>• will have seating, natural shade and natural landscape elements as a key feature of the play space</li> <li>• will have good provision for off-street car parking provision (number, size) and buses</li> <li>• will be of a standard that will attract visitations from across the region and beyond.</li> </ul> <p>Visits to these play spaces are generally planned.</p> |
| <b>Other play spaces</b> | <p>There are 23 public primary-school play spaces in Whitehorse, many of which allow community use outside of school hours.</p> <p>Wattle Park – owned and managed by Parks Victoria.</p>   |



### 3.4.5 Our Play Space Design Framework

Council has prepared a play space planning and design framework that will guide the planning of new play spaces and the upgrading of existing ones. The following table provides an overview of the type of play features and amenities that will be considered for each classification of play space.

**Table 5: Play Space Features**

| Type of features   | Classification of Play Space |       |        |           |          |
|--|------------------------------|-------|--------|-----------|----------|
|  | Sml Local                    | Local | N'hood | Municipal | Regional |
| <b>Play space focus</b>  |                              |       |        |           |          |
| Features for younger children                                    | •••                          | •••   | •••    | •••       | •••      |
| Features for older children                                      |                              | •     | ••     | •••       | •••      |
| <b>Site location considerations</b>                              |                              |       |        |           |          |
| Good passive surveillance of the site possible                   | •                            | •     | •      | •         | •        |
| Site has good street frontage                                    | •                            | •     | •      | ••        | •        |
| Main road access   |                              |       |        | ••        | •••      |
| <b>Site amenities and features</b>                               |                              |       |        |           |          |
| Shade trees  | •                            | •     | ••     | •••       | •••      |
| Shade structures   |                              |       | •      | ••        | •••      |
| Seating  | •                            | •     | ••     | •••       | •••      |
| Picnic tables and seating  |                              | •     | ••     | •••       | •••      |
| Drinking fountains   |                              |       |        | •         | ••       |
| Barbecues  |                              |       |        | ••        | •••      |
| Rubbish bins   |                              |       |        | ••        | •••      |
| Directional signage  |                              |       | •      | •         | •••      |
| Toilets  |                              |       |        | ••        | •••      |
| On site car parking  |                              |       |        | •         | ••       |
| Interpretative features  |                              |       | •      | ••        | •••      |
| Designated (disability) car parking and accessible pathway       |                              |       |        | ••        | •••      |
| Bicycle racks  |                              |       |        | •         | ••       |
| <b>Play features</b>   |                              |       |        |           |          |
| Natural play elements  | •                            | •     | ••     | •••       | •••      |
| Playground elements  |                              | •     | ••     | •••       | •••      |
| <b>Other play elements</b>                                       |                              |       |        |           |          |
| Open run-about areas   |                              |       | •      | ••        | ••       |
| Hard surfaces for activities such as scooters, bikes, basketball |                              |       | •      | ••        | ••       |
| Bushland features  | •                            | •     | ••     | •••       | •••      |
| Trails e.g. for bikes and scooters / between play spaces         |                              |       | •      | ••        | ••       |

• = Less relevant to the classification of play space ••• = More relevant to the classification of play space

Council aims to provide a diversity of playground equipment across the city's play spaces to provide different play experiences such as those associated with swinging, climbing, spinning, sliding, balancing, puzzle solving and pretend play.

Council also aims to provide innovative and creative natural play environments such as:

- discovery features such as dry river beds that include stepping stones, sand and pebbles
- balance elements such as natural or simulated logs and tree trunks
- scramble / climbing features such as rock scrambles and climbing boulders
- digging features such as sand, gravel or mud pits
- children's garden features such as planter stands and interactive garden beds
- hide-and-seek features such as grass lands and 'bush tunnels'.

Not all types of play elements will be included in any one play space or all play outcomes achieved for all ages or abilities at the one site. They may however be achieved across a number of play spaces within a district.

### 3.4.6 What Will Influence Development Priorities

The following criteria will help determine\* play space enhancement and development priorities:

- respond to population changes that may impact on the level or type of use of play spaces needed in a neighbourhood e.g. an increase in housing density
- provide play spaces in areas where there are gaps in supply
- enhance the quality and variety of play spaces in line with the play space design framework
- result in a higher level of use
- achieve the greatest benefit for the cost
- address risk management and risk mitigation issues
- are at demonstrated higher use sites
- improve the attractiveness of play spaces.

