



Playspace Management Plan

2021 - 2025

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1. Executive Summary

This Playspace Management Plan has been developed in order to:

- Provide a clearly defined and consistent approach to the way the City of Ballarat manages playspace assets and issues from an operational perspective;
- Assist City of Ballarat staff in determining priorities for playspace programs and works; and
- Support and complement Council's Playspace Strategy 2017.

The Playspace Management Plan will provide principles and reference policies for how the City of Ballarat addresses:

- Playspace management;
- Risk identification and mitigation; and
- Playspace inspections and assessments.

2. Background

The City of Ballarat will be known for its well-designed, fun, creative, innovative, high quality and diverse play spaces that contribute to the development needs of the Ballarat community and its visitors.

The City of Ballarat has 132 facilities (including play spaces, youth spaces, skate facilities, BMX and fitness stations). Council understands its role in the planning and management of playspaces within the City of Ballarat to:

- Be the primary partner, provider, operator, advocate and facilitator in the delivery of play opportunities;
- Provide principles and guidance on the social and health outcomes that Council is seeking in the provision of playspaces;
- Develop the policy framework, principles, guidelines and standards to be utilised in the planning and delivery of playspaces;
- Influence the provision of quality play opportunities that are equitable in their distribution and diversity;
- Engage with the community to understand their needs and aspirations and work with them to create vibrant, engaging and sustainable play spaces;
- Promote the benefits of play and the municipal play facilities available; and
- Mitigate risk of injury to the user and the public in general.

Standards AS 4685 (Parts 1-6 and 11): 2017 are the current standards dealing with the design, manufacturing, installation and maintenance of playground equipment and AS/NZS 4422: 2016 which is the standard that deals with playground undersurfacing. These documents are considered 'best practice' guidelines.

Playspaces are an essential part of the urban and rural fabric, providing economic and social benefits. They are highly important and should be managed similarly to other Council assets including the drainage network, roads and footpaths.

3. Playspace Management Issues

Playspaces, like any other asset, need to be managed to maximise their benefits and minimise adverse effects. The various components of the built form are subject to many factors including wear and tear, weather and, vandalism. Their life cycle can vary enormously, is not easy to predict and requires ongoing assessment.

The City of Ballarat is committed to the efficient and effective management of playspaces within the Municipality. Playspaces are assessed based on their hierarchy, any identifiable defects and the probability of the defects resulting in injury or failure of the equipment. Proactive and reactive works will always need to be managed carefully when the level of resources is limited.

An inventory of playspaces which includes their location, equipment, condition, size and surrounding environment provides the basis for making qualified decisions. It is also essential to be able to interrogate the data and keep the information up to date. To this end it is imperative that any works conducted are recorded in Council's asset management system, "Confirm". Currency and completeness of inventory data is also essential for good long-term strategic assessment, direction and plan development.

4. Risk Management

Play is an opportunity to challenge, learn and grow and with this comes varying degrees of beneficial risk. Playspaces whilst designed and managed by Council to provide a suitable duty of care towards children and young people, also need to be engaging to encourage children to challenge themselves and develop the confidence and resilience needed to tackle new activities. Even playspaces that are compliant with standards and regulations are not 'risk free' and the best preparation that can be offered to children is to teach them to have good judgement on their own capabilities. Risk Benefit Assessment is a process used by those managing playspaces to assess the inherent play value of any playspace against potential risks and hazards that may form part of that environment. The result should be a balanced approach to providing for play that includes maintaining valuable activities that may pose some risk, whilst at the same time teaching children the skills needed to manage themselves effectively in these environments. This process also allows for any identified hazards to be modified or removed. In all cases known risks in playspaces should be monitored over time.

The Risk Management approach is based on a three-step process:

1. Inspect the asset;
2. Identify any defects which may affect the structural integrity of the asset; and
3. Implement the appropriate action within the required response time.

Risk management for playgrounds includes the rich and challenging play environments that allow children and young people to test and explore their abilities, whilst managing risks to avoid the likelihood of serious harm.

The risk associated with playgrounds is a combination of the location, equipment, deterioration and vandalism. Management of the risk needs to take these factors into account.

The Australian Standard (AS/NZS 31000:2018 Risk Management) provides a sound methodology for managing risk. Standards for playspaces aim not to make them 'risk-free', rather they are designed to reduce the likelihood and severity of injuries.

Risk assessment is the overriding factor in determining priority for works and allocating resources. Inspections and risk assessments require standardised and documented procedures. These are undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced staff/contractors.

4.1 Proactive Inspections

These inspections are scheduled in accordance with Appendix A. A contractor or staff member will inspect the playspace for any defects which may impact the structural integrity of the asset or present a risk of injury to the user. Any mitigation works logged on the equipment and surrounds will be determined in accordance with the location of the playspace, the type of defect identified and the likelihood that the defect will result in injury to the user. Mitigation works will be referred for further action in accordance with Appendix B.

4.2 Reactive Inspections

These inspections come about after Council is notified of:

1. An incident related to an insurance claim;
2. A report of an issue by the community; or
3. Identification of an issue by a Council employee.

