



# Playground Policy

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Review Date:	
Version:	1
Division/Department:	Technical Services/Open Space & Trees
Responsible Officer:	Team Leader Open Space & Rec Planning
HPE CM Record Number:	19/12350

## Our Policy

Woollahra Council is committed to providing

- Playgrounds that meet the needs of children through all stages of their development.
- Play spaces that are safe, secure and hazard free and well maintained.
- Playgrounds that are accessible to people with special needs.

## Objectives

- To design age-appropriate playgrounds.
- To provide appropriate surfacing under and around playgrounds.
- To properly maintain playgrounds.

The development of a Playground Strategy will help meet these goals. The preparation of a Plan of Management for playgrounds will define how Council will maintain high quality playgrounds. Clear identification of playground usage, safety and maintenance will provide the community with appropriate playgrounds

## How this policy relates to our Management Plan

The Policy contributes to Council's Principal Activity 4, Parks and Public Space, and assists with achieving the following key objective:

- To maintain the parks and other open spaces of Woollahra and provide safe, convenient attractive facilities which meet the recreation needs of the community in a manner which minimises the adverse impacts of human activity, protects the natural attributes of their sites and contributes to the visual amenity of the Municipality.

The Policy sets Council's commitments and goals in the development and management of playgrounds. This document sets criteria that will be used in the development and management of all existing and new playgrounds to ensure playgrounds comply with Australian Standards and allow the public to utilise playground facilities in a safe environment.

## Implementation & Standards

### Playground Elements

#### Softfall

An important aspect of reducing injuries when using playground equipment is to provide cushioned surfaces beneath and around the playground equipment at depths that are appropriate to the equipment height. Surfaces such as grass, asphalt, concrete and dirt are not acceptable surfaces to cushion falls from playground equipment.

Australian Standards has developed a standard for playground surfacing. The objective of this Standard is to minimise the severity of head injury resulting from a fall from the play equipment to the ground below.

The softfall surfaces are to be placed in all playground areas and surround the equipment. The total area of softfall required will depend upon the type of equipment installed at the playground.

Softfall materials should not inhibit play equipment users. Products such as wetpour rubber and synthetic grass will allow to users access to the equipment whereas mulch as softfall limits mobility of wheelchairs etc.

#### Woollahra's Softfall Standards

- Playgrounds are to have softfall surfacing.
- Accepted softfall materials are wetpour rubber, pine bark mulch and synthetic grass. Softfall surfaces are to have the appropriate depth in accordance with AS/NZS 4422:1996.
- The coverage of the softfall surface will be, at a minimum, 2.5m in all directions from the edge of stationary equipment (as specified in AS/NZA4422:1996).
- The coverage of the softfall surface for swings will be a minimum of 2.5m in all directions from the frame and 2.5m the extended chain length in the direction of the swing motion (as specified in AS/NZA4422:1996).
- Council will regularly inspect all softfall surfaces for depths, compaction etc.

## Playground Equipment

The aim of playground equipment is to offer children a challenge and an opportunity to develop physical and social skills whilst being designed and maintained to ensure the risk of injury is minimised. Australian Standards have specified recommendations regarding fall heights, access, equipment arrangement, entrapment etc to ensure the development of playgrounds that are hazard free.

There are many elements that need to be considered when playground equipment is selected. Such things include fall heights, fall zones, entrapment (for head, fingers, feet, chest etc.) access, handgrips, handrails, chains, fixings and structural adequacy. (This is not an exhaustive list). All playground equipment selected must comply with Australian Standards and a manufacturer's guarantee that it is compliant with all relevant Standards.

Equipment that does not allow the user to have full control is considered undesirable. This type of equipment includes plank swings, machinery and maypoles.

### Woollahra's Playground Equipment Standards

- Playground equipment installed will comply with Australian Standards.
- If any existing equipment is determined as being undesirable or unsafe, removal or immobilisation will occur.
- The installation and maintenance of all playgrounds will be completed to manufacturers' and Council's specifications.
- Consideration will be given to people with disabilities when purchasing play equipment (with reference to Council's Disability Access Policy).
- Age appropriateness will be considered during the process of equipment selection.

## Solar Protection

Sun protection is an important component of a playground.

In addition to providing protection for the users of the playground, shading will also prevent many surfaces within the playground from absorbing sunlight and heating up. This is an important factor when installing metal slides and other metallic equipment. During the process of equipment selection, it is necessary to consider colours, materials and proposed aspect for the placement of the equipment as to minimise solar exposure and limit the amount of heat absorbed by the equipment.

Shade can be generated with the installation of shade structures, such as sails and other canopies and through careful placement of vegetation.

### Woollahra's Solar Protection Standards

- Playgrounds will be designed to provide solar protection either through the installation of shade apparatus or landscape design.
- Metal playground equipment is to be installed taking into account aspect and location to minimise heat absorption.
- Consideration will be given to the material and colour of new play equipment to minimise heat absorption.
- Where possible, equipment with small roofs will be used to increase solar protection for the users whilst actively playing.

## Care Givers' Areas

It is important to provide areas that are comfortable for caregivers who supervise children using the playground. Seats, shade, litter bins, toilets and other facilities influence the amount of time users will stay in the playground and use the facilities.

Fencing of the playground area is an effective method of increasing the safety of the playground users. The community commonly requests fencing as it aids in the supervision of the playground users. In addition to safety and supervision benefits, fencing a playground area will also prevent dogs and other animals entering in the playground.

### Woollahra's Standard for facilities for care givers

- Playgrounds will be designed to address the needs of care givers, where possible, with the use of seating, shade, bins, water fountains etc.
- Fencing of the playground will be considered where necessary to promote safety and animal management.

## Signage

Signage is an important element in a playground, not only to identify the space as being a public park, but also to specify behaviour that is appropriate within the playground. Formulation of the Woollahra Council Standard for Signage will include the design of signage for use throughout all playgrounds in the municipality.

As an essential component of the management of playgrounds, dogs must be excluded from playgrounds. Appropriate signage must be installed to ensure owners of dogs keep them away from playgrounds.

### Woollahra's Signage Standard

- Playgrounds will have appropriate signage to describe activities which are not permitted within the area of the playground.
- Signage must state the prohibition of dogs from playgrounds within the municipality.
- Signage used must comply with the appropriate Australian Standards for signage and be consistent with the Woollahra Council Signage Standard.
- In locations where dogs are permitted off leash at all times, playgrounds are to be fenced to exclude animals from entering the playground.

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## Want to know more?

For further information on this policy contact our Parks and Streetscapes Section on 9391 7142

This policy provides an overall statement on how Council will manage all playground assets. Further information on the management of Council's playgrounds will be contained in the Strategy and Plan of Management.

Gary James  
*General Manager*

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## Policy Amendments

Date	Responsible Officer	Description