

7 Inclusive Play Space Principles



KEY FINDINGS

The development of Inclusive Play Space Principles is integral to the success of the Inclusive Play Space Study Report. The design principles were formulated to reflect the essence of existing guidelines, and to honour the results of community consultation. The final principles therefore respond directly to the needs and aspirations of the Waverley LGA community.

The principles identify recommended best practice design parameters for inclusive play spaces. 'In Principle' diagrams were then developed to demonstrate the application of the principles at each hierarchy level.

Finally, principles to guide the selection of play types were developed, which break down play experiences into ten distinct yet interrelated play types.

The inclusive play space principles, 'in principle' diagrams, and play experience design principles can be used in combination to guide the designer on best practice inclusive design. Many of the principles support each other and overlap, and not all principles can be applied to every play space. The scale and complexity of inclusive play is proportional with the play space hierarchy and function, and encourages the idea of a 'mosaic of play', in which pocket and neighbourhood play spaces complement each other to create a network of inclusive play offers in a community.

7.1 Development of Inclusive Play Space Principles

7.1.1 Introduction

In order to assess and guide the development of inclusive play spaces, a series of inclusive design principles have been formulated.

A series of draft inclusive play space principles were developed using the NSW Government's 'Everyone-Can-Play' Guideline, Waverley Council's Play Space Strategy and the community consultation findings and recommendations, and compared against current 'best practice' play space design.

The study-specific design principles were then reviewed against the community consultation findings and recommendations. This ensured that the final principles responded to the community's needs and aspirations for inclusive play in the Waverley LGA.

7.1.2 Everyone Can Play Guideline: Inclusive Play Principles

The NSW Government's 'Everyone-can-Play' Guideline 2019 provides a best practice toolkit for use when creating play spaces designed to include everyone in the community.

Three (3) overarching principles form the framework of the Everyone-can-Play Guideline:

1. **Can I Get There?** Consider *location, layout, adequate signage, wayfinding* and *accessibility* to ensure everyone can find their way to, in and around the play space;
2. **Can I Play?** Consider the whole play experience, including the *equipment* and *surfacing*, to enable everyone to experience a variety of challenging and engaging play opportunities in a way that suits them; and
3. **Can I Stay?** Consider *safety, additional facilities, landscape* and the wider environment to ensure everyone can stay at the play space for as long as they would like.

Six (6) guiding design principles provide further design guidance in the Everyone-can-Play Guideline:

1. *Find*: Communicate the purpose and location of play elements and facilities;
2. *Fit*: Provide a range of play opportunities for people of all abilities and sizes;
3. *Choose*: Enable exciting individual experiences and social interaction;
4. *Join in*: Create opportunities for everyone to connect;
5. *Thrive*: Challenge and involve people of all capabilities; and
6. *Belong*: Create a place that's welcoming and comfortable.

7.1.3 Waverley Council Play Space Strategy – Principles

Six (6) overarching principles are identified in the Waverley Play Space Strategy 2014-2029:

1. Play spaces provide opportunities for play and learning;
2. Play spaces are safe and secure, and promote physical activity;
3. Play spaces are fun, exciting and unique;
4. Play spaces are easily accessible, conveniently located and well-distributed throughout the LGA;
5. Play spaces are sustainable; and
6. Play is underpinned by a robust management and maintenance system.

Each principle is supported by several design strategies/objectives to ensure the intention of the principle is achieved.

7.2 Waverley Inclusive Play Design Principles

The following design principles provide guidance on the design of inclusive play spaces. The principles follow the overarching principles in the NSW Government's 'Everyone-Can-Play' guideline, and are split into the overall headings of:

- > Can We Get There?
- > Can We Play?
- > Can We Stay?

The principles were then tested against Waverley Council's play space hierarchy system. This assisted in determining the practicality of applying inclusive play principles to different size play spaces, from pocket places to regional play spaces, on a sliding scale. The larger the play space, the more inclusive play experiences can be accommodated and the more support facilities can be provided.

The outcome is two sets of principles that can be applied to different size play spaces, broken down as:

- > **Spatial Design Principles; and**
- > **Play Experience Design Principles.**

7.2.1 Interpreting the Design Principles

While the principles identify recommended best practice design parameters for inclusive play spaces, it should be noted that:

- > Many of the principles support each other and overlap, as many aspects of play space design are inter-related. Few design decisions are made in isolation to other design parameters;
- > Budget and spatial constraints often mean that principles may be combined or adapted – this is particularly applicable in Pocket and Neighbourhood play spaces; and
- > Not all design principles can be applied to every play space; usually smaller scale play spaces require compromises, due to smaller available area and budget.

It is also noteworthy that community consultation often leads to a request for play spaces separated by age. Best practice inclusive design typically focuses on play space design through the filter of ability, rather than age. This means that very young children who have the same ability level as a teenager may be playing in the same area, which can be problematic for parents who are concerned about the safety of their very young children. It is important to balance these needs and wishes when applying the inclusive design principles.



Figure 7.1: Designing for Ability – Different Age Groups Using the Same Equipment

7.2.2 Inclusive Play – Spatial Design Principles

Inclusive Play Space Spatial Design Principles relate to the physical setting or spatial arrangement of the inclusive play space. This section is intended to provide guidance to designers when deciding where a play space should be located, how the play space can be connected to surrounding facilities, options to consider when planning the internal layout of spaces and connections including visual cues within the play space and its equipment.

The overall spatial arrangement follows the 'tennis racquet' model, with some key elements shown in the diagram below.

