



Submission on the Draft Wellington Play Spaces Policy

This submission is from the Newtown Residents' Association.

We wish to speak to our submission.

Introduction

The Newtown Residents' Association is the Incorporated Society representing Newtown and the surrounding suburbs. We are an active local group of residents and businesspeople, concerned with maintaining and improving our area's liveability, connectedness and sustainability and working to make our community a thriving, diverse, great place to live.

Submission

Overall we support the draft Policy. We agree with the philosophy underlying all five strategic priorities. We also commend the Council for including information that informs playground designs such as the play space theory and the age appropriate activity guideline in Appendix 1, and the survey carried out by Council as part of the preparation of this document.

Strategic Priority 1- Provide a network of play spaces across the city.

Although we agree with this high-level statement we have questions and comments about some of the detail in the accompanying policies.

- The network is designed so that 74% of residents will be within 600m of a neighbourhood playground or 800m of a community playground. This leaves 26% without this proximity; **we would hope that the future goal would be closer to 100% with ready access to a play space.**
- The proposal is for a maximum of 111 playgrounds and no new ones after that. We submit that this is a premature conclusion. The document says that "... any change in the number of children in each suburb is unlikely to require new formal playgrounds when considered in the context of city-wide projections for child population across the whole city over the next 20 years". We disagree with this statement. City-wide projections show general trends but 'finer grain' analysis is needed. The plan does not include any analysis of the current and projected makeup of communities in different parts of the city. **More analysis should inform decisions on the number and type of play spaces required in our suburb.**

- A relatively even spread of playgrounds across the city is proposed. There should be more recognition that **neighbourhoods are not all equal**. In our area private backyard play spaces are increasingly rare. The page 14 section on Medium Density Housing does not take into account special housing areas of which there are a number in Newtown/Berhampore/Mt Cook. These special housing areas will mean increased density and smaller or no private open space. Even though total population may not necessarily increase, the numbers of households will. Smaller households with smaller private open space mean a greater need for public play spaces with play for all ages. Adelaide Road is one of the special housing areas that lacks a play space. While Pukeahu Park borders this area that park has a particular character and function, and we submit that a dedicated neighbourhood play space should be incorporated into the development of Adelaide Road.
- In the **list of actions** a community play space is to be created near or at Wakefield Park. We agree and support this proposal, but we are disappointed that there are no other planned actions which will benefit the Southern suburbs. In Newtown we have one community playground (which needs some upgrading – see the next section) and a scattering of neighbourhood playgrounds. There are areas with play equipment, but very limited 'kick around' space, particularly for children in the parts of our suburb which are quite a distance from Carrara Park or Newtown Park. The southern suburbs of Newtown, Berhampore and Mount Cook have lots of green space, but the majority is either sports fields, which are booked for games and practice, or it is sloping, natural and wild Town Belt. As noted above we request more analysis of the number and type of play spaces needed in our suburbs, now and in the future.
- We commend the Council's intention to continue with the **Bikes in Schools programme partnerships**, for both play and skills training, although the proviso "subject to securing ongoing funding" makes it seem rather uncertain. We trust that every effort will be made to fund this programme.

Strategic Priority 2: Provide high-quality, fit for purpose play space.

We support this priority, and particularly commend the play space principles in Policy 1.

Policy 2 outlines the different play space categories. As noted above, in Newtown we have one community playground and a scattering of neighbourhood playgrounds.

Community Play Space – Carrara Park.

- This park is very important to our Association. Our members were very involved in lobbying for its establishment and it is the most significant play space in our area. Carrara Park was created to host casual outdoor play and recreation for a densely built up part of the city. More recently it has also become the site of the Newtown Community Garden, and our Association holds the Licence to Occupy that makes this possible.

- We are very pleased that Carrara Park has been designated a Community Play Space as this may open the door for it to have some badly needed extra amenities. There are no toilets or drinking water in the park or nearby, and this limits its usefulness and the time that families and others can stay there. **We request that the provision of toilets and drinking fountains in Carrara Park be added to the activities resulting from this policy.**
- **The trees in the park need attention.** The shade they cast has increased enormously over the years – they are now big trees and they don't lose their leaves in winter until many other trees are already showing new growth. Also some additional trees have been planted, and as they grow they are in danger of encroaching on the space available for ball sports and other run-around games. The shade has a number of problematic effects. It can be excessive for the enjoyment of sunny days, it inhibits plant growth in many of the garden beds, and it affects safety as neighbours who used to be able to look into the park have their view obscured. In addition many neighbours have lost a lot of the sun on their properties.

The management of play spaces, and community involvement.

- We support the principle that each playground has a different look and feel. We believe that it is important for local people to be engaged in development and 'renewal' of neighbourhood play areas so that they reflect their community and avoid a 'cookie cutter' approach. Different approaches would need to be used to engage with and get input from the different communities and ethnicities that make up Newtown and the surrounding suburbs.
- We submit that the proposed approach to seeking input from local communities for neighbourhood parks is inadequate. Posting plans on site and inviting comments will attract a very small proportion of the community. We would like the Council to be much more proactive and creative in their engagement so that our play spaces in Newtown reflect the diversity of the people who live in our suburb.
- Carrara Park was originally designed by the parents, children and grandparents of Newtown, Berhampore and Mount Cook through a series of public participatory design workshops, and then the Park was implemented by WCC staff. Although currently upgrading is needed this is a process that we would like to see replicated when play spaces are developed in future.
- Te Ara Hou on the corner of Constable and Owen Streets is another example of a playground which was designed and developed by engaging proactively and creatively with the local community. The result is a well-used playground with a distinctive character that expresses our suburb.

Strategic Priority 3: Community and school partnerships

We support school partnerships but as outlined in the policy document, schools sometimes withdraw public access for various reasons. We cannot depend on schools to provide public play spaces.

Strategic Priority 4: The city as a play space

We are enthusiastic about this priority. We support the stance that streets and public spaces are also potential play spaces for all ages and note that repurposing street space either temporarily (street festivals and events) or permanently can create much needed play space. We regard Newtown Festival, Cuba Dupa, and informal neighbourhood events such as the Epuni St Compost Festival as contributing to this priority.

Strategic Priority 5: Programming and advocacy for outdoor play

We are very supportive of this priority, and agree with all the proposed initiatives.

The Council 'Push Play' initiative has been very much appreciated, and we note that it has been referenced in this policy document. We have heard that it will no longer be operating, and hope that similar initiatives will take its place, as they will be needed if this priority is to be realised.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We would like to speak to it to emphasise the main points.

Rhona Carson

President, Newtown Residents' Association.