

# Playspaces

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Updated: Tuesday, 18 August 2020*

Council are committed to maintaining and building safe and quality playspaces for the benefit of our community and to attract visitors to our region. We proudly manage and maintain over 260 public playspaces in our region.

Play spaces play an important role in the lives of our community – from young to old.

They are intergenerational places in which we socialise, keep active and connect with each other.

For our children, playspaces offer multiple activities allowing for play and learning in fun spaces that develop their physical, emotional, social and cognitive skills.



### What is the difference between a playground and playspace?

A **playground** is an older term referring to public play equipment provided within a park or reserve.

**Playspaces** are more than the play equipment - they include a 'whole of park' experience and can offer spaces for multiple activities and play experiences within the reserve or park for a range of abilities - often with supporting infrastructure (for example, seating, pathways, drinking water etc.).

### What's the difference between Local, District and Regional Playspaces?

Council has developed a hierarchy of playspace categories. This provides a classification system for playspaces based on the extent of area it services, what playspace features and experiences are suitable, what site locations are favourable and expected duration of stay.

- **Local playspaces** sit within local parks and cater to surrounding residents located generally within a 400-800m radius for short stay usage. E.g. Gosford Lions Park.
- **District playspaces** are medium size and service residents in a 1 to 2 km radius and co-located with other facilities for a stay longer than 2 hours. E.g. Terrigal Rotary Park, Sohier Park Ourimbah

- **Regional playspaces** are the largest sized with the greatest variety of equipment and include ancillary facilities such as car parking and other activities such as skate parks or half courts. These playspaces service residents within a 5–10 km radius but also attract visitors across the whole region. *E.g. Peninsula Recreation Precinct Umina, Canton Beach Community Park, Saltwater Creek Park Long Jetty*
- **Destination playspaces** have the capacity to provide unique experiences that attract visitors outside of Council's LGA and provide interest and activity, with supporting infrastructure and facilities for an all day stay. There are usually only one or 2 in a region. *eg. Gosford waterfront redevelopment currently under construction.*
- **Nature/Alternative** – creative, low maintenance nature-based playspaces using natural and recycled materials. *E.g. Blackwall, Wallaby St playspace*

These categories ensure equitable distribution of playspaces across Social Planning Districts based on the availability, size and quality of existing open space and the category of the proposed facility.



### How are the features and design elements selected for each playspace?

Design of playspaces considers the context, including nearby facilities, current and future demographics and embraces a 'whole of park' approach so that playspaces are inclusive, accessible, intergenerational, creative and minimise maintenance.

Within the design process, the important factors essential to the successful development of new and existing playspaces for the Central Coast are: consideration of community input through specific or previous community engagement activities, site planning, inclusion, accessibility, 'whole of park' principles, play value, compliance, longevity.

Council has a professional team that prepares, and reviews individual designs based on these principles.

### What are inclusive playspaces?

Council is committed to the provision of places for everyone to feel welcome and participate in community life – including playspaces.

Council has been at the forefront of this as seen in the early development of places such as Saltwater Creek Park, Long Jetty, Peninsula Recreation Precinct Umina, Canton Beach Community Park for the visually impaired and the sensory playspace at Wendy Drive, Point Clare.

Inclusive playspace design means that everyone can participate and have a positive experience, regardless of age, gender, ability or backgrounds.

Inclusive playspaces provide for all abilities, not just access. Accessible playspace design mainly addresses the movement needs of those with limited mobility or specific physical disabilities.

Council vary playspace inclusions across different sites on the Coast to accommodate the varied needs of all disabilities – whether they are physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments.

Typical considerations include fencing requirements, type of ground cover, pathway access, stimulating play equipment or quiet play, colourful equipment or natural infrastructure, visibility, parking.

Design for all abilities requires consideration of the wide spectrum of needs as not all playspaces can cater to all needs. Our larger facilities such as the district and regional playspaces provide the greatest range of inclusive features.

Council implements the principle of providing inclusive and accessible playspaces in line with the endorsed NSW Government 'Everyone Can Play' guidelines and Central Coast Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan to meet the needs of our diverse range of users.

Council was also involved in the working group for developing the NSW Government's 'Everyone Can Play' Guidelines 2019, a collaborative initiative to ensure new and upgraded playspaces are inclusive and accessible for everyone. These guidelines were developed with extensive consultation with advocacy and advisory groups, parents and educators and qualified industry experts.

Council has completed an independent access appraisal on all its playspaces and is developing a program for improving access in playspaces across the region with priority given to addressing deficiencies in existing regional and district playspaces and in some local playspaces.



