

Strathbogie Shire Council

Playground Management Plan

Version: 2
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prepared by:
design and projects group

Strathbogie Shire Council - Playground Management Plan

Introduction:

The purpose of this Playground Management Plan is to establish the clear management processes that Strathbogie Shire Council uses to effectively manage the playgrounds under it's control, for the benefit of it's community, in both the operational and strategic sense.

The equipment within these playgrounds ranges from new "state-of-the-art" equipment, to some items that are estimated at over 30 years old.

Playground equipment design, construction, inspection and reporting are required to comply with a number of Australian Standards.

From a public liability insurance claim point of view, playgrounds are high-risk areas for Council. The management of playgrounds, and playground equipment, is an operational area that can, and must be performed in a systematic, effective manner. Council has implemented an inspection and maintenance regime as part of it's playground management system.

The majority of Council's existing playgrounds presently have elements that do not conform to the current Australian Standards as a result of recent changes to the Standards. Whilst these changes are not retrospective the Council, as the playground manager, needs to progressively upgrade the play equipment to achieve and maintain compliance. In some of these playgrounds, compliance through maintenance and/or repair is not viable, and therefore replacement of playground items will be required.

Council will continue to investigate and implement "access for all" provisions within playgrounds, together with linking of equipment with pathways where practical.

Playgrounds are a community asset that will be managed in accordance with Council's Asset Management Policy and Plans

Australian Standards:

The Council's playgrounds are required to be designed, developed and managed in accordance with the following Australian Standards:

- AS/NZS 4422: 1996, Playground Surfacing - Specification's requirements & test method
- AS/NZS 4486.1: 1997, Playground Equipment - Development, installation inspection maintenance & operation

- AS 1924 Part 2: 1981, Design & Construction - Safety Aspects

- AS 4685-1 – 2004, General Safety Requirements & test methods

- AS 4685-2 – 2004, Particular safety requirements & test methods for swings
- AS 4685-3 – 2004, Particular safety requirements & test methods for slides
- AS 4685-4 – 2004, Particular safety requirements & test methods for runways
- AS 4685-5 – 2004, Particular safety requirements & test methods for carousels
- AS 4685-6 – 2004, Particular safety requirements & test methods for rocking equipment

Playground Inventory:

An essential requirement for the overall management of any asset is to have an accurate inventory of the asset base.

Council engages an external consultant to undertake a comprehensive inspection of the playgrounds to develop an accurate inventory, and provide a condition assessment of the equipment. This inventory and condition assessment is undertaken annually. A copy of the 2006 inventory of play equipment is attached in Appendix 1.

Playground Hierarchy:

The Council has adopted the following playground hierarchy for playground management purposes:

Regional: – the main playground in a town. The playground may have toilets and/or BBQ facilities nearby

District: – serving a general area

Neighbourhood: – serving an immediate, localised area

Controlled use: - playground is fenced, and use is controlled by a committee of management, or similar, and used within limited times, eg: kindergarten playgrounds used during kindergarten operating hours.

The following table provides hierarchical classification and management details of the current Council managed playgrounds, within the municipality:

Item no:	Playground: Hierarchy classifn and name	Urban/remote:	Owner of land:	CoM: Ccl / DSE	Control authority of playground
	Regional:				
1	Avenel Jubilee Park	urban	Crown	DSE	Council
2	Euroa Rotary Park	urban	Crown	Council	Council
3	Nagambie Blayney Reserve	urban	SSC	Council	Council
4	Violet Town Rec Res – West	urban	Crown	Council	Council
	District:				
5	Euroa Lions Park	urban	SSC	Council	Council
6	Longwood Recreation Res	urban	Crown	Council	Council
7	Nagambie Buckley Park	urban	SSC	Council	Council
8	Violet Town Lions Park	urban	SSC	Council	Council
	Neighbourhood:				
9	Creightons Creek Rec Res	remote	SSC	Council	Council
10	Euroa Bicentennial Park	urban	SSC	Council	Council
11	Euroa Skate Park	urban	SSC	Council	Council
12	Moglonemby Hall	remote	SSC	Council	Council
13	Nagambie Maternal & C.H.C.	urban	SSC	Council	Council
14	Nagambie Rec Res	urban	Crown/SSC	Council	Council
15	Nagambie River St Reserve	urban	Crown	Council	Council
16	Strathbogie Rec Res	remote	Crown	Council	Council
17	Violet Town Hurt St Res	urban	Crown	Council	Council
18	Violet Town Rec Res – East	urban	Crown	Council	Council
19	Violet Town Skate Park	urban	Crown	Council	Council
	Controlled use:				
20	Avenel Pre-School	urban	Crown	DSE	Council
21	Euroa Pre-School	urban	SSC	Council	Council
22	Nagambie Pre-School	urban	SSC	Council	Council
23	Violet Town Pre-School	urban	SSC	Council	Council

