

REPORT ON PLAY SPACE STRATEGY

SUMMARY

- Council has commenced a Play Space Strategy in order to set the vision, policy, context, framework and standards for their future renewal and development.
- Public consultation undertaken from the 19 July 2018 to the 17 August 2018 has shown a high interest in play spaces with over 300 responses received.
- Council currently has 60 public play spaces with a combined replacement value of \$8,676,000.
- Council currently allocates \$138,000 per annum in play space renewal.
- The maximum lifespan of most play spaces is 20 years.
- Council is currently underfunding the renewal of play spaces by \$295,800 per annum (68%) when considering current levels of service.
- Four potential scenarios have been created that can inform the creation of the Draft Play Space Strategy.
- Based on current renewal rates all items of play equipment are expected to last for 63 years.

BACKGROUND

Council commenced a Play Space Strategy in 2018 in order to set the vision, policy, context, framework and standards for their future renewal and development and address the significant funding gap occurring in their condition and provision.

Play spaces are defined as any public space that has some physical infrastructure which is designed for play.

ISSUES

A desk top review has been undertaken of each play space in Warrnambool to identify their location; proximity to other play spaces / open spaces; proximity to barriers such as roads, waterways and railway lines; existing play opportunities; and supporting infrastructure such as paths, seats and shade.

Simultaneously, a review of all relevant structure and master plans has been undertaken to identify existing documents related to play space upgrades, renewals or developments. In addition, a community survey and internal workshop has been undertaken to identify community demand and suggestions around play opportunities in the municipality.

The community survey for the Play Space Strategy identified significant public interest with over 300 surveys being returned. The survey data showed that the public strongly desired the continued upgrade and maintenance of play spaces. It also showed that the most visited play spaces were those which were more significant in size such as Lake Pertobe, Cramer Street and Woodford which featured very high use by the general public.

In order to deliver on the continued provision of play spaces as well as maintaining the current stock, Council will need to decide on the best approach given the financial constraints currently being faced.

PROVISION

Council currently provides 60 public play spaces in Warrnambool with a combined replacement value of \$8.6 million dollars. Each play space varies in style, offering, and scale and can generally be broken into the below categories.

Park type, Cost, Amount	Example photos
Level 1 Cost: \$1-2 million+ Number: 2	
Level 2 Cost: \$200 - \$700,000 Number: 8	
Level 3 High Cost: \$90-\$200,000 Number: 19	



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<p>Level 3 Low Cost: \$30- \$90,000 Number: 29</p>		
<p>Other Cost: Varies Number: 2</p>		

Provision is a significant consideration as the amount of play spaces in comparison to the population of children under 15 years of age is high in comparison to many other Councils.



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KPI. Key Performance Indicators: **Provision Indicators**