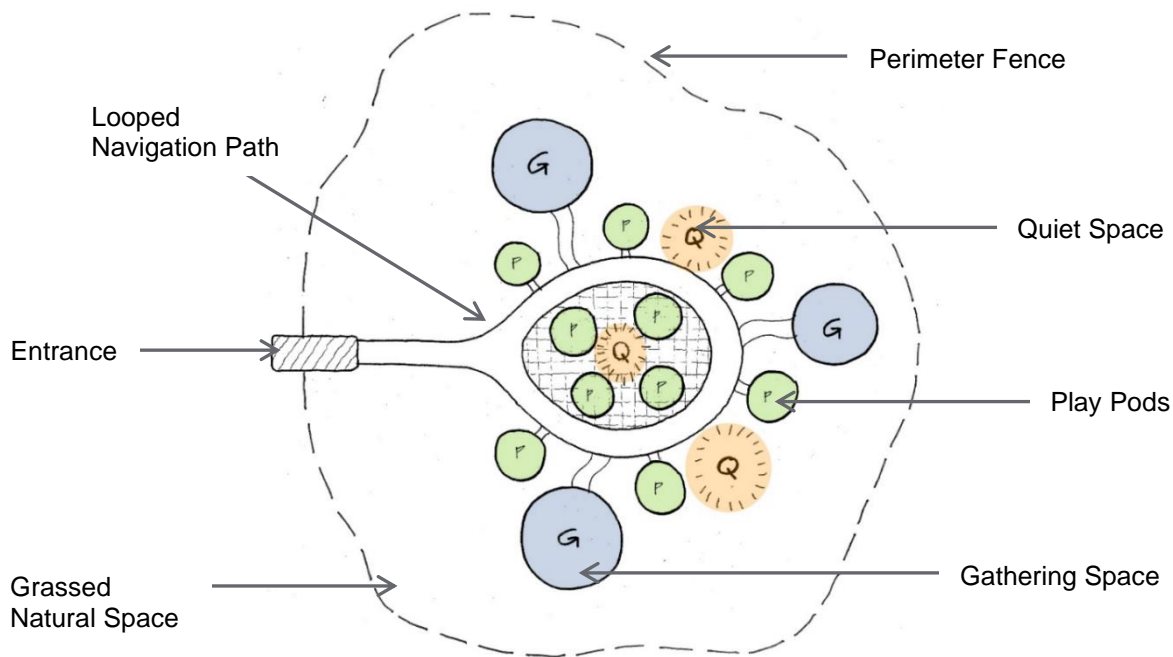


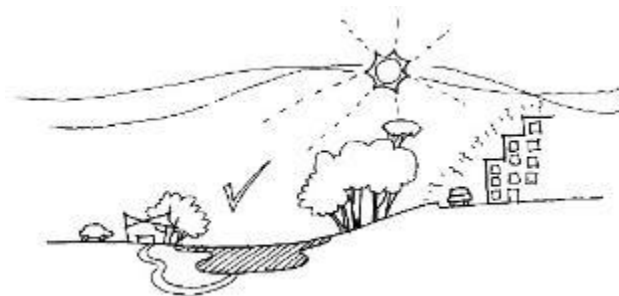
Figure 7.2: Inclusive Play Space Model

1. Can We Get There?

Inclusive Play – Spatial Design Principles

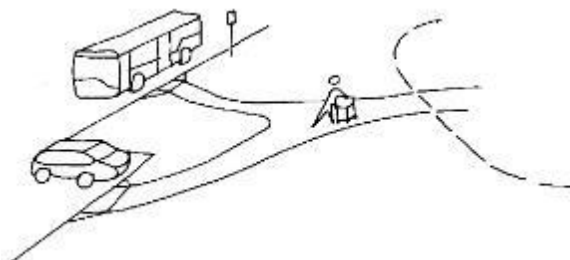
Siting

- > Select a suitable location for an Inclusive Play Space. The Inclusive play space should be located in a park with an excellent established natural landscape character, with a range of nearby complementary recreational activities. The site should be reasonably flat, protected, and quiet, with existing or potential path connections to adjacent facilities.
- > The Inclusive Play Space should be in close proximity to supporting facilities such as accessible carparking, an accessible amenities block, picnic facilities and grassy open spaces.



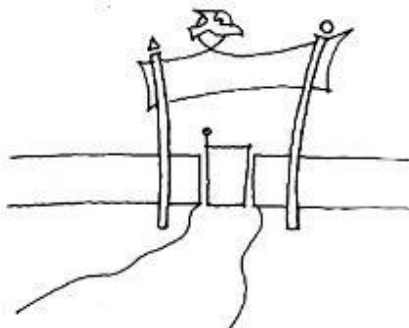
Accessibility

- > Provide a continuous accessible primary path of travel to link public transport and accessible parking to the play space.
- > TGSIs should be applied to the walkways outside the playground fence in accordance with AS1428.

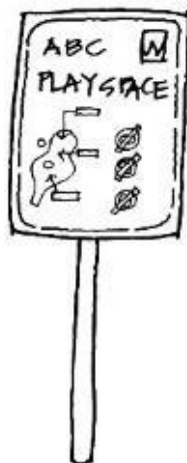


Wayfinding

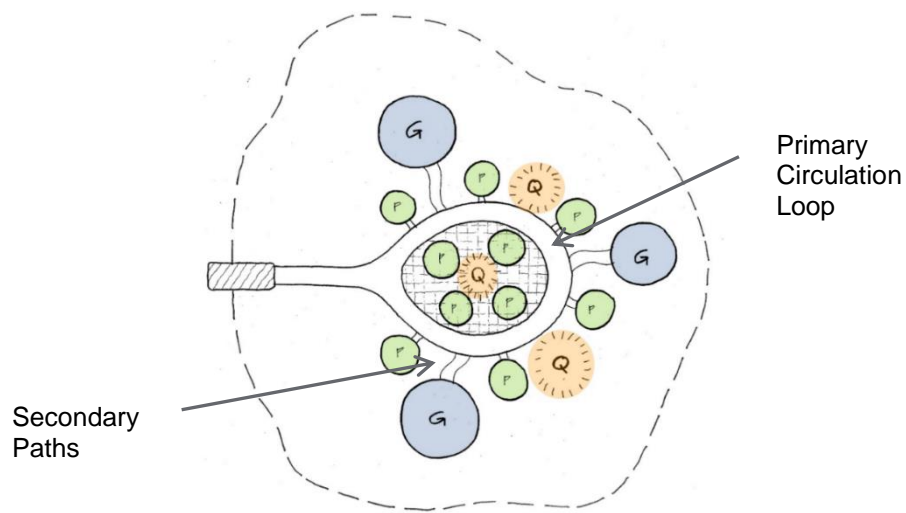
- > Highlight the main entrance through use of signage, colour and/or artistic form. The main entrance will be clearly visible and easily identifiable with an artistic sense of welcome.



- > Provide signage to communicate the play space's name, and use pictograms and clear graphics to communicate component parts of the play space to visitors.



- > Ensure the play space is easy to navigate by providing a clear and unambiguous layout developed around a primary circulation loop. Secondary paths may connect from the loop to other areas. Locate separate play pods (P) evenly around the looped path, interspersed with gathering areas (G) and quiet spaces (Q).



Best Practice Play – Spatial Design Principles

Communication

- > Council's website will communicate the objectives of Inclusive Play, and establish where inclusive play spaces can be found, identify transport options to the play space, identify the play space size, summarise the play experiences on offer, and identify existing support facilities at each play space.

2. Can We Play?

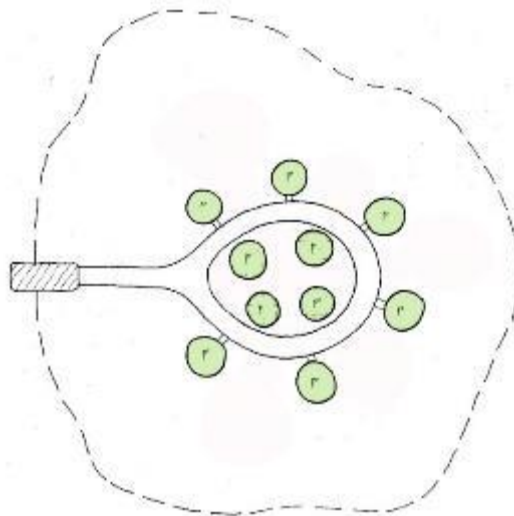
Inclusive Play – Spatial Design Principles

Play

- > The Play Space will provide play opportunities for people of different ages and capabilities. This may take the form of equipment of differing sizes (for different ages), or different supportive features (for different abilities).
- > Provide as many types of play (play variety) as the space and budget will allow. Variety provides choice, and choice is highly valued. (Refer to Section 5.3.1 for types of play).
- > Provide each type of play separately, in identifiable rooms or pods, so that types of play are not combined (for instance climbing and sliding are not combined). This helps make choices, maintains focus, and engenders confidence. All play types are offered at the same level of importance so that no one activity or item of equipment dominates the play experience.