Defects which could potentially cause injury are phoned through to Council officers and made safe within 2 working days or as soon as possible.

4.3 Integrated Asset Management System

Council utilises an Integrated Asset Management System (IAMS) to store all relevant information regarding Council's playspace assets, as well as the results of any inspections, and works carried out. This system enables the appropriate scheduling of maintenance and programmed works, as well as providing data for the internal auditing of processes.

4.4 Customer Tracking and Document Management Systems

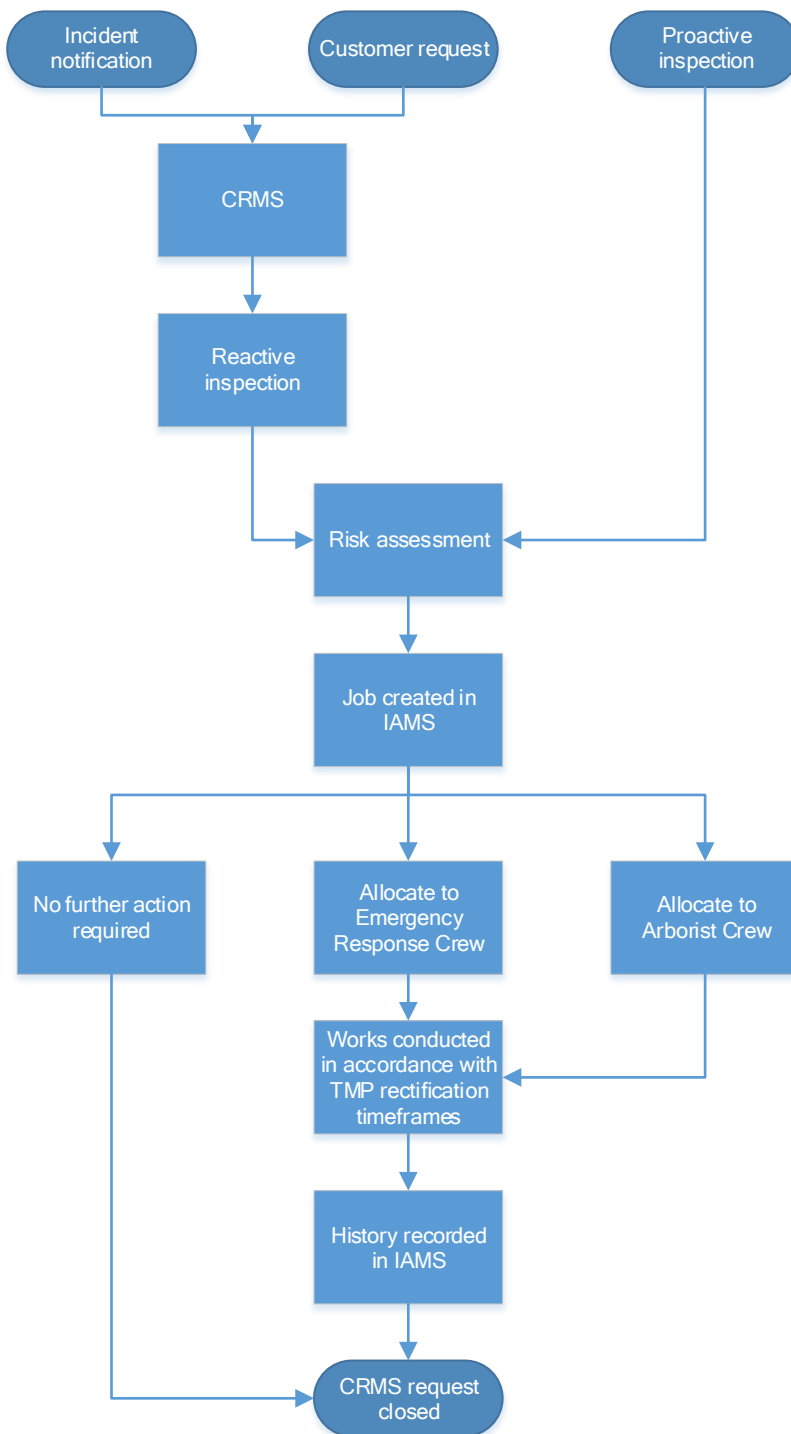
Council utilises a customer tracking system to trace customer requests through the organisation. The tracking system enables the appropriate delegation of maintenance and programming requests to the Infrastructure and Environment Department.

The customer tracking system and IAMS are linked using the asset number allowing requests to be cross referenced between the two systems and allowing asset history information to be retained. Council also maintains an electronic document storage and retrieval system to manage all incoming correspondence.

Related Documents

Risk Management AS/NZS 31000:2018
City of Ballarat Risk Management Policy
City of Ballarat Risk Management Procedure
City of Ballarat Playspace Strategy 2017

Workflow



5. Plan Improvement and Monitoring

The Playspace Management Plan is an evolving document to be reviewed and refined on an on-going basis. A complete review of the plan and compliance is to be conducted every four years.

5.1 Performance Measures

The following objectives must be met to measure the performance of the plan:

- Inspection frequencies meet the prescribed schedule; and
- Responses to defect requests within the prescribed time-frame.