\*This will be determined in accordance with the planning framework in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*.



## 4. Consultation

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* has been informed by community consultation. It sets the planning and design framework for play spaces in the future.

Council will seek community involvement in the development of play spaces within this framework, particularly in relation to:

- selection of play equipment and integration with the park landscape
- design of landscapes and the integration of natural play features
- replacement of play equipment or natural play elements
- consolidation of play spaces where there is an overlap in supply and in order to provide higher quality spaces and play experiences
- selection and siting of amenities such as seats and tables, and
- access considerations.

## 5. Information

The *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007* and Play Australia (formerly Playgrounds and Recreation Association Victoria) identify the need to provide information that enhances the community's awareness of play opportunities, encourages children and families to use play spaces, and provides information about the safe use of play spaces.

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* recommends information about play spaces and their use be updated to include:

- the location of play spaces in Whitehorse
- the location of play spaces in nearby municipalities that might be relevant to Whitehorse residents
- the type of play features available at play spaces
- other facilities available at the site
- the ages provided for at play spaces
- accessibility considerations
- carer responsibilities including supervision of children and 'sun safe' practices.





## 6. How We Prepared the Play Space Strategy

### 6.1 Consultation

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* was prepared following extensive consultation with children, families, carers and organisations including schools, support agencies and government. Consultation included:

- play workshops with children from five kindergartens
- discussions and workshops with children from 10 primary schools
- surveys conducted with 159 children of various ages
- survey of representatives from a number of Council network and advisory groups including the Parents Advisory Committee, the Sports and Recreation Network, and the Disability Advisory Committee
- interviews with representatives from government departments and peak associations including the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- interviews and surveys of parents and carers.

In addition, the strategy considered relevant findings from research undertaken for *Early Years Plan (Childhood Matters) 2009-2013*.

### 6.2 Council Documents

Council has prepared a number of service planning documents and policies that are relevant to the planning of play spaces. The following diagram provides an overview of the different levels of planning Council goes through to ensure it delivers services and programs that are consistent with its vision and values.

The *Council Plan 2011*, the *Municipal Strategic Statement* and the *Community Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013* articulate the city's vision and the framework used to guide decision-making to ensure the vision is achieved, in this case in relation to play spaces.

Documents such as the *Early Years Plan (Childhood Matters) 2009-2013*, the *Whitehorse Open Space Strategy 2007*, the *Disability Policy and Action Plan 2008-2011*, the *Sustainability Strategy 2008-2013* and the *Recreation Strategy Plan 2004-2009* are examples of documents also important to the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*. They identify actions that relate to children's health and wellbeing, encouraging children and their families to be active, and to creating parks and play spaces that help achieve some of these outcomes.

Council consults with the community through its planning processes to ensure changing community needs are addressed. The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* has involved community forums, workshops with children and carers of children, and extensive research of children's developmental requirements and innovations in play space design.



The following table provides an overview of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* relationship with other key Council planning documents and processes.





### 6.3 Other Key References

There are a number of state, national and international documents and policies that have influenced the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*. These include:

- **The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative** that emanated from the Convention of the Rights of the Child which came into force in 1990.

A child-friendly city is a city committed to fulfilling children's rights, including their right to protection, to influence decision-making, to self-expression, to services and amenities, to family and community, to safe and clean environments and their right to be an 'equal citizen'.

Of particular relevance to the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* are the expressed rights of a child to be able to influence the environment in which they live, to walk safely in streets on their own, to meet friends and play, to have green spaces for plants and animals.

Reference: Child Friendly Cities, UNICEF National Committees and Country Offices Fact sheet, September 2009; [www.childfriendlycities.org](http://www.childfriendlycities.org)

- **The federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*** which serves to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of disability. Of particular relevance to the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* is the Act's determination to ensure, as far as practicable, that a person with disabilities has the same access to facilities, programs and environments as the rest of the community.

Reference: federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992; [www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/dda1992264/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/dda1992264/)

- **The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006.**

## 7. Monitoring and Reviewing the Play Space Strategy

The *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* will be monitored annually and reviewed every five years to ensure key directions are consistent with community needs and aspirations.

- > The 2009 report showed that 88.7 per cent of Victorian parents reported they lived in neighbourhoods with good parks and play spaces for children.
- > The 2006 report showed that 75 per cent of parents with a child on a health care card said there were good parks and play spaces in their neighbourhood. This compared to 86.2 per cent of other parents.