Notes: CoM = Committee of Management

Playground life:

It is estimated that the functional life of playground equipment is 15 to 20 years. This is based on a number of factors including:

- Changing user expectations
- User environmental considerations
- Materials used in construction/fabrication
- Changing Australian Standards requirements
- Use of asset

Operations/Maintenance of playgrounds:

Playgrounds require on-going operational and maintenance inspections and actions to ensure that they are, and remain, fit for purpose. Play equipment that is inspected regularly, and well maintained, will stay safe and last for many years.

Maintenance:

Playground maintenance and inspections will continue to ensure that “fit for purpose” requirements of the equipment, and “duty of care” requirements of Council are met.

Inspections:

Playground inspections will be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of this Plan. The regime of inspections, and frequency intervals for the various inspections are to ensure that the playgrounds are managed effectively to minimize risk.

Inspection regimes will vary according to the playground hierarchy.

Manufacturers are required, in accordance with the relevant Australian Standard to provide instructions for inspections, including frequency and inspection locations (eg: potential high wear areas), with all new playground installations.

The inspection regime given below demonstrates that the Council is meeting it's “duty of care” requirements.

The following is the inspection schedule that will be followed:

Routine/safety compliance inspections:

- Frequency: Regional playgrounds: – 3 times a week*
- District playgrounds: – weekly*
- Neighbourhood playgrounds –urban: – weekly*
- Neighbourhood playgrounds –remote: – monthly*
- Controlled use – weekly by the operating committee (eg: the Pre-School Committee)*

Operational inspections:

- Frequency: All playgrounds, except remote playgrounds: - monthly*
- Remote playgrounds: -six monthly*

Comprehensive inspections:

Frequency: All playgrounds - annually

CCA treated material in playgrounds:

The Council has a number of playgrounds with CCA treated timber playground equipment, and/or barricades and fences.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority have released findings of its review of the use of copper chrome arsenate (CCA), a chemical used to treat timber products to combat rot. The investigation was undertaken after increasing international pressure to phase out the use of CCA treated products.

The review was particularly concerned with children aged from three to five, and their potential to absorb/take up arsenic contamination from the treated timber.

The review has recommended that the use of CCA treated timber products be discontinued. No recommendations were made requiring the removal of existing CCA treated products..

Given the above information it is considered prudent to incorporate into this plan, a phased removal of any treated timber products in Council controlled playgrounds. The following actions will be undertaken, with the outcome that the Council's playgrounds will be free of treated timber products by 30 June 2008.

Based on this recommendation, the Council proposes to undertake the following actions:

- the removal of any play equipment or apparatus made from CCA treated timbers
- any new softfall borders will be constructed of suitable material
- where existing softfall borders are made of CCA treated timbers - these will be progressively replaced with other suitable material.

“All-abilities” playgrounds:

The Council recognises that playgrounds should provide recreational opportunities for all people. Facilities need to be established where disabled persons, and their carers, can freely access play equipment, ideally integrated with facilities catering for a range of abilities.

New playgrounds will incorporate improved access at all locations. However, all equipment will not be suitable for all users. Individuals will have to make decisions as to what level of activity and/or equipment they feel they are capable of using, or are interested in participating in, or on.

