

Community Playground Reference Group Phase 1 Report



Project Background

In August 2015 the City removed approximately 20% of its playground equipment in public open spaces as it had either reached the end of its lifecycle or was found to be non-compliant. On 24 September 2015 Council endorsed to replace the playground equipment at six parks across the City with the funding allocated for playground equipment renewal in the 2015/16 Budget identified as high priority in the Public Open Space Strategy as part of a phased approach.

The community's passion for playgrounds and letters sent to the City by Year Five students at Geraldton Primary School asking when playground equipment was going to be replaced sparked the creation of a reference group to assist the City in the selection of playground equipment to be installed in six parks.

Workshop 1

On 28 November 2015, members of the Community Playground Reference Group met at Spalding Park for a two hour workshop regarding the replacement of playground equipment at six parks.

The 11 members of the Reference Group include primary school teachers, child educators, progress association representatives, parents and their children aged 10 years and above.

The first part of the workshop consisted of a joint presentation by Andrea Selvey and Andrew Boska from the City of Greater Geraldton regarding:

a) Why playground equipment was removed.

The City conducted an audit of all playgrounds and found that some playground equipment was generally in poor condition and of an unacceptable standard and some softfall areas needed attention. As some of the equipment presented safety risks, the playground equipment was initially fenced off and later removed.

As context, the City is responsible for managing 57 playgrounds including softfall, equipment, shade, and limestone walls.

b) Explanation of the Public Open Space (POS) Strategy.

The POS Strategy 2014 was adopted as a local planning strategy. The Strategy provides an overarching framework and strategic direction implementing a hierarchy system regarding the services and design for public open spaces:

- Local
- Neighbourhood
- District
- Regional
- Conservation
- Foreshore

The POS Strategy contains provision standards which outline the type of assets that the City should provide in public open space based on its hierarchy.

c) *How the Public Open Space Strategy informed Council's resolution.*

On September 22 Council resolved to implement a phased approach to the renewal of playground equipment in parks. The decision was made to renew the playground equipment now, with funds available in 15/16 Playground Renewal Budget at the following parks:

- Mahomets Beach - Neighbourhood Open Space
- Glendinning Park - District Open Space
- Muir Park - District Open Space
- Spalding Park - Regional Open Space
- Pages Beach - Foreshore Reserve
- Rundle Park - Foreshore Reserve

Priority for equipment replacement has been developed in accordance with the parks hierarchy detailed in the City's adopted Public Open Space Strategy - replacing the playgrounds in parks that are classified as either 'District Open Space', 'Regional Open Space', or 'Foreshore Reserve'. The budget for each park was determined by multiple factors, including:

- Park Hierarchy
- Playground size
- Existing equipment (like for like)
- Park utilisation

The funding available for playground renewal in the 2015/16 Budget is \$429,000.00.

d) *The three roles the group.*

The roles the group will have in relation to the replacement of playground equipment and City public open space are as follows:

- Help the City choose playground equipment from the options provided by the suppliers in this first instance
- Share your knowledge and experience of playground equipment to help set the foundations for decisions making around playground equipment in the future
- Help the City balance community aspirations and the available budget in regard to the replacement of playground equipment

There were two questions asked during the workshop.

1. Why can't the toilet blocks be refurbished/replaced at the same time?

Response: Toilet blocks have their own schedule for refurbishment. As their lifespan is generally longer than playground equipment, it often isn't undertaken at the same time.