Export Chart

Provision of playgrounds per 1000 children under 15

Year Selection: 2018

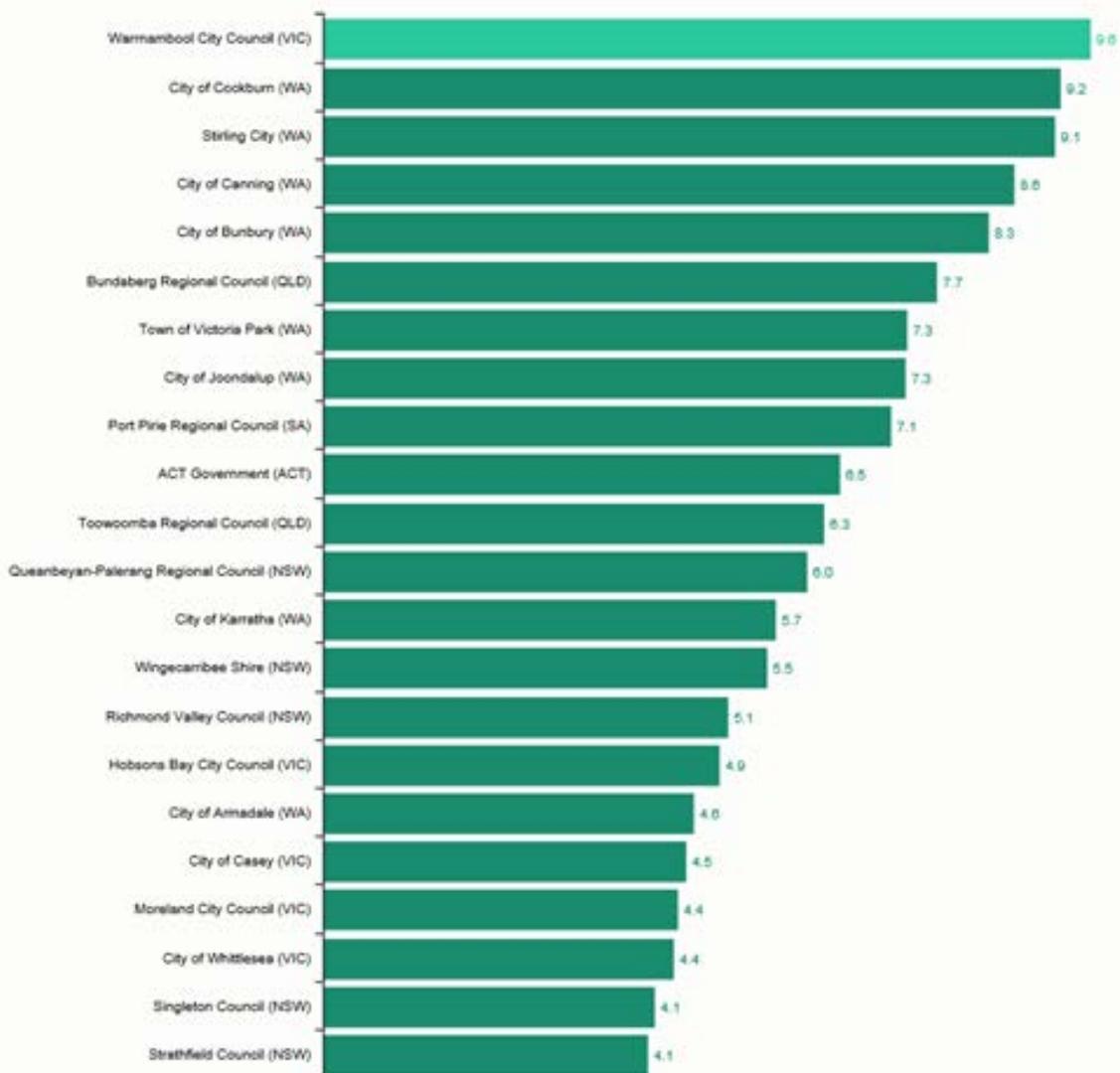


Figure 1 Source: Yardstick Global



POTENTIAL SCENARIOS FOR PROVISION

In order to meet the expectations of the community Council would need to significantly increase its funding provision for the renewal of play spaces.

Currently Council spends \$138,000 per year for the renewal of play spaces; with the total replacement value of all play spaces being \$8,676,000 this leaves a renewal gap of \$295,800 per year.

Based on current renewal rates all items of play equipment are expected to last for 63 years, which is more than three times higher than the adopted practical life or 20 years.

Four scenarios have been considered and are provided below for Council consideration.

The scenarios for the continued provision are: at current levels (with minimal upgrades), the provision possible with current funding (status quo), the provision of the communities' desired upgrades, and a moderate funding increase with reduction in provision.

Replacement Timeframes

It should be noted that in all the scenarios Council is working to a 20-year replacement timeframe, this is 5 years or 25% more than the industry standard of 15 years for the replacement of play spaces.

While some play spaces can technically last 20 years or longer, deterioration will begin to be more evident especially within the 15-20 year timeframe which can make the facilities look dilapidated. In an ideal setting play spaces would be replaced long before they reached the stage of beginning to display structural failures.

Potential Scenario 1 - Current Provision

Provide the current standard and provision of play spaces while undertaking minimal upgrades to facilities providing disabled paths and some infrastructure improvements.

Play space provision:

Play Space Category	Number to be provided for this scenario
Category 1	2
Category 2	8
Category 3 – High	19
Category 3 – Low	29
Other -	2

Cost of provision per year \$433,800

Current shortfall per year \$295,800

Potential Scenario 2 – Provision in line with current funds

This scenario would use the current \$138,000 of funding in the continued replacement of play spaces, this would result in the removal of 54 play spaces at the end of their life and reverting them back to grassed Open Space areas.

Play space provision:

Play Space Category	Number to be provided for this scenario
Category 1	2
Category 2	4
Category 3 – High	0
Category 3 – Low	0
Other -	0
Returned to Open Space at End of Useful Life	54

Cost of provision per year \$138,000

Current shortfall per year N/A

Potential Scenario 3 – Provision for desired upgrades

This scenario would include upgrade to all play spaces, as it is a current expectation that all play spaces are upgraded when they are renewed. This would include upgrading the minimum provision of play spaces to \$90,000 in value as well as major upgrades of Lake Pertobe and 1 Category 3 Low play space.