A report is to be presented to the Director, Infrastructure and Environment on an annual basis regarding compliance with the plan.

5.2 Internal Auditing of Processes

The processes that are to be audited internally per annum are as follows:

- Collection and storage of condition information;
- Recording of complaints/requests in the appropriate database in the manner required;
- Complaint/request is inspected and/or assessed in relation to risk/safety & specified maintenance intervention levels;
- Proactive inspections are carried out as scheduled;
- Relevant inspection reporting and recording mechanisms are in place;
- Reported defects are being properly recorded in the system;
- Where required, appropriate rectification responses are determined, and Works Orders issued;
- Record of maintenance activities is made in the database against the asset, including actual date of completion;
- Record that maintenance works have been delivered as intended (i.e. an appropriate Council Officer has signed off on the satisfactory completion of the work);
- Management system in place to record and respond to customer enquiries; and
- Asset handover/update process is being managed as required.

The outcome of the internal audit is to be reported to Council's Audit Committee, while responsibility for overseeing the audit process belongs to the Executive Manager Property and Facilities Management.

6. Access to Document

This document is available to the public at the following locations:

- Online at www.ballarat.vic.gov.au; and
- Customer Service, 25 Armstrong Street South, Ballarat Central.

7. Applicability

This Playspace Management Plan will be applicable to the following:

- Regional level open space;
- District level open space; and
- Neighbourhood/local level open space.

8. Playspace Inspections

Council will endeavour to assess all applicable Playspaces within the Municipality to determine their potential for public risk with inspection frequencies determined by that potential.

Appendix A details the inspection frequencies based on the Playspace hierarchy.

To enable Council to effectively monitor and maintain its Playspace assets Council must maintain an up-to-date inventory of these assets within the Integrated Asset Management System (IAMS).

Each Playspace in the IAMS is uniquely identified and assigned a category in the hierarchy relevant to its size and usage. Further information relating to the IAMS can be found in the Asset Management Strategy and the relevant Asset Management Plans.

Information contained within this inventory is defined within Council's data standards.

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix A – Inspection Frequencies

Hierarchy Category	Proactive Inspections Defect	Reactive Inspections
Regional Playspace	Monthly	Within 2 working days of notification
District Playspace	Every 3 months	Within 2 working days of notification
Neighbourhood Playspace	Every 6 months	Within 2 working days of notification

Yearly visual condition audits are carried out on all playgrounds owned by the City of Ballarat and as listed in council's asset management system.

The audits are carried out by an accredited playground auditor who reports on any defects and classifies the overall condition of the asset using the following criteria.

Table: Condition Rating Table

Condition Level	Description
1	Excellent (as new)
2	Good
3	Fair
4	Poor
5	Failed (unserviceable)

The inspector will conduct the check against the nominated condition comparing this with the condition grade's expected remaining useful life. E.g. If the inspector has assigned the playground with a condition grade of 'poor', then the playground has a remaining useful life of between 2-3 years, if the inspector believes that the playground has a longer remaining useful life, then a high condition grade must be applied, such as 'good'.

Condition Grade	Description	Maintenance Outcome	Remaining Useful Life
1. Excellent	As New, sound equipment well maintained.	Minimal maintenance required to allow asset to perform at excellent condition.	13-15
2. Good	As grade 1, showing minor wear, tear and deterioration e.g., minor impact damage, but no loss of protective coatings, staining of fastenings and welds. Deterioration has no significant impact on strength, appearance and safety.	Minor maintenance required to allow asset to perform at excellent or good condition.	8-12
3. Fair	Equipment function sound, but appearance affected by minor wear and tear e.g., flaking of protective coatings, staining of steel and fastenings. Deterioration beginning to affect the strength, appearance, and safety of the equipment.	Minor maintenance required to allow asset to perform at average condition. Some maintenance work required to allow asset to perform at good or excellent condition.	4-7
4. Poor	Equipment functioning but with problems due to significant wear and tear e.g. loss of protective coatings, corrosion of steel, fastenings and welds, impact damage, loosening of fastenings and supports, likely to cause a marked deterioration in strength, appearance and safety.	Significant maintenance and renewal required to allow asset to perform at average condition. Excessive maintenance and renewal required to allow asset to perform at good condition	2-3
5. Failed	Equipment has serious problems and has failed or is about to fail soon, causing unacceptable strength, stability, safety and appearance. Urgent replacement/ rehabilitation required	Excessive maintenance and renewal are required to allow asset to perform at any condition.	1 (Replacement required within next financial year.)

9.2 Appendix B – Rectification Response Times Playspace Defects

Priority	Maintenance Level	Response Time	Examples	Examples	Examples
A M1	Urgent Safety Issue	48 Hrs	Broken Harness, Open S Hooks. Potential Entrapment issues	Sharps, potential of falls, Missing safety barrier. Loose bolts/fixings Animals	Chemicals, Contaminated soft fall. Broken equipment
B M2	High Priority	1 Week	Missing bolt. Broken Welds	Replace damaged slide	Reattach chain climber
C M3	General Maintenance	1 Month	Replace missing footrest cap	Resin fill chips in surface	Replace worn bushes inside hanger bracket