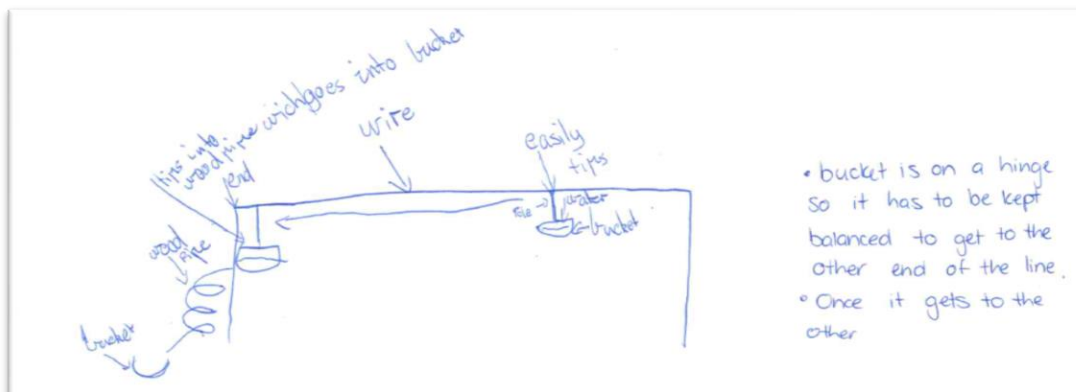
2. Have the schools who have installed nature playgrounds been consulted/will be consulted about the cost and maintenance of their playgrounds?

Response: The City hasn't met with these schools as of yet but will be as research into playground equipment options continues.

The second part of the workshop consisted of small group discussions around the theme of playground equipment. The Group split into two smaller groups to answer two questions. The following is a report of the discussions that took place.

1. Tell us about some really great playground equipment you have seen here or in your travels beyond Geraldton. What made it so great?

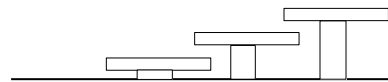
- a) Nature/adventure Playground e.g. St Lawrence, Rangeway Primary Schools, Kings Park, Mt Hawthorn Braithwaite Park <http://www.kids-around-perth.com/braithwaite-park-nature-play-area-mt-hawthorn.html>
 - It's very different, challenging but simple
 - Don't create nature playgrounds because it's trendy – make good decisions
 - Don't pretend the materials being used are natural (e.g. don't just use veneers, etc...)
 - Needs to be made of sturdy, yet natural materials
 - Use of pullies and levers
 - Some of the wood at St. Lawrence's is already splintering
- b) Music based playground in Perth (WA Museum)
- c) Separation of playground space into younger/older areas but not physically separated by a fence though
- d) Things for babies and toddlers to do
- e) A variety of equipment:
 - Climbing frames
 - Spiders
 - Swings - bigger for adults or baby and Mum swings for swinging together (e.g. big round swing at St Lawrence's PS)
 - Tunnels
 - Obstacle courses
 - Things that make noise - things to bang on
- f) Use of recycled materials e.g. tyres Quintillian School Mt. Claremont <http://www.quintilianschool.wa.edu.au/our-school>
- g) Equipment not being of a fixed purpose (e.g. n open platform can be many things forcing children to use their imagination)
- h) Good access and inclusion pathways for the young, disabled and the elderly
- i) Use topography, long slides on big hills and the use of a climbing wall to access the top of the slide so young children can't get to it
- j) Use of gradients or different levels, boundaries or textures to walk on
- k) Use of big steps to keep small children off of playground equipment they shouldn't be on
- l) Use of science and physics in the equipment things to fill up and move around



- m) Shade, either man made or trees so the equipment doesn't get so hot to touch
- n) Enough space for adults to either accompany/rescue children
- o) Good visibility across the equipment so parents can scan the equipment to spot their kids
- p) Knowledge of area's demographics (e.g. ropes get cut at night when no one is around)
- q) Equipment to hide in such as tunnels could be made of materials that can be seen through – safety concerns.