Reference: The state of Victoria's children report 2006/2009.

## 8. Implementation of the Play Space Strategy

The lead department for all actions will be Council's Engineering and Environmental Services Department.

Recommended actions are:

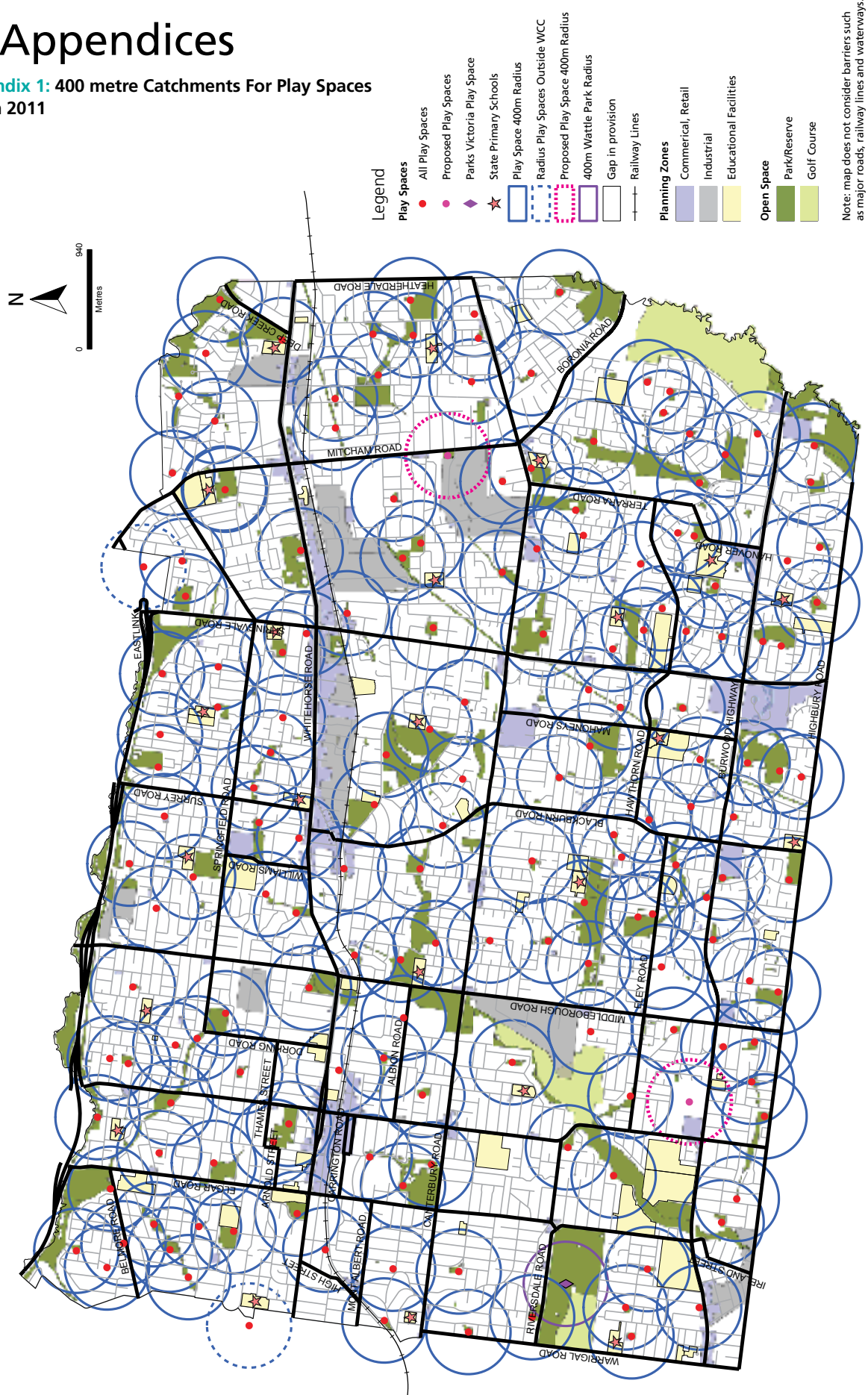
1. Play spaces be planned, designed, managed and developed in accordance with the service levels defined for the different classifications in the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*.
2. Where appropriate open space is or becomes available to meet a gap in local level service provision, that a new play space at that site is given some priority in the play space capital works program.
3. Universal design principles are applied to all new and play space renewal projects and that this is done on a 'whole of park' planning basis.
4. Opportunities for increasing access at existing play spaces be identified and implemented, particularly at 'municipal' level play spaces, and that this is done on a 'whole of park' basis.
5. More detailed condition, usage and play value assessments of existing play spaces be undertaken and, using the service level classifications of the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011*, an Asset Management Plan be developed to better inform Council's longer-term financial planning.
6. A feasibility study is undertaken to fully assess community need, potential sites and capital and recurrent costs for the establishment of a 'regional' level play space and associated infrastructure.
7. Council substantially increase its budget provisions for expenditure on renewal and improvement of the play space network.