Play space provision

Play Space Category	Number to be provided for this scenario
Category 1	2
Category 2	10
Category 3 – High	19
Category 3 – Low	28
Other -	2

Cost of provision per year: \$594,790

Current shortfall per year: \$456,790

Potential Scenario 4 – Moderate funding increase and reduction in provision

This scenario would require a modest increase in funding of \$126,000 per annum, this would result in renewal and replacement of major play spaces and removal of 29 play spaces over the next 20 years at the end of their useful life. This scenario also requires that play spaces such as those which are on recreation reserves will have the renewal responsibility transferred to the relevant recreation reserve committee.

Play space provision:

Play Space Category	Number to be provided for this scenario
Category 1	2
Category 2	5
Category 3 – High	15
Category 3 – Low	3
Other -	0
Transfer Responsibility	6
Returned to Open Space at End of Useful Life	29

Cost of provision per year: \$264,000

Current shortfall per year: \$126,000

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The financial impact varies depending on the scenario selected; the financial implication is significant for scenarios 1 and 3 with Council requiring significant funding to address the desired service standards. Scenario 2 will have no financial impact on Council but will see a significant service reduction. Scenario 4 requires a modest increase in funding in order to continue the renewal of approximately half of the play spaces.

LEGISLATION / POLICY / COUNCIL PLAN CONTEXT

2 Foster a healthy City that is socially and culturally rich

2.1 Promote healthy lifestyles

2.4 Encourage and support participation in sport, recreation and physical activity.

2.8 Increase participation opportunities for disadvantaged members of the community.

3 Maintain and improve the physical fabric of the City

3.2 Create a more vibrant City through activating high quality public places.

3.5 Maintain and enhance existing Council Infrastructure.

4 Develop a modern economy with diverse and sustainable employment

4.3 Enhance the visitor experience.

5 Practice good governance through openness and accountability

5.7 Develop policies, strategic plans and processes to address local and regional issues, guide service provision and ensure operational effectiveness.

5.8 Ensure financial sustainability through effective use of Councils resources and assets and prudent management of risk.

5.9 Deliver customer-focused, responsive services.



COMMUNITY IMPACT / CONSULTATION

A community survey was undertaken as part of the Play Space Strategy to identify which play spaces people currently visit, their means of transportation, their activities undertaken and their suggestions to encourage greater use. This strategy was distributed in electronic format through various Council networks and was advertised in the media.

The survey had a very high return rate with 303 people completing the survey, from a geographic perspective, there was a good spread of suburbs amongst survey respondents. 83% of respondents were aged 20-49 and 13% over 50 years of age. Response rates from those under 20 was very low at 4%. The results likely indicate the views are of parents / carer givers more so than young people, although it is presumed that adult respondents completed the survey on behalf of their children / grandchildren or children in their care.

The survey indicated that for the most part it was the more significant in size play spaces which were used more. The local play spaces (level 3) did not feature highly for most residents but the respondents indicated that they would likely travel further to more play spaces if there was more opportunity. The top 8 visited play spaces were as below:

- Lake Pertobe (183 respondents)
- Cramer Street (69 respondents)
- Jubilee Park, Woodford (55 respondents)
- Brierly Park (27 respondents)
- Granny's Grave / Hickford Parade Reserve (13 respondents)
- Pecten Avenue (10 respondents)
- Victoria Park (10 respondents)
- Stanley Street (10 respondents)

Overall there was a significant request for more playground equipment and opportunities with 67 responses containing this request.

LEGAL RISK / IMPACT

There is a significant risk to Council both in public perception as well as liability exposure; the severity of these risks depends on which of the 4 scenarios is considered.

Scenario 1 has risk associated with organisational reputation. While playgrounds will be upgraded, they will not necessarily be upgraded in line with community expectations. While this is a reputational risk it is relatively minor, play spaces will be able to be kept safe with moderate improvements.

Scenario 2 has a very significant reputational risk as most play spaces will be removed as they reach the end of their useful life and the land converted to open space. This will result in significant angst within the community as most community members highly value play spaces even if the play spaces have a relatively low use. Due to the removal of play spaces at their end of useful life, decisions on when the play space is no longer safe to use will be a difficult assessment to undertake potentially creating higher risk assets.



Scenario 3 has the lowest reputational and safety risk as most play spaces will be upgraded to a far higher standard of play space, from a safety standard and the community perception this is the best approach.

Scenario 4 is an approach which still has a fairly high level of reputational risk as there is a substantial amount of play spaces which will be removed at the end of their useful life and converted to grassed open space. This is likely to cause significant angst amongst the community although it will be less so than in Scenario 2. Similar issues will exist in this scenario as in scenario 2 with the desire to keep play spaces operational for the longest time possible.