Simple measures that can be provided to all playgrounds, and proposed to be progressively introduced over the next five years, include :

- All-weather paths to the softfall area
- Rubberised paths within the play area to access swings and play modules
- Swing seats with supportive backs

It is proposed that each of the four major towns – Avenel, Euroa, Nagambie and Violet Town - will have at least one playground in future that meets these access standards to ensure reasonable opportunity of participation and access for all. The playgrounds will be the regional playgrounds, as listed below :

- Euroa – Rotary Park
- Avenel – Jubilee Park
- Nagambie – Blayney Reserve
- Violet Town – Recreation Reserve – West.

The above playgrounds will all have:

- disabled access
- rubberized softfall
- shade structure

Once these playgrounds are developed to the appropriate level of service further playgrounds will be upgraded.

Shade structures:

The Council will investigate the provision of shade structures in any renewal, upgrade and/or development proposals for playgrounds.

The inclusion of shade structures will provide additional comfort to users, together with additional operational and capital renewal responsibilities, and additional operational and renewal costs. These will be considered in any capital investment decision.

The inclusion of shade structures in our playgrounds will increase in the level of service provided by the Council. The playground replacement program will include shade structures for all Regional playgrounds.

Rubberized softfall:

The playground replacement program will include rubberized softfall for all Regional playgrounds.

The high initial capital cost of rubberized softfall means that it will not be provided at all District, Neighbourhood and Controlled Use playgrounds initially. The implementation of rubberized softfall throughout the Council's playground asset base will be investigated when preparing the capital renewal plans for the various playgrounds.

The use of rubberized softfall increases the level of service provided by Council. It also provides the opportunity to introduce colour and patterns into the playground, to enhance the overall experience of the user.

Localized treatments using rubberized softfall will be investigated for high-use zones, such as under swings, at the base of slides and on access pathways to equipment. The areas of rubberized softfall would then be supplemented with conventional softfall material to meet required standards.

New playgrounds:

The development and installation of new playgrounds should not be considered until all of the Council's existing playgrounds, under Council control, meet the required operational, maintenance and relevant Australian Standards. This will allow Council to demonstrate that it has achieved a sustainable and effective playground management system.

Proposals for new playgrounds will be considered after the above criteria has been satisfied.

Factors to be considered when new playground proposals are received include:

- Council's Asset Management Policy and Plan including life-cycle costing analysis
- Proposed position in the Council's playground hierarchy
- Requirements of the Australian Standards (eg: design requirements, playground location and positioning, age groups, etc)
- Management arrangements – operational and strategic
- Funding contributions, including recurrent and renewal contributions
- Land tenure arrangements

All new playgrounds will be managed in accordance with this Plan, once accepted by Council

Playground equipment suppliers:

The Council will only purchase, or allow to be purchased, for playgrounds under its control, playground equipment that complies the relevant Australian Standards.

Installation of playground equipment:

All playground equipment to be installed in Council's playgrounds, or playgrounds under its control, will be installed by the playground equipment manufacturer, and certified by the manufacturer that the equipment has been installed correctly to their specifications and complies the relevant Australian Standards.

Memberships:

Strathbogrie Council is a member of the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV).

This Association provides a resource base for access to playground management and equipment information, and is committed to working with sectors of the community to promote the value of play and increase play opportunities for children and young people.

PRAV also undertakes a number of activities including:

- Represents the play sector on the Australian Standards Committee;
- Provides expert advice on playgrounds standards;
- Collects, disseminates and exchanges information about play and play environments;
- Conducts training programs on planning, design, management, and maintenance of playgrounds;
- Provides telephone and email advisory service on play development issues;
- Promotes research into safety of playgrounds, use of playgrounds and their value;
- Facilitates risk assessments of playgrounds and play equipment;

The Strathbogrie Council will remain a member of PRAV to ensure that it remains aware and informed of issues and changes that will affect our playground management practices.

Review of the Playground Management Plan:

This plan will be reviewed at least every two years from date of plan adoption.

Appendix 1: Inventory of playgrounds and playground equipment, as at February 2006