# 9. Appendices

## Appendix 1: 400 metre Catchments For Play Spaces March 2011



## Appendix 2: Comparison of Play Space Provision with Adjoining Municipalities

Playground comparison with adjoining municipalities based on the 2006 census information.

| Measure   | Municipality |           |         |         |            |            |
|---|--------------|-----------|---------|---------|------------|------------|
|   | Whitehorse   | Maroondah | Knox    | Monash  | Boroondara | Manningham |
| <b>Population</b>                                 | 144,768      | 99,200    | 146,740 | 161,241 | 154,450    | 109,915    |
| <b>No. of children aged 0-14 yrs</b>              | 25,331       | 19,381    | 29,899  | 25,263  | 27,872     | 18,795     |
| <b>Children 0-14 as a % of the population</b>     | 17.5         | 19.6      | 20.3    | 15.7    | 18.0       | 17.1       |
| <b>Area (km2)</b>                                 | 64           | 61.4      | 114     | 82      | 60         | 114        |
| <b>No. of play spaces</b>                         | 169          | 123       | 198     | 124     | 103        | 151        |
| <b>No. of play spaces / sq km</b>                 | 2.64         | 2.0       | 1.74    | 1.51    | 1.72       | 1.32       |
| <b>No. of play spaces / head population</b>       | 1:857        | 1:806     | 1:741   | 1:1,300 | 1:1,499    | 1:728      |
| <b>No. of play spaces / child 0-14 yrs</b>        | 1:150        | 1:158     | 1:151   | 1:204   | 1:271      | 1:124      |
| <b>Applied play space catchment radius</b>        | 400m         | 500m      | 500m    | 500m    | 500m       | 400m       |
| <b>% of land – public open space</b>              | 10.4         | 11.3      | 18.0    | 9.9     | 9.6        | 24.8       |
| <b>No. of play spaces/sq km public open space</b> | 25           | 18        | 10      | 15      | 18         | 5          |

## Appendix 3: Age-related Play Requirements

Specific age groups have specific play requirements to ensure they are challenged and offered developmental opportunities. Outlined are requirements for each age classification, together with the play area requirements.