When play types are combined (typically due to budget and spatial constraints), the following guidelines should be followed:

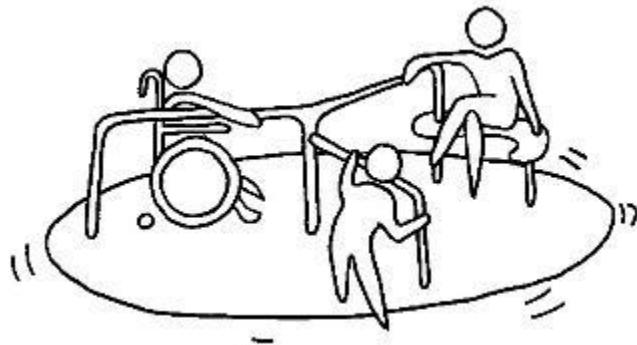
- Large, physical movements should not be co-located with sensory, cognitive or quiet activities;
- Sensory and cognitive challenges can be co-located;
- Social, physical and intergenerational challenges can be co-located;
- Natural, imaginative and some types of sensory play can be co-located;
- Social play outcomes can be combined with all types of play (except solo play);
- Similarly, side-by-side play is usually a component of other play types;
- Physical play is a component of most types of play; and
- Free play can encourage almost all other types of play, but on its own, is not a play space.



- > The play space will provide both solo play opportunities and group social play experiences.

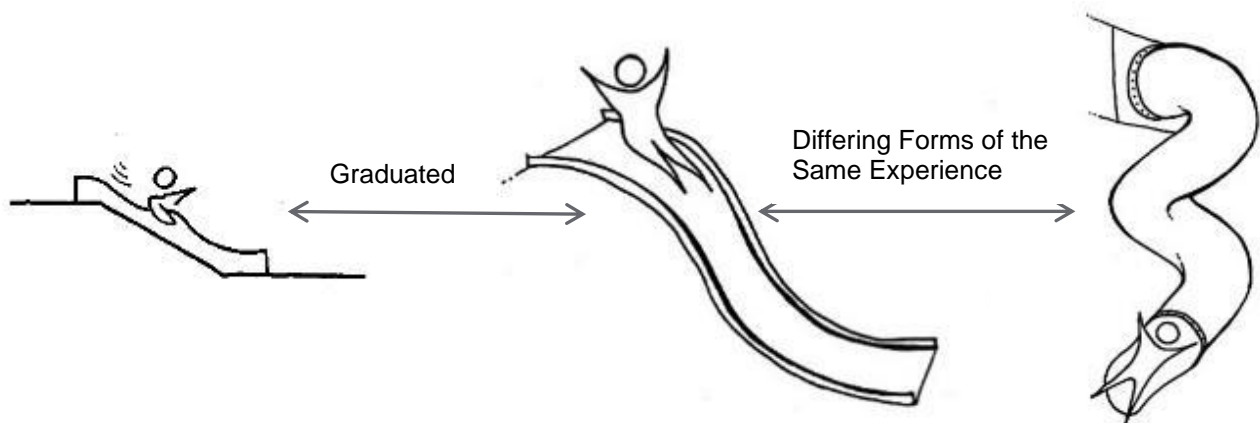


Solo

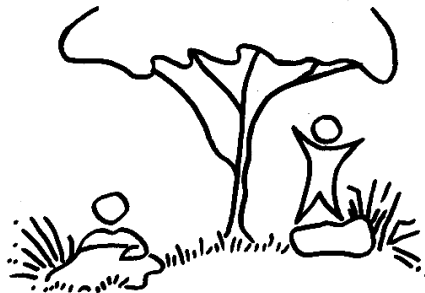


Group

- > Graduated challenges are provided where possible to incrementally improve and develop users' abilities on one type of play activity (e.g. graduated balancing challenge). If graduated challenges are not possible, then provide differing forms of the same play experience.



- > Quiet, natural areas are provided which encourage unprogrammed, creative play opportunities; or the space is suitable as a respite space.



Equipment

- > Arrangement of equipment at both ground level or elevated above ground shall be spacious enough to enable carers to comfortably assist the user. In addition, ramps and platforms shall be generously proportioned to enable mobility devices to be easily manoeuvred (1500mm turning circle).

Where ramps cannot be used to access elevated play experiences, transfer systems should be considered instead (platforms, steps and supports). Allow generous spaces to support parking of mobility aids/devices.

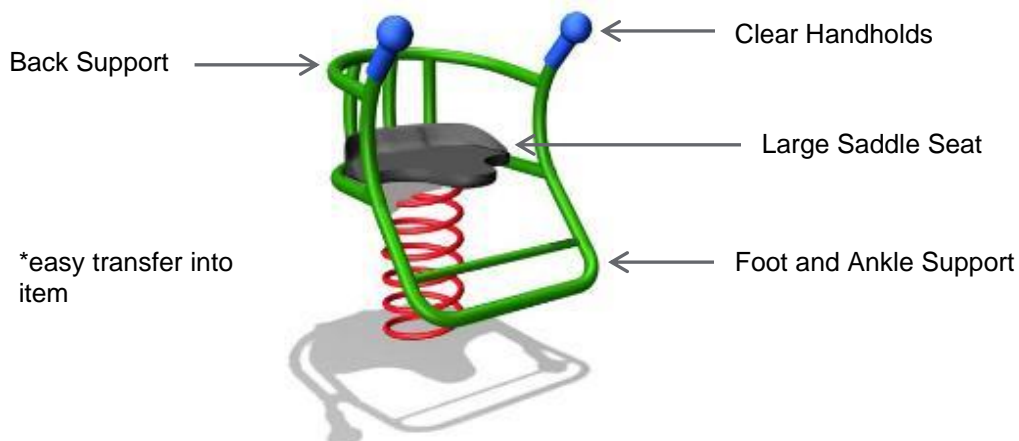
Where elevated platforms with ramps or transfer platforms are provided, there must be a reason and reward for travelling to the platform (not necessarily a slide or fireman's pole).