2. Looking back at the playground equipment we had, did you notice anything that was missing or could be improved upon?

- a) More swings and variations of swings, different sized swings
- b) Wide slides, long slides
- c) Shade, more trees and use clever planting
- d) Things that can work with our wind
- e) Adventurous things/challenges for older children
- f) Mazes
- g) Obstacles
- h) Flying fox
- i) Climbing things like monkey bars wider so kids can pass each other or swirly not just straight
- j) See saws – old fashioned equipment
- k) Music or things that make noise
- l) Use of platforms instead of ladders
- m) Public art kids can climb and play on and touch
- n) Interactive pieces – turnstiles that you turn to make images (like the letter one)
- o) Wheelchair and pram access
- p) Equipment that toddlers can use
- q) Ramp at Pages Beach that lets you access the equipment easier
- r) Elevated playground equipment lets you collect children easier
- s) Tactile experiences – sensory type stuff
- t) Equipment to play with and make things out of - could be locked up at night or have TAFE students or Progress Associations manage
- u) Nature play, using everyday things or resources at the place that are at hand (e.g. Kings Park)
- v) Pop Up Playgrounds – equipment that could be moved around
- w) Colours – new colours rather than primary colours could incorporate with a theme – Let's go to the orange park
- x) Themed Parks
- y) Mega parks – a few really good ones that offer a great experience
- z) Variety of items – Make each park different



Workshop 2

On 12 December 2015, the Community Playground Reference Group met a second time.

The objectives of the second workshop were to:

1. To visit each of the six parks that will have their playground equipment replaced in the coming months to assist you in visualising how the playground equipment options will look in each park.
2. To choose the playground equipment option that should be built in each of the parks.

Before the tour began the group decided that a simple majority vote would determine which playground equipment option would be built in each of the parks.

The group then boarded a bus and visited each of the parks, except Spalding park as the first meeting of the Group had been held in this location. During the drive to each park group members were informed of the hierarchy of the park in relation to the Public Open Space Strategy, who visits the park, some of the park's more popular uses for (e.g. birthday parties) and the walking distance to the next park with playground equipment.

During each park visit, Group members took the opportunity to view the open space and discuss among themselves the playground equipment options in terms of what they liked, didn't like or what was missing. They were also asked to provide the City with their comments by adding them to their ballot paper.

Group members then voted for the playground equipment option they preferred and gave their ballot paper to a City staff member. Preliminary voting results were shared with the group. (These results were considered preliminary as two group members could not take part in the bus tour and submitted their voting results on 14 December 2015.)

Voting Results of Playground Equipment Options

Location	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Preferred Option
Rundle Park	10(4)	3	XXXXXXX	1
Muir Park	8 (1)	5 (3)	XXXXXXX	1
Glendinning Park	0	13 (4)	XXXXXXX	2
Mahomets Beach	8 (4)	2	XXXXXXX	1
Pages Beach	6 (2)	0	7 (2)	3
Spalding Park	7 (2)	6 (2)	XXXXXXX	1

*The number in red indicates the number of children who voted for the option.

Rundle Park Participant Comments

Preferred Option: 1

Children Comments:

- I like option 1 because it's pretty much for everyone but I like the climbing frame on option 2.
- Option 1 is spread out and big. Lots of different things, good for all ages. Option 2 has too many features.
- I think option 1 is better because it has a lot more equipment and it looks more exciting. The only thing I liked about option 2 is that it had a cute polished thingy that looked interesting that I would like to be part of option 1.
- Option 1 is the perfect playground for the park but there is a bit too much blue and green.

Adult Comments:

- Option 2 has excellent smooth steps, possible lower flying fox.
- I like option 1 because of the spread out (open) amount of equipment but the low steps of option 2 are great. Use steps rather than rungs on ladders.
- Option 1 presents a greater opportunity to the viewer and hopefully a want to engage. Great opportunity to play chasing games and possible to have ideas for play incorporated.
- Option 2 climbing cube would be a great incorporation in option 1 where the monkey bars and spider net are.
- Option 1 has more variety, less moving parts, more shade cover.
- Option 1 is more spread out and has more features, more challenging and suites the bigger space.
- Option 2 has too many useless features e.g. plastic bubble walls.
- Option 1 provides greater variety, more play spaces and more climbing opportunities.
- Don't like the separateness of option 2.
- Option 1 provides a larger scope of challenge for all ages.
- Option 2 caters for more specific ages e.g. younger or much older so not so multi useable.
- Option 2 is more appealing for the younger and older children.
- Option 1 is more appealing for the older children.
- Option 2 I like the boat theme, it is nice by the sea.
- Option 2 has a wider target audience. Younger children can play in one section, older children in another. This option suits families with both age groups.
- Option 1 but just use different colours (purple, aqua, pink)