| Age and development characteristics   | Play area requirements  |
|---|---|
| <b>0-12 months</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to become upright and mobile</li> <li>• Enjoyment of interaction with carers</li> <li>• Awareness of sensory stimuli sounds and movement</li> <li>• Learning to sit, crawl and stand</li> <li>• Learning to clamber over objects</li> <li>• Copying actions</li> <li>• Focusing attention on simple events i.e. wind in the trees.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level play spaces that offer simplistic challenges, colours and excitement through sensory experiences i.e. sound, touch, taste</li> <li>• Features that can be used to grab and pull themselves along</li> <li>• Grassed surfaces</li> <li>• Gentle slopes</li> <li>• Natural elements.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>12 months-2 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasingly upright and more mobile</li> <li>• Imitation play and pretend animal play</li> <li>• Learning to throw, with little control</li> <li>• Learning to climb in and through objects</li> <li>• Learning to fill, empty, carry objects e.g. collect shells</li> <li>• Learning to topple, pull, push movements i.e. push trolleys, wheeling prams</li> <li>• Learning meaningful words</li> <li>• Enjoyment of playing in sandpits.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level play spaces that are clear of trip hazards, given movements have little control and minimal sense of direction</li> <li>• Spatial layout of equipment is essential, given that toddlers are unable to forecast consequence</li> <li>• Note: toddlers learn through sensory exploration and many materials are mouthed – so non-poisonous plants only should be considered.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>2 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing autonomy</li> <li>• Learning independence, but wanting carers in close proximity</li> <li>• Using aggression to problem solve</li> <li>• Engaging in parallel play i.e. side by side with another child</li> <li>• Moving with peers i.e. all into the sandpit, then all on the climbing structure</li> <li>• Developing imitative role play i.e. mothers and fathers</li> <li>• Refining gross motor skills i.e.: walking action becoming running action</li> <li>• Enjoying physical play i.e. climbing, chasing balls and balloons, rolling, kicking and throwing balls, walking up and down steps, managing a small slide</li> <li>• Using wheeled toys</li> <li>• Enjoying manipulating small objects and filling containers</li> <li>• Interested in birds, insects, flowers and animals.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level soft surface areas i.e. grass and mulch spaces</li> <li>• Smooth paths with non-abrasive surfacing for wheeled toys</li> <li>• Planting to provide sensory experiences i.e. smell, listen, touch</li> <li>• Gentle slopes to provide interest and develop gross motor skills</li> <li>• Sand and dirt pits to cater for the needs of a group of children</li> <li>• Climbing areas with soft fall and mobile equipment</li> <li>• Note: toddlers learn through sensory exploration and many materials are mouthed – so non-poisonous plants only should be considered.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>3 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging in basic socio-dramatic play for short periods</li> <li>• Using wheeled toys with pedals comfortably</li> <li>• Enjoying climbing and using this as a measure of self i.e. look at me!</li> <li>• Managing a small slide</li> <li>• Enjoying sand and water play i.e. pouring and filling</li> <li>• Enjoying hauling i.e. filling bags and buckets, removing contents to another place, carrying it around.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of heights with options of moving up, down, and around</li> <li>• Small areas for groups of children to play with sensory materials or imaginative play</li> <li>• Variety of climbing, sliding, swinging equipment on impact absorbing surfaces</li> <li>• Large grassed areas for free running, ball and other organised games</li> <li>• Low growing plants to create edges for small group play for outdoor music, drama, science, language experiences</li> <li>• Large sandpits and digging patches with water available</li> <li>• Flat areas for bike riding</li> <li>• Segregated natural environments to provide cubby /camping opportunities and provide a range of sensory experiences throughout the year.</li> </ul> |

## Appendix 3: Age-related Play Requirements (continued)

| Age and development characteristics  | Play area requirements  |
|--|---|
| <b>4 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing and negotiating</li> <li>• General inquisitiveness and questioning</li> <li>• Testing carer boundaries</li> <li>• Directing language to other children</li> <li>• Including violence in play and testing peer boundaries</li> <li>• Interested in natural science</li> <li>• Playing with fantasy/abstract socio-dramatic play themes</li> <li>• Having basic ball skills i.e. throwing, catching, hitting with a bat</li> <li>• Participation in group games and activities.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of heights with options of moving up, down, and around</li> <li>• Small areas for groups of children to play with sensory materials or imaginative play</li> <li>• Variety of climbing, sliding, swinging equipment on impact absorbing surfaces</li> <li>• Large grassed areas for free running, ball and other organised games</li> <li>• Low growing plants to create edges for small group play for outdoor music, drama, science, language experiences</li> <li>• Large sandpits and digging patches with water available</li> <li>• Flat areas for bike riding</li> <li>• Segregated natural environments to provide cubby /camping opportunities and provide a range of sensory experiences throughout the year.</li> </ul> |
| <b>5 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping to do real chores</li> <li>• Preference to co-operative play</li> <li>• Physically poised and controlled</li> <li>• Testing physical skills and stunts</li> <li>• Experiencing change in physical skills</li> <li>• Enjoying collation of information and fact finding</li> <li>• Valuing group acceptance</li> <li>• Enjoying construction and realistic model making</li> <li>• Importance in reaching an end point</li> <li>• Mastering ball games</li> <li>• Enjoying games with rules.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of heights with options of moving up, down, and around</li> <li>• Small areas for groups of children to play with sensory materials or imaginative play</li> <li>• Variety of climbing, sliding, swinging equipment on impact absorbing surfaces</li> <li>• Large grassed areas for free running, ball and other organised games</li> <li>• Low growing plants to create edges for small group play for outdoor music, drama, science, language experiences</li> <li>• Large sandpits and digging patches with water available</li> <li>• Flat areas for bike riding</li> <li>• Segregated natural environments to provide cubby /camping opportunities and provide a range of sensory experiences throughout the year.</li> </ul> |
| <b>6 - 8 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continual refinement of movement skills</li> <li>• Climbing confidently and mastering new skills</li> <li>• Risk taking</li> <li>• Managing ball games i.e. kicking, batting, catching a ball</li> <li>• Enjoyment of games with rules, but difficulty losing</li> <li>• Energetic and active, can run or walk for long periods, find sitting more tiring than running</li> <li>• Consideration of peer group importance</li> <li>• Increased interest in the world around them</li> <li>• Enjoyment of group activities and can play cooperatively</li> <li>• Using adults as supporters rather than carers.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible spaces for individual or group active and passive play</li> <li>• Climbing equipment</li> <li>• Gymnastics type attachments i.e. trapeze swings, horizontal ladders, roman rings</li> <li>• Staging areas for drama and competitions</li> <li>• Space for team games</li> <li>• Space and equipment for individual work.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>8-11 years</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing interest in competition, sports and active play.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require flexible spaces to engage in active and passive play</li> <li>• Challenging climbing equipment</li> <li>• Challenging gymnastics type equipment</li> <li>• Space for team games</li> <li>• Space for quiet activity</li> <li>• Area for social activities and communication.</li> </ul>  |



