

## Strategic Planning for Play across whole Municipalities

***A practical way of setting priorities,  
and dealing with over demand,  
under-resourcing and political  
pressures***

Mary Jeavons  
Director  
© Mary Jeavons Landscape Architects  
jeavons.la@bigpond.com



## Scenarios from real life

- Developers like new playgrounds!
- Councillors like opening playgrounds!
- Fewer and fewer maintenance crews looking after more and more new sites
- The tiny block with a swing and an old see saw that everyone loves
- Some managers think all local parks should be removed
- Access to kids with disabilities- should every playground be fully accessible?
- Pushy sales people so all the playgrounds are the same
- Everyone wants a fence!

**A Municipal play [grounds] Strategy  
is simply a way of ensuring that  
you have...**

- Adequate play *opportunities*
- in the right *place*
- offering sufficient *choices*
- to meet the *demands of specific communities*
- in a way that can be realistically and adequately *managed* with the resources available
- both now and in the future

**It's a tool to make your planning.  
designing, purchasing, budgeting  
maintenance and consultation  
easier**

Otherwise *how will you know ...*

- which playgrounds are worth upgrading to become accessible to children with disabilities?
- When it is ok to remove a playground and when it is not?
- What to say to developers or councillors demanding new playgrounds?
- Which sites are suitable to fence and why?
- Where toilets are required?
- Where the funds will come from in 2007 or 2010 to build and maintain it all

Some quite specific, current reasons why this information is important

- Safety audits pick up safety problems so an upgrade is required
- At the same time, council is requiring that playgrounds be made accessible to children with disabilities
- However a strategy might tell you that for certain sites, such an upgrade for either reason is simply a waste of money

Spectrum issues





### About Hierarchies

- A useful tool especially for deciding the levels of investment in a site
- Simple way of classifying sites, and determining their importance
- Need to *reflect* reality rather than *define* it
- We frequently find that three levels is adequate and useful but could be many local variations

### How we use hierarchies

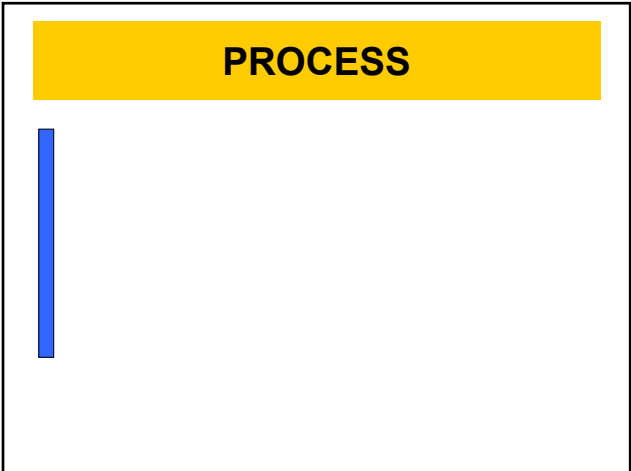
- Size
- Nature of the site
- Qualities/attractions and
- Variety of things to do, and
- *Context*

**Determine**

- How, and how far people will travel
- How long they will stay
- And what expectations they might have

**And these factors tell us whether we need**

- toilets or not
- fences
- picnic facilities
- car parking
- to cater for all age groups
- and all abilities



## 1. Summarise Existing Policies & Implications for Playground Management

Because each community is different

- Review in house documents, management processes and systems
- Review expectations and budgets for ongoing maintenance and development
- Research into controversial safety/philosophical or management issues ie dogs, sand, fencing
- Local Politics

## 2. Initial Review of Municipal Maps; Distribution Data and Demand

- Draft Maps of open space /pg distribution
- Political boundaries
- Major roads and barriers
- Review Demographic data
- Precinct boundaries
- Initial conclusions re future development; areas with gaps in access, & oversupply.
- Sketch map of distribution issues to be noted during site inspections

## Distribution of Playgrounds



● Existing playgrounds

## Barriers & Catchments

Barriers define catchments for local parks

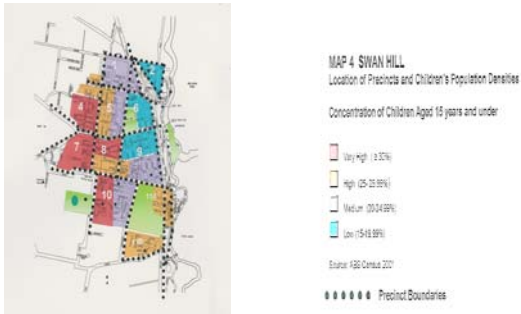
Even though this space is just across the road,

For kids on this side of the highway it is not accessible



major highway

## Map Population Data [Demand]



## Initial review

- **Initial conclusions** re areas with gaps in access; oversupply and future development.
- **Map of distribution issues**

It's handy to have done this *before* you do the site inspections, as it provides context to each site

## 5. Site Inspections

- Complete on-site checklist:
  - asset data as required
  - play value
  - accessibility
  - age group suitability
  - supervision
  - shade
  - suitability for context,
  - fencing, amenity, aesthetics [*Not a safety audit.*]

- **Take lots of photos**
  - Record the site name and number in each photo

Of the whole space, as well as close-ups

## While you are out on site...

### While you're there, be a spy...

- Note what people are doing, ask yourself why?
- Check the **context** – is there a kinder, special school, high school around?
- Anything which might dictate a **particular client group** or **pattern of use**?