Transfer Systems



[SOURCE: US Access Board Summary of Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas]

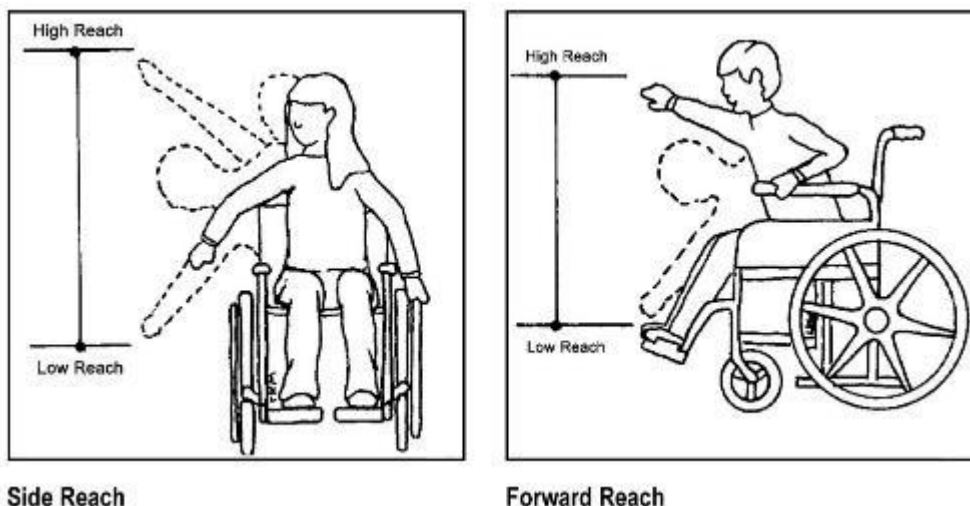
- > The route of travel through a complex piece of equipment is supported with handrails, handhold, gripping points, D-handles, guard rails, rope handles etc.
- > All play experiences and equipment are offered with an equal distribution of height and size. No one play item will dominate the offer of play.
- > Select equipment with appropriate supports to assist a wide group of users, e.g. foot, ankle, arm and back support. When equipment relies on people sitting, choose wider seat options to suit a bigger group of users.



[SOURCE: Sutcliffe]

- > Provide accessible ground level play challenges, designed to be used by the user facing the play item, avoiding sideways twisting movement for seated users in mobility aids.
- > Play experiences requiring the player to use their hands should be within appropriate reach ranges, and within the range of grip and grasp (if the hand encircles an item like a rail). Play panels should not rely solely on fine motor skills, but rather a range of hand movements and a range of dexterity. See AS1428.3 for recommended reach ranges.

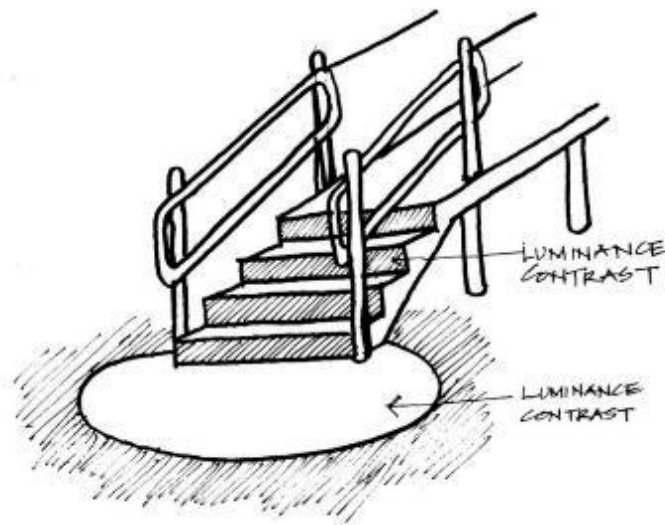
The images below show an example of recommended reach ranges. It must be noted that these reach ranges apply only to wheelchair users with upper body mobility and good hand dexterity. Leg clearance must also be considered for seated users.



[SOURCE: US Access Board Summary of Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas]

Wayfinding

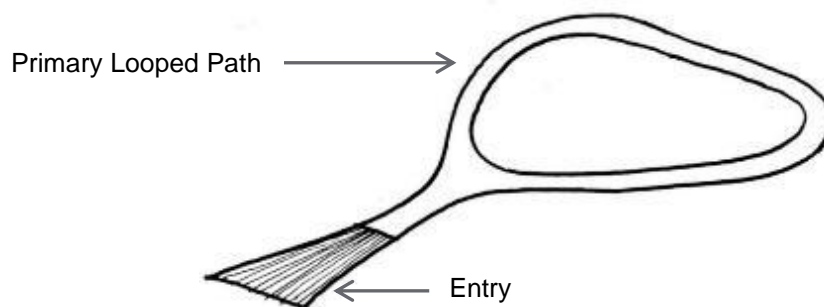
- > Luminance contrast (the relative brightness of adjacent surfaces, selected to create contrast to assist people with low vision) shall be considered and provided to highlight use, or changes in use, at ground level and within equipment (e.g. highlight, at ground level, the spot from which a flight of stairs can be ascended).



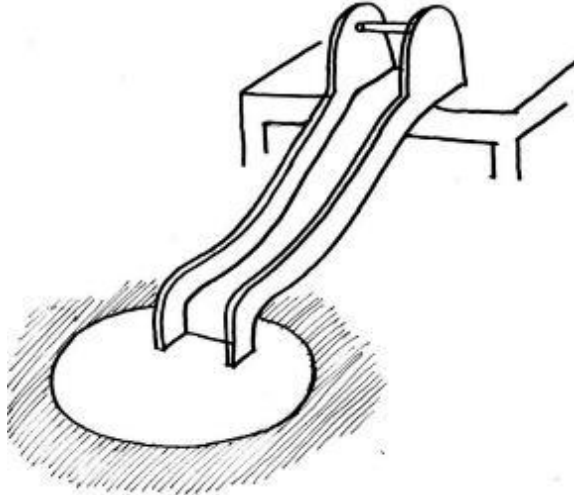
- > A co-ordinated colour scheme is used throughout the play space whereby colours highlight differing types of use in a predictable way, and so provide visual cues to users on how to navigate the play space.



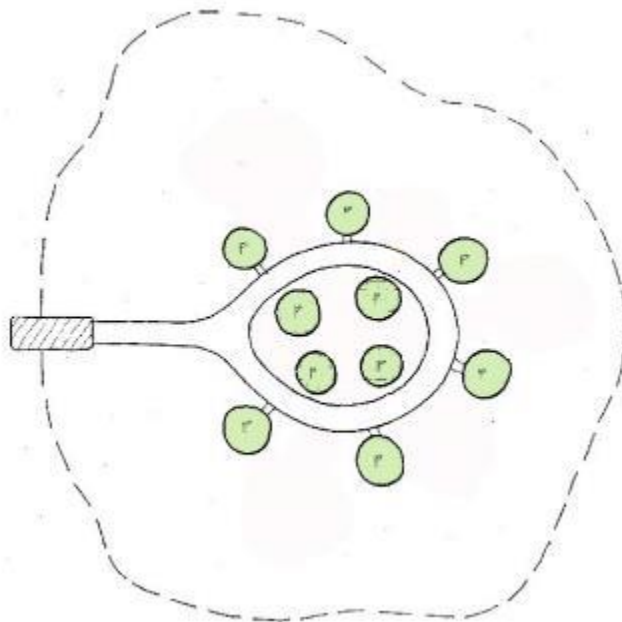
- > An accessible, looped path connects all play experiences (1525mm minimum width). The path should be consistent in colour, width, material and texture.