## Appendix 4: Play Space Trends

This appendix provides an overview of play space provision trends. Information is drawn from a number of sources including the Play and Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV), US-based Recreation Management (2006) (1), industry research and site visitations. Trends are summarised according to key themes.

### Whole of Park Design

- Consider all available play opportunities and how they can link together e.g. stands of trees, rolling hills, equipment, open ball play areas
- Take a site approach and not an equipment focused approach
- Consider the features that will attract carers to the play space e.g. shade, comfortable seating, easy access.

### Equipment

- Climbing features, particularly features that simulate real life such as climbing boulders; spatial nets
- Swings and whirling features. Merry-go-rounds are making a return
- Slides, particularly those built into slopes and are set in clambering features. Note that heights have come down
- Circuit play and agility / obstacle courses in response to childhood obesity concerns
- Natural / neutral colours that blend with the landscape.

### Free-standing Equipment

- Sculptural and artist play features such as giant acorns that can be clambered on
- Elements at different heights. There is conflicting opinion as to the need for extreme heights
- Electronic features e.g. sound recordings and play back.

### Spaces

- Multiple spaces in the play environment. This supports small group activities which is an important component of play
- Different types of spaces in the play environment e.g. spaces for activity, spaces for quiet reflection
- Imaginative play spaces e.g. 'outdoor rooms', foxholes
- Creative play spaces e.g. 'buildable/construction components', tunnels
- Intimate gathering and reflection spaces e.g. cubbies, rock platforms.

### Water

- Splash play areas featuring misters, sprayers, inground geysers
- Created creekbeds / real creekbeds
- Aqua combat guns.

### Sound

- Music / dance posts
- Musical bridges
- Talking posts
- Interactive and creative music and sound making elements
- 'Noise-makers'
- Quiet/reflective spaces.

### Back to Nature

- Landscaping so the environment is enjoyable for children and adults
- Colour, texture, natural fragrances
- Plants that attract insects and butterflies
- Environmentally-inspired structures e.g. tree stump climbers, equipment integrated into the environment, log and boulder benches and tables
- 'Discovery gardens' and 'adventure woods'
- Include sandpits or gravel pits for digging.

### Education components / 'Learning play spaces'

- Incorporation of natural features such as faux fossils in the bottom of the sand box.
- Textured surfaces to demonstrate friction and slip.
- Spinners to demonstrate centrifugal force.
- Opportunities for carers to teach children about nature and help them connect / reconnect with their environment.
- Noted that children generally only engage in learning panels when directed by carers.
- Include signage that signposts activity opportunities e.g. "can you find 3 different types of leaves?", "what insects have come to play?"

### Paths

- Create formal or informal paths that link play spaces and encourage children to explore into adjoining play spaces.

### Community Involvement

- Parents and children involved in the design and construction, particularly of natural elements
- Engage local schools and garden clubs in the planting and maintenance of natural areas.