### **What are intergenerational playspaces**

Intergenerational playspaces focus on creating spaces that cater to all ages – from toddlers to seniors - so children, parents and grandparents can participate in outdoor physical activity together and throughout their lifetime.

Motor development is similar amongst young and old and experts recommend activities focusing on strength and coordination. With an expected increase of the number of people aged over 60 on the Central Coast the need for these intergenerational playspaces will increase.

The benefits of intergenerational meeting places and activities that challenge not only children, but also the skill and fitness of parents and grandparents will be catered for within Central Coast Council's network of playspaces.

Intergenerational playspaces are inclusive as they foster social organisation and co-existence rather than those with the typical age-specific facilities, thereby counteracting age stereotypes, and promoting, social integration, tolerance and emotional and social skills.

### **What is supporting infrastructure?**

Supporting infrastructure enables a 'whole of park' and inclusive approach to maximise usability, enjoyment and accessibility of playspaces.

For example, fencing and natural barriers, seating, water refill stations, toilets, pathways, natural shade or shade structures, picnic shelters, car parking, amenities or toilet blocks, signage, and additional exercise or fitness equipment.

Council endeavours to use existing infrastructure in close distance to playspaces for efficiency and cost.

The hierarchy category of a playspace will determine what is typically included, however other factors also contribute to their inclusion on a case by case basis.



### **Why can't rubber softfall be used for all playspaces?**

Softfall is an impact attenuation (reduction) material used under and around play equipment to minimise risk and injury. It can be any material that meets Australian Standards. Typical types of softfall are sand, mulch, synthetic grass (with attenuation) and rubber.

Rubber softfall provides a stable and level surface ensuring the area is accessible, but it has a high installation cost, holds heat during summer months, and its longevity is untested.

Council uses both rubber and mulch softfall in most playspace areas to balance between functionality and cost effectiveness. The rubber softfall is typically used in high wear areas such as under swings, and where accessible connections are needed between the different equipment and back to other pathways around the facility.



### **Why don't all playspaces have shade structures?**

Shade structures are included at all regional and district playspaces in the areas of the park that are most essential – such as toddlers' areas. They are not generally included in local playspaces.

Council uses natural shade within local playspace design via existing trees or the planting of mature trees.

Shade structures are not possible at every local playspace due to the upfront capital cost as well as the ongoing maintenance, the high incidence of vandalism and site constraints.

In line with Cancer Council recommendations, wearing sun-safe clothing such as long sleeves and hats when outdoors and avoiding visiting playspaces at the hottest time of the day (in the middle of the day) is promoted by Council.



### **Why don't all playspaces alongside waterways or roads have fencing?**

Risk assessments are undertaken during the development of concept plans for playspace sites to ensure adequate measures are put in place for the safety of the community.

Partial fencing is occasionally included at playspaces assessed as being too close to a hazard, such as a main road or water body (within ten metres or less). However, parental supervision is always required.



### **Why are there public toilets at some playspaces and not others?**

The co-location of other facilities such as public toilets and pathways for accessibility are considered when selecting locations for new playspaces or relocating existing ones. Regional playspaces are generally designed to include public amenities buildings where they don't already exist.

### **How are playspaces monitored to make sure the equipment is safe?**

To manage risk and provide safe facilities for the community, Council ensures that the design, development and maintenance of playspaces comply with national and state legislation and guidelines.

Council has developed a 20-year management program that provides a long term strategy for repair, replacement and upgrade of play equipment and associated infrastructure.

The management program is reviewed every three to four years to ensure the key directions are consistent with community needs.

In addition, a playspace management program ensures routine inspections, maintenance and cleaning across the region's 260 playspaces. This program is reviewed and adjusted based on needs from year to year.



### **How often are playspaces cleaned?**

Playspaces are serviced every three weeks through warmer months of the year (November to April) and every five weeks during the cooler months (May to October), which also includes litter, weed, graffiti clean-up. In addition, all playspaces are checked during quarterly inspections and any specific needs attended to.

High use priority parks, and any playspaces located within these areas, are serviced weekly (Monday to Friday, with weekend rosters during warmer school holiday periods and long weekends).

The community can report issues that need addressing by contacting Council's customer service – p: 1300 463 954, e: [ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au)

### **How safe is it to use public spaces located next to mobile phone base stations?**

Council understands that the community may have health and safety concerns related to mobile phone base stations.

On advice from the Federal Government's Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency, it is determined that mobile phone base station antennas emit low level radiofrequency (RF) electromagnetic energy (EME), and based on current research there are no established health effects that can be attributed to the low RF EME exposure from mobile phone base station antennas.

A fact sheet provided by this agency is available online <https://www.arpana.gov.au/understanding-radiation/radiation-sources/more-radiation-sources/mobile-phone-base-stations>