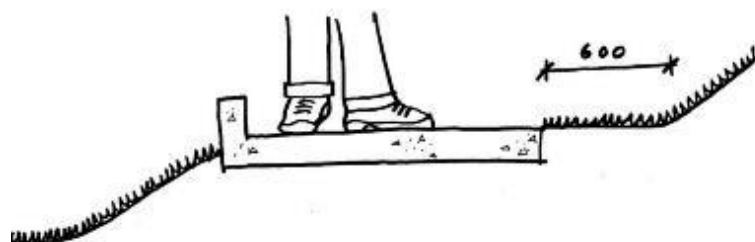
- > Play equipment should always have a strong luminance contrast to the adjacent surfaces e.g. a slide runout should contrast to the ground surface immediately surrounding it.



- > A continuous path of accessible travel links the looped primary orientation path to the access point of items of equipment. All primary paths should conform to the requirements of AS1428, and all paths should conform to AS4586 (slip resistance).

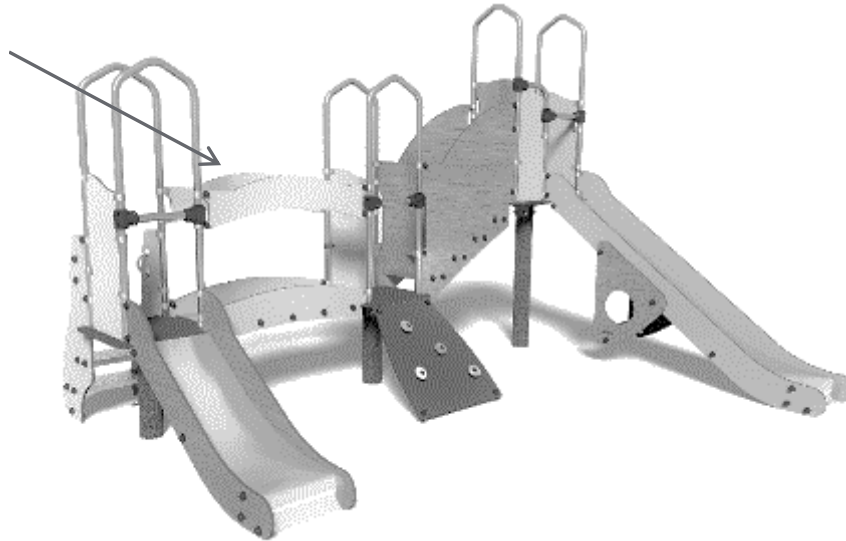


- > Tactile indicators inside the fenced area should be used as a warning system only on pedestrian footpaths and ramps in accordance with AS1428, but are not deemed necessary in, on or leading into play equipment or items.
- > Provide either edge protection (e.g. kerb) where paths are directly adjacent to a steep drop-off (e.g. grassed bank) or provide a 600mm wide shoulder. Refer AS1428.



- > Primary routes through elevated play equipment shall meet the requirements of AS1428 for landings and gradients (excluding TGSIs, stair tread and riser ratios), and AS4685 for handrails. Extensions of handrails into the play area are not required. Note, equipment expressly for toddlers can be narrower than the requirements set out in AS1428.

Narrow Walkway



[SOURCE: Proludic]

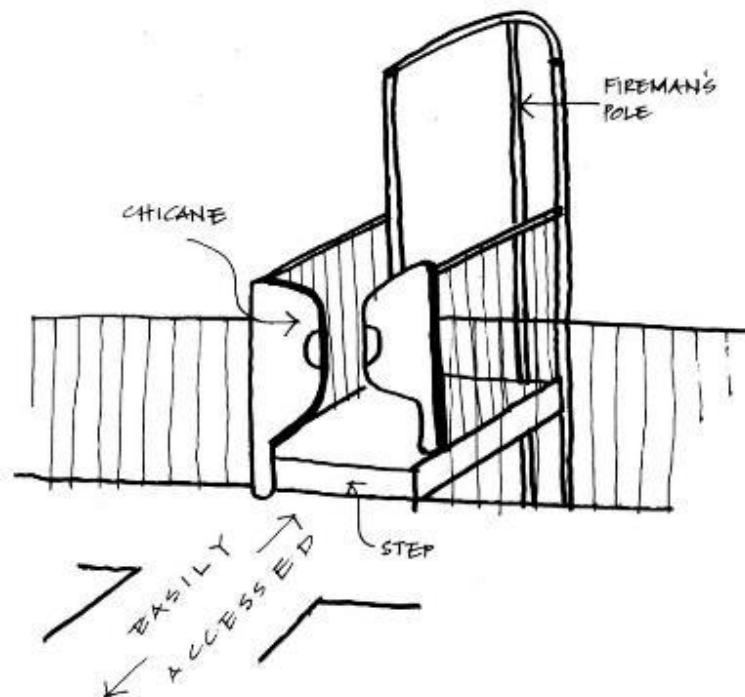
- > Accessible surfacing in and around play equipment should meet the requirements of AS1428 for accessibility. This provision must consider turning movements of mobility devices e.g. at the top and run-out of slides.
- > Where loose-fill surfacing is deemed appropriate for use around equipment, non-accessible paths of travel may be acceptable.



Safety

- > Provide generous parking areas for strollers and mobility devices (areas outside impact areas and the orientation path).

- > Easily accessed elevated play equipment items (such as fireman's poles) should have additional protection from falling. Elevated play equipment items which are *not* easily accessed can be more challenging than easily accessed elevated play equipment. (refer AS4685).



- > 5-way harness seats should not be used in place of a 'pomma' seat, as pomma seats are usually an age and ability filter. 5-way harness seats on a flying fox do not meet AS4685.4 (Clause 4.9) and should not be used.

5-way Harness



Pomma Seat

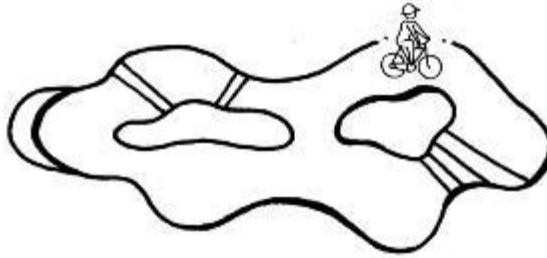


- > Accessible access to swings shall be from the front of the swings, not the side.
- > Flying fox decks shall have protection from falling if the horizontal surface is over 600mm in height. Protection from falling shall be provided on the sides where the user does not take off on the pomma. The deck shall be large enough for the edge protection (e.g. barrier) not to be used as a higher take off point. Work closely with the manufacturer to achieve a solution.