#### Appendix 4: Play Space Trends (continued)

##### Universal Access

- More than just Disability Discrimination Act 1992 compliant
- More than just ramps e.g. raised sand boxes, high backed swings with arm rests
- Design that does not segregate able bodied from people with disabilities
- Add raised planter boxes so people in wheelchairs can access them.

##### Specific Age Groups

- 0-4 years – outdoor spaces for crawlers e.g. 'poured surfaces' with mounds for crawling and rolling; objects to grip and grasp and pull on. This age group is a new consideration in play space design
- 5-8 years – play houses, secret spaces, sand features
- 8 years plus – circuit play systems, climbing features such as spatial nets and rock boulders.

##### Recreation Management Cautions About

- sameness across all play spaces
- an emphasis on 'flow through play equipment' that is the 'climb up, run along, slide down and its over' structures
- doing away with the old and known favourites – swings and slides
- placing an emphasis on extreme height
- adventure/amusement parks – quality and creative play spaces that inspire the imagination should be a priority over play spaces that just rev up the adrenaline.

References: Play Hard-'The latest in playground philosophy, design and components', Klingensmith 2006.  
Planning ideas for a more natural play environment, Steve King FASLA, at [www.playlsi.com](http://www.playlsi.com); Industry feedback and site observations.



## Appendix 5: Regional Play Spaces

### Bayswater Park, Bayswater

*Features of this play space:*

- full-size red steam engine, ticket, smaller wooden train, wave slide, rigid balance beam, fire-fighter's pole, musical pipes, high rope bridge, musical bridge, large slides, cubby
- facilities include toilets, seats picnic tables, shade sails barbeque, car parking.

Distance from Whitehorse eastern municipal boundary – 6km /10-minute drive.

### Federation Estate Play Space, Ringwood

*Features of this play space:*

- unique and very different from other play spaces in the area
- fully accessible
- includes a small grassed area
- has access to toilets, drinking water and seating.

Distance from Whitehorse eastern municipal boundary – 2.2km/6-minute drive.

### Federation Playground, Warrandyte

*Features of this play space:*

- based on gold-mining theme
- traditional junior and senior playground equipment, water play structure with waterwheel, disability swing, shade sails, 'music post'
- limited car parking
- toilets 250m away.

Distance from Whitehorse northern municipal boundary – 11 km/17-minutes drive.

### Hays Paddock, Kew

*Created in 1998. Features of this play space:*

- wide seesaw, double width slide, swings, hammock, spiders web trampoline, large sandpit, 'music-making features
- facilities include toilets, seats picnic tables, shade sails barbeque, car parking
- landscaping features – billabong, open grasslands, copses / trees, shrubs
- 'all abilities' access / braille instructions
- dog off-leash park.

Distance from Whitehorse western municipal boundary – 5.7km/10-minute drive.

### Jells Park, Wheelers Hill

*Features of the three play spaces at Jells Park:*

- Jells Park South – Liberty swing with rubberised under surfacing, all other areas tan bark under surfacing; 50-100 metres from the car park; 50-100 metres from toilets
- Yabby Hill - Tan bark under surfacing; 50-100 metres from the car park; 50-100 metres from toilets
- Jells Park East - Tan bark under surfacing; 200 metres from the car park; 200 metres from toilets
- other facilities:
  - visitor information centre, café, seats picnic tables, shade areas, barbeques, car parking, proposed community garden
  - landscaping features – billabong, open grasslands, bicycle trails, nature reserves.

Distance from Whitehorse southern municipal boundary – 6.5km/9-minute drive.

### Ringwood Lake play space, Ringwood

*Features of this play space:*

- includes seven track rides, good access for a range of skills (including a accessible swing and a 'Liberty Swing')
- incorporates the Ringwood Lake, natural environment play areas, paths, and grassed areas
- has picnic, toilet and access to drinking water.

Distance from Whitehorse eastern municipal boundary – 1.9km/5-minute drive.

### Ruffey Lake Park, Doncaster

*Features of these two play spaces:*

- regional level play spaces at each site
- curved tunnel slide, slide with no steps, swings, accessible swing set, climbing cubes, large sandpit, musical bridge, flying fox, much of the equipment is undercover
- facilities include toilets, seats picnic tables, barbeque, car parking, and drinking fountains, natural shade, picnic shelter, open/ rolling grassland
- 'all abilities' access
- dog off-leash park.

