

10.5.3 Fencing of Playspaces

To the Chief Executive Officer

Directorate: Infrastructure Services

Business Unit: Infrastructure and Projects

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to respond to Resolution 14.1 from the Ordinary Council Meeting of 26 September 2023:

- 1. Investigate and prepare a report identifying playgrounds that are currently fenced and the most suitable park in each Shellharbour City ward for the inclusion of boundary fencing with gates to its playground, and report back to Council on the associated costs for each play space identified;*
- 2. Prepare and present this report to Council prior to the preparation of the next Delivery Program/Operational Plan, and*
- 3. Prepare a policy in relation to the fencing of playgrounds with consideration of the Everyone Can Play Guidelines.*

This report presents the methodology used to identify play spaces within the City that would benefit the community if outfitted with enclosed fencing. Additionally, it offers a cost projection for the installation of fencing around each of the identified areas. This report also recommends a policy position on the future fencing of play spaces be established through the preparation of a Play Strategy.

Recommendation

That Council resolve to include playground fencing within the Draft 2024/25 Capital Works Program. This consideration should be aligned with the Operational Plan and evaluated against other priorities of the City.

Background

Council is currently guided by play organisations such as Ausplay NSW, Kidsafe NSW and the Shellharbour Open Space and Recreation Strategy

2020, and as such, does not deem fencing of all playspaces to be required. This is due to several factors such as costs associated with installation and maintenance, segregation from surrounding open space infrastructure, kick around areas and picnic settings, potentially restricting access for wheelchair users to enter fenced spaces, and interrupting passive surveillance and views.

However, it is acknowledged that in some circumstances, some playspaces could be fenced or partially fenced to support very young children, parents/carers who are supervising more than one child, children with a disability, or address sites with a high level of risk.

Council aims to provide a variety of play opportunities and experiences and has provided a small number of play spaces across the City that are fenced or partially fenced, so there are options for parents and carers whose children require additional security.

Types of Fencing and Barrier Design

Built form fencing has only been considered for the purposes of this report, however, it is noted that play space designs may use a number of alternate methods to create visual and physical barriers. These playground designs may incorporate increased gate opening or footpath widths. Common design styles used include:

- Grass mounds,
- Plantings/vegetation,
- Timber post and rail barriers,
- Low retaining style walls of timber, stone or brick,
- Combination of fencing

Partially fenced playgrounds offer other opportunities to interact with the broader park or natural settings and increase passive activities within the area without being separated. The fencing layouts will generally restrict access to roads or other potential hazards, while allowing easy flow and access to grassed or nature play areas.

Current and partially fenced playgrounds in Shellharbour

For the purposes of this report, fencing is defined as a continuous built structure, with an approximate minimum height of 1 metre, that is sturdy and cannot be moved. **Table 1** below lists the parks and their location related to a Ward for those existing sites that are fully fenced (with or without a gate) or partially fenced.

Table 1 – Existing playgrounds fully or partially fenced

Park / Playspace	Ward	Fencing type
Ski Way Park	B	Fully fenced with gate
Tullimbar Park (Balmoral Parade)	A	Fully fenced without gate
Mood Park	A	Partially fenced
Central Park	B	Partially fenced
Village Green	D	Partially fenced

Assessment of park suitability for inclusion of fencing and associated costs

With guidance taken from Everyone Can Play Guidelines, Ausplay NSW and Kidsafe NSW, the following factors were considered in a desktop assessment of playgrounds that may benefit from fencing:

- Park Hierarchy (Local, District, or City Wide)
- Current fencing
- Age of play equipment
- Accessibility and inclusivity elements
- Age range the playground accommodates
- Demographics of the area, including disability data and proportion of children
- Ancillary infrastructure e.g. toilets, seating, shade, water stations, barbecues
- Proximity to high traffic volume roads
- Proximity to shared path or cycleway
- Proximity to carparking
- Proximity to waterway
- Proximity to dog off-leash areas

Consideration of Park Hierarchy was considered a key factor, as higher order parks have additional supporting infrastructure compared to local play spaces. Play spaces with newer equipment were also prioritised to minimise constraints when future works are undertaken. Each shortlisted play space in **Table 2** was subject to an individual site inspection and considered in more detail against a set of attributes that would support the inclusion of fencing.

Table 2 – Shortlisted play spaces that benefit from fencing

Playspace	Suburb	Ward
Central Park	Oak Flats	B
Mood Park	Albion Park	A
Village Green	Flinders	D

Playspace	Suburb	Ward
Tullimbar Park (Balmoral Parade)	Tullimbar	A
Caldwell Park	Barrack Heights	C
Reddall Reserve (Pirate Playspace)	Lake Illawarra	C
James Cook Park	Shell Cove	D
Seascape Park	Shell Cove	D
Collins Reserve	Blackbutt	D

The shortlisted playspaces were then subject to site assessments. The outcome of these assessments resulted in the play spaces listed in **Table 3** that could be considered for fencing as part of the upcoming Draft Operational Plan against other priorities, with approximate costs for installation of fencing, gates and associated infrastructure.