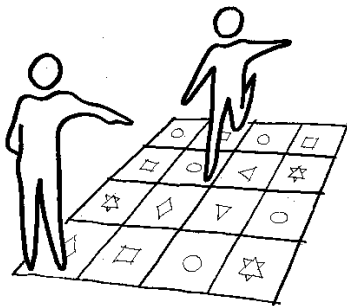
Best Practice Play – Spatial Design Principles

Equipment

- > Looped accessible paths often double as bike/ trike/ scooter and mobility device play provision. Should an advanced track be required it can be included separately to the main path.

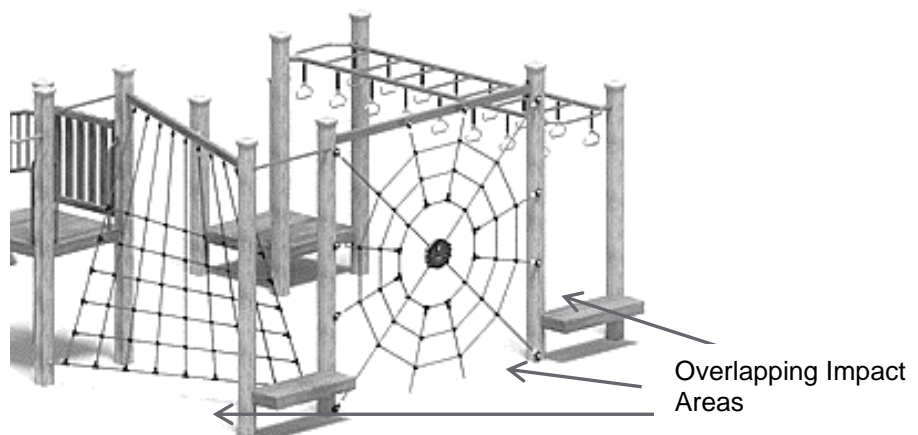


- > Consider the valuable contribution of games, floor markings, scavenger hunts and loose parts play in the overall play offer (not on the primary looped path).



Safety

- > Equipment considered to be a 'combination unit' shall not have overlapping impact areas within the same unit.



3. Can We Stay?

Inclusive Play – Spatial Design Principles

Safety

- > Inclusive play spaces shall be designed and constructed to meet relevant Australian Standards including AS4685, AS4422 and AS4586.
- > The entire play space is enclosed by fences, walls or buildings (minimum 1200mm high) with self-closing access gates and child-proof latches. A wheelchair accessible entry latch is best practice but may require innovative solutions (e.g. electrical connections, special keys etc.).
- > Siting of inclusive play spaces should avoid nearby hazards such as busy roads or water bodies.
- > Inclusive play spaces should be regularly cleaned to promote safer play. This includes disinfecting chemicals.
- > Shade (natural or man-made) shall be provided to the play space in accordance with Cancer Council recommendations, and AS4685.0.



Facilities

- > Existing play spaces and infrastructure should aim to locate accessible toilets within 50m of a play space. If an amenities block is provided, particularly at a Regional play space, it should be provided within the fenced curtilage of the play space.
- > Seating should be provided throughout the entire play space, and offer a variety of choices:
 - Seats with backrests and armrests (AS 1428 compliant);
 - Picnic tables (AS 1428 compliant);
 - Platform seats;
 - Bench seating (optional);
 - Informal seats e.g. low walls (optional);
 - Group seating is best practice;
 - Individual seating choices are also required (2 people); andVarious seating choices/options to be linked by an accessible path of travel.
- > Provide permanent picnic shelters linked to accessible paths, with ample room for manoeuvring space and accessibly picnic tables.
- > Provide seating in a quiet retreat (linked by a path).
- > Provide bins in obvious locations (e.g. at entrance to play space) and consider accessibility of bin to all users, particularly young children. Consider rubbish sorting pictograms for all users.

- > Provide an accessible drinking fountain within the play space boundary. The fountain shall have easy-to-operate levers or buttons, not reliant on strength or dexterity (e.g. lever arms) and include a water bottle filling-point.
- > Ensure ample turning and manoeuvring space around drinking fountains (for mobility devices) and provide generous drainage close to the drinking fountain, ensuring falls to the grated lid.
- > Where barbecues are provided, at least one unit shall be accessible to AS 1428. Barbecues shall be linked to the main orientation path by an accessible path of travel. Barbecues shall be placed close to the play space (within 10m) or within the boundary of the play space located to the side of the main playing area and adjacent to complementary facilities such as picnic shelters and tables.
- > Signs shall be placed near entries in larger play spaces identifying the name of the play space, the location of features and facilities, and nominating any regulatory rules (e.g. no smoking).

Landscape

- > All plants selected (trees, groundcovers etc.) shall not pose any safety issues in terms of toxicity, thorns, sharp sticks, bee-attracting flowers, choking hazards, and allergenic properties.
 - > Garden bed edges must generally be flush with adjacent materials, or if raised must not contain trip-points or “thin-edge” choices (steel edges).
 - > Where possible, plant choices should be selected for their contribution to sensory experience, wayfinding and play opportunities. Colour, texture, smell and height all contribute to the overall experience.
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Best Practice Play – Spatial Design Principles

Safety

- > The effects of heat and climate change should be carefully considered through the choice of materials, trees and plants, colours, aspect and shade provision.
- > The play space should be largely visible from adjacent streets, nearby buildings or areas of high pedestrian activity to enable passive surveillance of the play space.
- > Allow for clear sightlines to the majority of the play space from a central seating area.
- > Play equipment, artistic elements and nature play items shall all comply with AS4685. Regular inspections shall ensure that installed equipment continues to meet the requirements of the standards.
- > Surfacing within the impact areas of play equipment and items will comply with AS4685 and AS4422. Regular inspections shall ensure that surfacing continues to meet requirements of the Standards.
- > Supportive facilities (such as toilets) are clearly visible from the play space, as well as from adjacent streets and buildings.
- > The supportive features are well lit at night or are lockable (toilets). Adjacent paths around the play space should be lit at night. Note: The play space itself is not required to be lit however creatively integrated lighting may extend the play experience and allow use of the play space at night.

Safety, Vandalism & Sustainability

- > Use of solar and wind power is encouraged to power surveillance cameras and lights.
- > Security cameras may be considered in the play space in accordance with the public authority policies in relation to CCTV and civil liberties.

Facilities

- > If desired, dog drinking bowls and features are located a minimum of 10 metres away from the play space and must not be provided within the play space boundary.
- > If bike/scooter racks are provided, they shall be placed at play space entries.

Landscape

- > Trees for shade are to be generously provided throughout the play space. Both deciduous and evergreen options to be considered where climatic conditions allow. Trees should be selected for suitability to future climate change conditions and suitability to provide U.V. protection. Trees also to be selected for reliability (e.g. no branch dropping).
- > Low shrubs, groundcovers and strappy plants are used to define play pods and boundaries.
- > Natural materials and items are integrated into the play space where possible.
- > Natural grass is highly valued and a grassed kick-about/picnic/respice area is best practice. Consider irrigating this highly valued commodity. Artificial grass only to be used sparingly.
- > Structural root zones must not be compromised in any way by play space construction (refer AS4970).
- > Natural boulders are considered as play items, creating a sense of naturalness, and can also assist in defining play pods, and protecting plants.