Distance from Whitehorse municipal boundary (to the north) – 5 km/11-minute drive.



## Appendix 5: Regional Play Spaces (continued)

### Ferntree Gully Play Space, Ferntree Gully Community Centre

*Features of this play space:*

- facilities include toilets, seats picnic tables, shade sails barbeque, car parking
- on same site as a sports oval with nearby creek
- older style play space due for renewal in approximately 2013/14. Facilities include toilets, seats picnic tables, shade sails barbeque, car parking.

### Tim Neville Aboretum, Ferntree Gully

*Features of this play space:*

- fantasy children's garden, adventure garden rooms, butterfly garden, jungle garden, sandpits, stepping stone maze, playground equipment, children's size seating
- facilities include toilets, seats picnic tables, shade sails barbeque, car parking
- landscaping features – 2 ornamental lakes, gardens, lawns, trails, trees, shrubs
- 'all abilities' access.

Distance from Whitehorse eastern municipal boundary – 8.5kms/15-minute drive.

### Wombat Bend, Lower Templestowe

*Features of this play space:*

- nature-based setting
- amphitheatre, native forest walk, maze, two double slides (no steps), sundial, sound recordings, scented plants, climbing cube, flying fox, carousel, seesaw
- facilities include toilets, seats / undercover picnic tables, barbeque, car parking, and drinking fountains
- 'all abilities' access
- proximity to Main Yarra Trail.

Distance from Whitehorse northern municipal boundary – 7km/15-minute drive.





## Appendix 6: Consultation Summary

Summary of information drawn from consultation carried out for the *Whitehorse Play Space Strategy 2011* and the *Early Years Strategy: Childhood Matters* regarding play value elements.

| 6-11 year olds   |  | Adults   |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| Most likely to:  | Least likely to:   | Most likely to:  | Least likely to:  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want play spaces that are fun, exciting, challenging and have lots to do</li> <li>Enjoy playing in parks or at home (inc the home 'yard')</li> <li>Enjoy playing with a friend or group of friends</li> <li>Enjoy playing sport, games and running activities</li> <li>Enjoy climbing, running, chasing activities</li> <li>Enjoy playing on play equipment and in the natural environment</li> <li>Want to play on flying foxes, swings and sliding (incl poles) equipment.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want play spaces that are boring, dirty, too bushy, too noisy dark/scary, close to roads, isolated and dominated by older kids</li> <li>Enjoy playing around shops, reserves and the bush</li> <li>Want to play with parents, grandparents or carers</li> <li>Want to engage in sensory activities e.g. looking, smelling and thinking activities</li> <li>Consider distance and location an important consideration</li> <li>Want to play on 'acting stages'.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be influenced by safety and facility considerations</li> <li>Say exploration, imagination and safety as important elements of play</li> <li>Want all-weather playgrounds, access for all abilities and age related opportunities</li> <li>See safety and imaginings as important play experiences</li> <li>Want play opportunities for a younger and older children at the one site.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Say passive play spaces, creekline locations, trails and art themes are important elements of play</li> <li>Want children's gardens, bounce courts, local park play opportunities</li> <li>Be influenced by size, nature/open space, stimulation, fun and equipment</li> <li>See fencing access for parent and child and equipment as important in the play experience.</li> </ul> |

In summary:

- Preschool children indicated a preference for play slides, water play activities in particular bubble play and water environments such as beaches and creeks; grass environments and interacting with the natural environment as in rolling down hills, climbing trees and rocks, and digging, planting and playing with flowers.
- 6 to 11 year olds indicated a preference for play spaces that are fun, exciting, and 'have lots to do'; provide access to a range of play activities including running, chasing, climbing, and 'playing sport games'; include play equipment like flying foxes, swings and slides that are challenging.

They indicated a preference for places they can play with a friend or with a group of friends, and for natural environments such as ponds, climbing trees, and 'tunnels'.

They dislike noisy and crowded places, places dominated by older kids, and places that are in isolated locations or close to roads.

They are less likely than younger age groups to want to engage in sensory, acting or make believe activities, or to play with parents or carers.

- Adults are most likely to be influenced by safety considerations, but this is more likely to relate to 'social safety' rather than 'physical safety' concerns; the standard of provision; and they are more likely to be impressed by larger impressive play spaces than are children.

## Appendix 7: References

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### Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land now known as Whitehorse and pays respects to its elders past and present.

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