Table 3 – Existing play spaces assessed as priority playgrounds

Playspace	Suburb	Ward	Fencing Type	Estimated Cost
Mood Park	Albion Park	A	Fully fenced with gate	\$25,000
Central Park	Oak Flats	B	Fully fenced with gate	\$26,500
Reddall Reserve (Pirate Playspace)	Lake Illawarra	C	Fully fenced with gate	\$29,000
Collins Reserve	Blackbutt	D	Fully fenced with gate	\$21,000
Total				\$101,500

The cost of fencing for the four identified playgrounds must be made with full consideration of the associated whole of life costs which extend beyond the initial outlay for installation. The whole of life costs encompass ongoing maintenance, eventual replacement, and end-of-life disposal costs. These expenses, alongside depreciation and the potential for unforeseen repairs due to factors such as vandalism, collectively contribute to the total financial commitment required. Therefore, it is crucial that Council carefully evaluates the long-term financial implications and the impact on asset management budgets before proceeding with the inclusion of fencing.

Future Play Strategy

The preparation of a Play Strategy is an action of the Shellharbour Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2020. The purpose of a Play Strategy is to consider a number of factors associated with playspaces, such as fencing, to provide guidance on the future of play, and how to best meet the needs of the community.

The Play Strategy will address the use of fences around playspaces and will consider the NSW Government's Everyone Can Play Guidelines. This will, in turn, provide Council with a policy position on fencing of playspaces that has been informed by a more detailed strategic assessment. Until the Play Strategy is developed, Council will continue to consider the need for fencing against the criteria identified in this report as playspaces are renewed.

Council Implications

FINANCIAL / RESOURCES

The estimated cost to fence and provide associated works for the four proposed playspaces is \$101,500. These projects will be included in the Draft 2024/25 Capital Works Program within the Operational Plan for consideration against other City priorities. Council's consideration to install fencing at the identified playgrounds should take into account the whole of life costs, including installation, maintenance, replacement, and disposal. A decision requires a thorough evaluation of these long-term financial commitments for fencing against the Council's asset management budget and existing playground priorities.

LEGISLATION AND POLICY (INCLUDING ADVOCACY, STRATEGIC AND OTHER PLANS)

As part of the future Play Strategy, a policy position in relation to fencing of playgrounds will be developed with consideration of the Everyone Can Play guidelines, the Shellharbour Open Space and Recreation Strategy 2020, and the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-2026.

SOCIAL IMPACT

The topic of fencing playspaces has previously been raised through the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee, as well as feedback from the community. Council aims to provide a variety of play opportunities and experiences and has provided a small number of playspaces across the City that are fenced or partially fenced so there are options for the community to choose a playspace that suits their needs. More playspaces may be fenced into the future, providing more recreation options for the

community.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Nil.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Nil.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

Nil.

Link to Community Strategic Plan

This report supports the following objectives, strategies and actions of the Community Strategic Plan:

1.2 We are a liveable community

1.2.2 Promote healthy living and high-quality public spaces that are well maintained and activated

1.2.2.02 Implement the Shellharbour City Open Space and Recreation Needs Study and Strategy

1.2 We are a liveable community

1.2.3 Construct and upgrade buildings and infrastructure that meet current and future community needs

1.2.3.11 Develop and scope a prioritised capital works program informed by asset planning

Previous Council Resolutions (including type and date of meeting)

[26 September 2023](#)

Consultation

Internal

Recreation Planner

Senior Community Planning Officer

Community Development Officer - Access and Participation

External

Nil

Political Donations Disclosure

Not applicable.

Options

Option 1

Include fencing of playgrounds in the Draft 2024/25 Capital Works Program as part of the Operational Plan against other City priorities.

Option 2

Include fencing of playgrounds in the 2023/24 Capital Works Program. Cuthbert Drive Stormwater Renewal would be rephased to the 2024/25 financial year as a result.

Option 3

Not consider fencing of playgrounds in the Draft 2024/25 Capital Works Program as part of the Operational Plan against other City priorities.

Conclusion

Council aims to provide a variety of play opportunities and experiences and has provided a small number of playspaces across the City that are fenced or partially fenced so there are options for parents and carers whose children require additional security. Projects to fence additional playspaces could be included in the Draft 2024/25 Capital Works Program within the Operational Plan, pending the resolution of Council and consideration of other renewal priorities. A Play Strategy will be developed in consideration of the NSW Government's Everyone Can Play Guidelines. This will provide Council with a policy position on fencing of playspaces that has been informed by a more detailed strategic assessment.

Attachments

None