7.2.3 Play Experience Design Principles

Once spaces for play are established around a navigation path, play types can be selected for the spaces. The principle is to provide as many varied types of play in a play space as possible, with items of play equipment being selected for their contribution to inclusive play. Each type of play should be provided separately to other play experiences, e.g. a spinner should not be in the same space as a balancing item.

Ideally, play items should all be roughly the same scale, with no element dominating the play space setting. This provides a sense that play types are equally attractive.

This study identified ten different types of play experience, which are described in the following sections. However, all play experiences are intrinsically interrelated, as indicated in Figure 7.3.

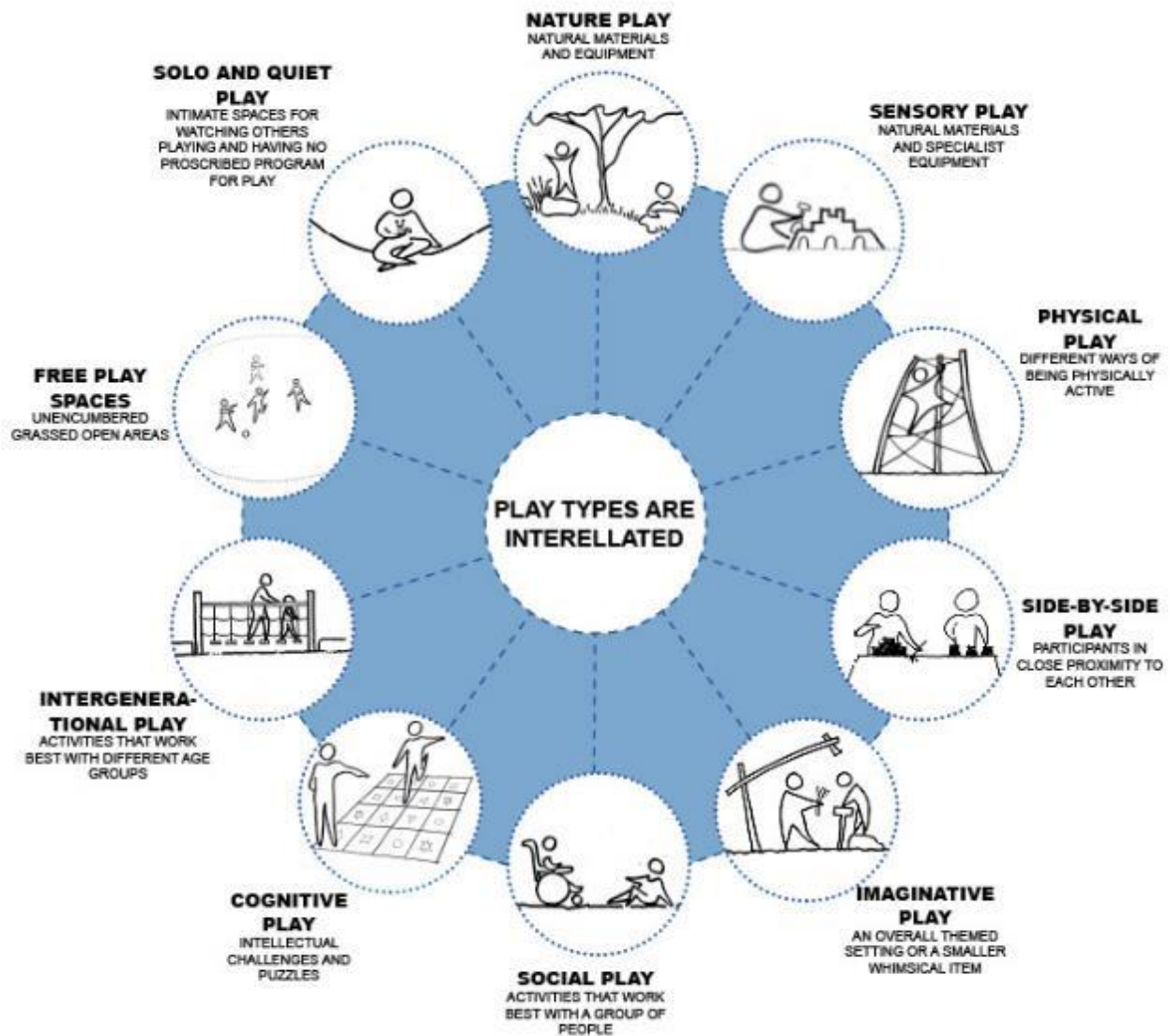


Figure 7.3: Play Types are Interrelated

1. Imaginative and Creative Play

Imaginative and creative play can involve made up games or role playing. Creative play offers children the chance to stretch their imaginations, using new words and numbers to express concepts and explore emotions.

Imaginative and creative play provides children with the invitation to explore lateral problem solving with a variety of solutions, promoting flexible thinking and expressive language.

It is vital to provide imaginative and creative play in an inclusive play space setting as many children with disabilities need more opportunities, and more encouragement to experience and practice creative play. Imaginative play is less spontaneous for many children with intellectual disabilities, and being in a social setting with other children may promote this valuable form of play.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Create an imaginative theme and setting for the play space e.g. the whole space is a castle-setting;
- > Create an imaginative corner in the play space (e.g. a theatrical stage, a dinosaur nest) which strongly suggests a play theme;
- > Use equipment or individual items which are themselves imaginative e.g. a dragon slide;
- > Reinforce themes in artwork and signage; and
- > Provide natural elements such as plant material and mulch for loose parts play.



[SOURCE: Kompan Pirate Castle]



2. Social Play

Social play encourages participants to communicate and interact with each other, focusing on language and cooperative behaviours. Social play is an important context in which children acquire social skills and knowledge, vital to a child's ability to interact in their social world.

Social play is important to children and adults with disabilities as this group tend to withdraw from social situations and would benefit from becoming genuinely involved in playing with their peers to develop social interactions.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Select equipment which relies on communication to operate successfully e.g. a group carousel, a tap and sluice gate combination, a shop front;
- > Create social play settings by co-locating play activities together e.g. sandpit with water play, a graduated balance challenge that loops back on itself; and
- > Create play settings with adjacent seating.



3. Active/Physical Play

This type of play involves fixed equipment for swinging, climbing, hanging, balancing, jumping, stepping, sliding, etc. Active/physical play offers children the chance to develop muscle strength and coordination.

Active play promotes both fine and gross motor skills, and an understanding of one's body, movement and position in space. Play inherently promotes being active in complex ways, with improved fitness as an outcome.

