

Fact Sheet: Playground shade



Open Space Strategic Management Plan (OSSMP)

The OSSMP is a comprehensive and high-level roadmap. It guides how we sustainably plan our open space and playground areas which may include shade, fencing and toilets.

The OSSMP 2018-23 has reached the end of its planning cycle and is due for renewal.

The following provides some information relating to shade over playgrounds and provides background to the rationale behind the draft OSSMP and the service levels within it.

Background

In response to requests from elected members and the community, a Shade Policy report was endorsed at the [5 April 2022 Strategic Direction Committee \(item 7.1\)](#).

The report noted that of our existing 20 Family Regional and Family District Playgrounds, 15 meet our current service levels relating to shade provision. It also noted that of our total playground stock, 99 are either shaded or have a shade structure, such as a shelter, within 50 metres of the playground.

The report also included a Shade Matrix that provides a strategic assessment tool based on

the reserve hierarchy, park function, time and user frequency to determine the level of shade requirement.

In response to the report:

- The Shade Matrix has been applied as part of the scoping process to every playground renewal project.
- Shade has been retro-fitted at the Dinton Farm Playground, Hackham and the Karawatha Playgorund, O'Sullivan Beach at a cost of \$100,000.

Benefits

In addition to sun protection, shade over playgrounds provides the following benefits:

- Cooling effect: shade can significantly reduce the temperature of playground equipment and surfaces, making them safer and more comfortable for children to play on.
- Extended playtime: with shade available, children are more likely to spend longer periods playing outdoors, as they are shielded from direct sunlight and its associated discomforts.
- Accessibility: shade makes playgrounds more accessible to children with

sensitivities to sunlight, such as those with certain medical conditions or sensory sensitivities.

- Parent and caregiver comfort: shade provides a comfortable space for parents, guardians, and caregivers to supervise children while they play, especially during hot and sunny days.

Both built and natural shade have a role to play in ensuring our parks address the benefits noted above. While we do not have a large number of playgrounds with built shade over them, we do try to align the playground to take advantage of natural shade and depending on the hierarchy of the park, provide a shade shelter near to the playground as a minimum.

Shade types

Shade sails

Shade sails can provide immediate shade over playgrounds and can be tailored to specific site requirements and colour schemes.

A shade structure using shade cloth over a playground can have a build (capital) cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000 for our smaller Local and Neighbourhood level playgrounds and potentially more than \$120,000 for larger Regional and District playgrounds.

While shade sails provide immediate shade, they have a relatively short life expectancy of five to seven years, after which time they need to be repaired or replaced. Accordingly, funding to renew shade sail(s) on a seven year rotation needs to be included as part of our renewal program and corresponding budget.



Figure 1 – Shade sails at Hastings Reserve, Sellicks Beach

Alternative artificial shade options

Alternative artificial shade options include a range of shade products such as picnic shelters and gazebos. A medium sized shelter with picnic and seating options costs approximately \$15,000 to \$35,000.

While these provide immediate shade near the playground and support parents, guardians and caregivers, they do not provide shade over the playground itself.



Figure 22 – Alternate shade - shelter

Natural shade (trees)

Natural shade provided by tree canopy is the most preferable approach to addressing shade within playgrounds, as they cool the environment and in most cases will exceed the useful life of any artificial shade structure. However, noting the recent incidents where large gum trees have dropped limbs, this approach needs to be carefully considered with respect to tree species and risk.

New trees can be planted when a playground is being constructed. However, while this approach supports our tree canopy and heat mitigation targets, with respect to shade, this does not provide immediate shade to the user. Noting the size the tree needs to reach to provide adequate shade, a new tree may not provide shade until it is 15 or more years old.