Muir Park Participant Comments

Preferred Option: 1

Children Comments:

- Option 2 really depends on the measurement but I like to climb.
- I also like the swing in option 1.
- Option 2 is not good for small kids.
- More swings for option 1.
- Option 1 is good for big and small kids
- I like option 2 better because it looks interesting and more exciting.
- Option 1 has a great swing and I think they should swap swings even though the tornado swing is dangerous but it is fun and it helps you learn. It seems way 'funner'.
- Option 2 would be really fun, there is enough space for the kids e.g. swings.

Adult Comments:

- Option one is good for kids who love to climb and swing.
- Option 2 would be more relevant to older kids than younger.
- Would like the tornado swing from option 1 in option 2.
- Love the swing in option 1
- I think option 2 caters more for older kids but I loved its quiriness.
- Put the swing from option 1 in option 2 and lower the handles for greater access by smaller children.
- Add a low flying fox from the 400mm high platform in option 1.
- Option 1 is more inclusive of more age groups and again lots of choices in the space.
- Option 1 has more features for more age ranges it suits the users of the park.
- Option 1 is a better all age play place. In context for me with my Kindy class visiting this space (from SCC) the children would access the whole system but that would be limited with option 2.
- Option 1 caters to a more diverse age range.
- Option 1 is more appealing to different ages.
- Option 2 is more appealing for older children.
- I love the round swing nice for young and older children.
- Nice shaded area.
- Option 1 had more variety. Will upset motor bike riders. Maybe a need for more weed control to reduce snakes due to bush area.
- Option 2 it's good that there is two of each swings.

Glendinning Park Participant Comments**Preferred Option: 2****Children Comments:**

- I like option 2 because it has a lot more obstacles and the swings are awesome. It is a lot more open and it looks a lot more interesting. I think it suits the area with the Skatepark and toilets.
- Glendinning is important to me because I live up the road and like to play on this after school every day.
- Option 2 is good for chasing games with separate net and swings.
- In Option 2 there is enough equipment for all the kids that go to this park. It is well fitted for all age groups as lots of people have parties at this park.

Adult Comments:

- Nice shaded area. Option 2 has a larger variety for greater range of children. Nice low tree branches in the park.
- Option 2 can accommodate more. Love the spider web.
- Option 2 swing choice looks awesome however kids are facing out, not very social.
- Option 2 provides for a much wider range of aged participants.
- Option 2 seems more fun to me, more variety.
- Option 2 has a great circuit, looks inviting to play on.
- Option 2 includes more options for many ages however I love the five swings from option 1
- Would like to see the swings from option 1 swapped into option 2 although the pentagon swing in option 1 doesn't allow for kids who cannot swing themselves.
- Option 2 has far more variety of play.
- Option 2 offers more diversity to all ages.
- I have chosen option 2 because I have been to this park and know that is a very popular park for people to have parties at.

Mahomets Beach Participant Comments

Preferred Option: 1

Children Comments:

- Option 1 could be bigger. It's adventurous but has no swings.
- Option 2 is good for imaginative play and not fun for older kids.
- Option 2 looks quite boring.
- I think option 2 was actually pretty boring but you could add to it.
- Although option 2 was boring it seem a lot more interesting than option 1. It would be even more better if it had swings.
- Option 1 has a variety of fun equipment for the kids to play on.