Opportunities for varied physical play are important to all people with disabilities, because when physical activity is presented in a fun and social context, it may encourage greater physical movement from the participant, which is valued. Independent use of play equipment is the ultimate goal, but if the person with disabilities is assisted in being active, this is an improvement over sitting and watching.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Provide as many varied active play options in one play space as allowed by space or budget. Choice is the key principle; and
- > Provide differing sizes or levels of challenge within the activity e.g. high and low slides.



4. Cognitive Play

Cognitive play provides challenges for participants to tackle using problem-solving skills, logic, spatial awareness, fine motor skills and social skills.

Cognitive play is vital to develop a child's ability to think, understand, communicate, remember, and work out what is going to happen next.

Cognitive play helps children and adults with disabilities understand more about the world around them.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Include specific problem-solving challenges or games such as hopscotch, floor mazes, flip panel games, novel ball games;
- > Include challenges where items must be found or counted; and
- > Include challenges where cause-and-effect become self-evident (e.g. I will pump this handle and water comes out; I will hit this button and it will make a sound).



5. Sensory Play

Sensory play stimulates the senses: touch, smell, taste, sight, hearing and moving. This can include a choice of interesting materials (e.g. bark) as well as specific sensory items of equipment (e.g. musical drums). Sensory experiences enable participants to use their senses to explore (e.g. sand and water), as well as learning to classify objects based on different characteristics of the object.

Sensory play is vital to brain development, helping to build nerve connections and neural pathways. It leads to a child being able to complete more complex tasks, and supports cognitive growth. Sensory play helps a child make sense of their surrounding world, as well as create memory pathways.

Sensory play is important to children and adults with disabilities as it is calming, soothing, engaging, and builds skills in understanding the messages their senses are relaying to them. Through sensory play, the participants can also explore and communicate their emotions (e.g. "I dislike slime"), leading to a greater sense of self.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Provide materials rich in colour, smell and texture which are directly available to a user (e.g. sand, plants with peppermint scented leaves, etc.);
- > Provide natural materials which are movable and manipulable (e.g. water, sand, leaves, mulch, branches);
- > Provide natural play areas with boulders, trees, plants, logs, creeks/creek beds;
- > Provide items which either make interesting sound or music (e.g. speaking tubes, musical instruments); and
- > Provide interesting visual effects (e.g. reflective materials or patterns of light and shade).



6. Exploratory & Natural Play

Nature play includes the elements of a play space that consist of natural, non-manufactured items incorporated into the play space, including items such as logs, boulders, plant materials and surfaces, changes of level and other landscape elements.

Exploratory and natural play are important to children and adults with disabilities as it is calming, restorative, sensory-rich, variable and captivating. This type of play is therefore essential to a child's healthy development.

Children and adults interacting with nature through play gain a sense of affiliation with nature, which contributes to a sense of joy and overall wellbeing. All children (with and without disabilities) have an innate need to play directly with natural environments (materials, plants, weather, animals, etc.).

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Where appropriate (i.e. not conflicting with requirements for access), use natural materials to create the play setting, play equipment and play surfacing;
- > Use plants to define play pods, and provide sensory play elements;
- > Use ephemeral and seasonal change (e.g. deciduous trees, flowers, fruits) to create interest; and
- > Create naturalistic settings such as meandering stream, bamboo forest, etc.



7. Intergenerational Play

Include a variety of play activities which encourage interactions between different age groups (e.g. toddlers with older people), to foster opportunities for communication, sharing of ideas and cooperation between participants.

Intergenerational play is important to a child's development as it deepens their understanding of their social context, and improves cognitive skills such as problem solving. This form of play broadens a child's life experiences by understanding everyone's differences and building acceptance.

Intergenerational play is important to people with disabilities as it promotes relaxation, reduces anxiety and stress, improves social skills and maintains cognitive skills such as memory and problem solving. It is also beneficial as the participants are less competitive, which can result in higher engagement levels in authentic play.

Parents, grandparents and older people value being in play spaces to accompany children and grandchildren, to be active themselves, and simply to watch children at play. Intergenerational play activities are important for this age group to maintain and boost physical and mental wellbeing, and to keep older people active in their community.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Provide equipment and settings which encourage and support grandparents, family and grandchildren to enjoy play experiences together (e.g. group carousel);
- > Select play equipment that has options for both children and adults to use and enjoy (e.g. swings);
- > Provide equipment in a range of sizes and configurations catering for different ages and abilities; and
- > Where appropriate, provide equipment and settings which support health and wellbeing, rehabilitation programs, and practice of various movements (e.g. balancing).



8. Quiet Play

A quiet play area is a space which may be suitable for reading, talking, sitting, watching others or playing a sit-down game. Quiet play builds confidence allowing an individual or group to quietly observe other children before joining in.

Quiet play is important to a child's development as children gain enjoyment and confidence in being able to be calm and watch others playing before possibly joining in themselves. Feeling confident to participate is a precursor to all play activities and outcomes.

For people with disabilities, quiet play is important as, firstly, it can provide pleasure through feeling that you are part of a fun activity as an on-looker. Secondly, it allows the participant to gain confidence to join in. Thirdly, this type of space allows less active people a calm, non-programmed area for self-chosen activities such as playing a board game. Children with sensory processing disorders also benefit from quiet spaces to withdraw from the noise and activity of a busy play space.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Consider seating options adjacent to play activities that allow a person the choice to sit quietly and observe others at play, with the option of joining-in; and
- > Provide grassy spaces.



9. Side-by-Side Play

Play items that provide opportunities for participants to play in close proximity to each other. The participants may not necessarily interact, but enjoy being in each other's company.

Side-by-side play is important to a child's development as it lays the groundwork for more complex stages of social play. It allows a child to play on their own terms alongside others, which can improve concentration and sense of self.

Side-by-side play is important to people with disabilities as it allows them to play without the pressure of social interaction. They are part of a social context, and understand more about it, gaining confidence with practice.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Provide play settings and/or equipment where two people are engaged in a play activity side-by-side, or face-to-face (e.g. on 2 adjacent swing seats). The participant should have the feeling that he/she is part of an activity with another person.



10. Free Play

Open grassed spaces or slopes provide opportunities for activities and games such as rolling, running, informal ball games, cartwheels, somersaults, handstands etc. Free play is different from Active play as it enables non-prescribed movement in open space. Free play can involve elements of creative and nature play, but takes place in an area that offers no directives or limitations on what play experience can be had.

Free play supports all the domains of a child's development – social, physical, cognitive, and emotional – and allows a child to exercise executive decision making in terms of what to do, how long to do it for, and who to do it with.

Free play is important for people with disabilities as it offers a neutral space to experiment, practice, watch and build confidence to participate. It is also a neutral space for people to regulate sensory imbalances.

Inclusive Play Experience Design Principles:

- > Provide unprogrammed, grassed open space for people to play in any way they choose;
- > No equipment is provided: space remains adaptable to users' needs; and
- > Trees, tables, seats etc. should not impede the space, but can surround it to allow people to sit and observe the space.