## 6. Municipal Overview

Examine...

- Site reports
- Photos
- Previous audit reports
- Maps/distribution info

### Analysis

- Areas of over- or under-supply, in relation to demand
- Conclusions re the range of qualities and settings available
- Hierarchy levels, and categories suitable to client
- Key issues for *this* municipality

## 6. Municipal Overview, cont .

### • Report on:

- Demand for Playgrounds (ie demographics,)
- Physical Distribution (Supply) of Playgrounds
- Classification of Parks and Playgrounds
- An Effective Open Space/Playground System
- General Conclusions and Recommendations regarding the location and distribution of playgrounds
- Accessibility to Parks and Playgrounds for People with Disabilities across the Municipality
- Adequacy and quality issues
- Rural Settlements and Playgrounds ( if applicable)
- Summary of Priorities for Action - A Five Year Plan

To a point

## 6. Mapping of Key Information

- **Synthesise** Site information and Municipal Overview info;
- Link the **big picture** and the **details** on each site

At this point you need to toggle between the maps (ie the big picture), and the site reports (ie the details), as each affects the other

## Overview Maps



- Precinct boundaries
- Demographics/implications
- Possible removals
- Proposals for equitable geographic distribution of:  
Accessible p/g, Fences,  
Shaded p/g, Age specific areas
- Other issues as required

## Show Recommendations on Maps



- Sites with potential for development as playgrounds

## 7. Site/ Precinct Reports

- Identify role/function of each site
- Classification in the hierarchy
- Outline proposals for each site
- Implications for design and management
- Set priority rating

Go back and check that proposals for each site are consistent with the 'big picture', and that what you propose will make up for existing deficiencies

## 8. Consultation Processes

- As required, and at whatever stage is suitable
- Ask for community input before and during the process
- Display, present and discuss the reports
- Discuss controversial issues
- Explain decisions

Involve **maintenance staff**, and **local politicians** (for very different reasons!!)

## 9. Principles and Policies

- Access to disabled users
- Provision for age groups
- Play value /qualities of settings
- Design themes
- Materials
- Rationale and process for establishing a new playground
- Core levels of provision for local/district and regional playgrounds
- Community Consultation processes
- Fencing playgrounds
- Other issues as they arise

## 10. Plan for Prioritising Development and Upgrading works

Table 9 Summary of Priority 3 Works

PRIORITY 3 WORKS							
SITE NO.	PLAYGROUND SITE	ADDRESS	PRIORITY NO.	CLASSIFICATION	PROPOSED ACTION	PRIORITY	ESTIMATE
30	Riverside Park Robinsvale	McCartons St Robinsvale	-	Potential District	Upgrade to new accessible play area	3	\$75,000
3	Mundara Park SH	Mundara St	1	Local	New accessible design; shelters; planting; play area	3	\$75,000
6	Alan Garden Reserve SH	Cnr Pyle & Stradbroke Sts	6	Minor District/ Sports	Re-site and complete overhaul	3	\$30,000
14/15	Riverside Park SH	Access Road/ Moorish Dr	-	Potential Regional	Document new design	3	\$10,000
16	Splatt Street Water Tower SH	Splatt Street	9	Local	Park upgrade and play activities	3	\$60,000
-	Sharam Park (new)	Foster/ McPherson Sts	4	Local	New layout, planting and play area	3	\$60,000
18	Lake Boga Community Park	Laibert/ Cemetery	-	Local	Upgrade	3	\$10,000
22	Plangli	-	-	Local	Replace play area in new location	-	\$35,000
<b>TOTAL PRIORITY 3 WORKS</b>							<b>\$375,000</b>

## Priority/Action Plan

- Cost estimates
- Get funds into budget process
- Deal with political pressures
- Continue with regular maintenance

• Get started  
 • Keep revising the plan and  
 • Update it regularly

## In conclusion...

A playground planning strategy is a useful tool which:

- gives staff a defence against ad hoc decision making
- enables financial planning and is a good way to prevent wasting money on poor playgrounds,
- and best of all it means children's needs are more likely to be met equitably.