Adult Comments:

- A swing needs to be considered with option 1 design.
- Option 1 to include swings.
- Option 2 looks like a fort and nothing else with some changes it could be more useable.
- Grounds well maintained, limited shade areas, corrosion will be a problem in this area.
- Option 1 has got more variety. I like the colours better they will suit the surrounding better. Would like a swing though.
- Neither of these designs – want more options.
- Please add a swing to option 1 if possible the tornado swing.
- Either option would be okay although option 2 provides swings.
- Possible an alternative colour than brown.
- Option 1 with a swing or another option
- More features.
- Option 1 with more options for activities. However, some swings would be great.
- Option 1 will tie in well with the existing spider net.

Pages Beach Comments

Preferred Option: 3

Children Comments:

- I like option 3 because it has a wheelchair ramp and drums.
- I like option 3 because it has lots of awesome obstacles and it also connects with the (old – removed) playground equipment.
- Wheelchair ramps are great but I like how option 1 is very different to the others.
- Option 1 playground is well thought out with lots of activities for different age groups. It also uses the space well.

Adult Comments:

- Option 3 looks good.
- Option 2 has amazing access with the ramp going all the way through.
- Option 3 has more activities and is more interesting. If the wave platform had rails along both sides, once a child in a wheelchair got onto the equipment they could pull themselves along.
- Place musical activities alongside the ramps for greater use and interest.
- I think option 1 is more appealing for the younger children than option 2 or 3. It's missing the round swing though.
- Option 1 is wheelchair friendly. Very important.
- Love the Argonaut and musical drums in option 1
- I think option 1 provides some variation to simply climbing and sliding.

- Option 1 Argonaut, climbers and drums are different from everything else we have chosen, with five separate areas. That's a bonus!
- Option 3 has more variety. Will be a high corrosive area and high maintenance.
- Need for limestone and retaining wall.
- Limited shade. Not as well maintained area.
- Option 3 would be great if the drums were accessible from the ramp.
- Option 1 is more dynamic.
- Like the ramp access with option 3 it enables kids with disability to access the park.
- Option 3 low slide near access ramp would benefit from being wider to accommodate disabled children.
- Option 3 good corner form and variety. Is in keeping with what was previously here.
- It appears from this space that the boundary of the space can be expanded. All other parks limit the expansion or incorporation of extra features by the 'rectangular limestone block space'. Removal of artificial boundaries at all parks would increase the organic look and feel.
- I think option 1 would be a very good playground, it has lots of different options for kids to play on and uses the space well.

Spalding Park Comments

Preferred Option: 1

Children Comments:

- I like option 2. Option 1 has lots of cool shapes but too many webs.
- Option 1 is very interesting and I think option 1 is a lot more detailed and is very 'climby'. Everybody has got to climb!
- I chose option 1 because it's for all age groups except for people who can't climb.
- Option 2 is a great space for younger children and the older children could play on the existing wood exercising equipment as well as the new stuff.

Adult Comments:

- The only thing I worry about option 1 is the tunnel slide it may cause antisocial behaviour, but otherwise a good option.
- Demographic of children. I believe they would benefit more from option 2
- Based on the 'demographics' of the visitors to the park such a broad range of abilities in option 1, the 'one' design e.g. little children can climb the webs to their ability.
- Option 1 is really different and provides a draw card to attract families. I prefer option 2 without the tunnel at the top of the slide.
- Option 2 has excellent swing choices and variety of equipment.
- Option 1 provides more variety for a range of ages. Lots of self-regulated climbing opportunities and colours.
- Don't like the covered slide in option 2 it looks like Hungry Jacks/McDonalds playgrounds.
- Option 1 very appealing and different from more traditional playgrounds.
- The climbing equipment in option 1 will be great for developing motor skills and caters for all ages. It also has a junior section.
- Option 1 – everybody loves to climb.
- Option 1 has lots of webs but I like option 2 because it has more variety or activity.
- Option 2 better variety, more suitable for a variety of children. More shade over the equipment. Grass needs cutting along the limestone wall.