

Fact Sheet: Playgrounds



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 a fact sheet relating to playgrounds and provides background to the thinking that has helped shape the draft OSSMP and the service levels within it.

What we have

What is a playspace versus a playground?

A playground is a specific area with manufactured play equipment, while a playspace is a more natural space that encourages various forms of play including free and imaginative play, sport, and fitness in addition to structured activities. Accordingly, a built/manufactured playground would be provided in a playspace, however a playspace may not include a playground.

Why are playspaces important?

Play is a crucial aspect of child development and a primary means through which life skills are acquired. As a provider of play areas, we have an integral role in ensuring accessible and safe environments are available to support developmental needs and well-being.

Current playground stock

Figure 1 below illustrates the location of our 250 playgrounds that incorporate elements for a range of play experiences as well as associated amenities (such as seating, shelters, barbecues, fencing, toilets, and pathways).

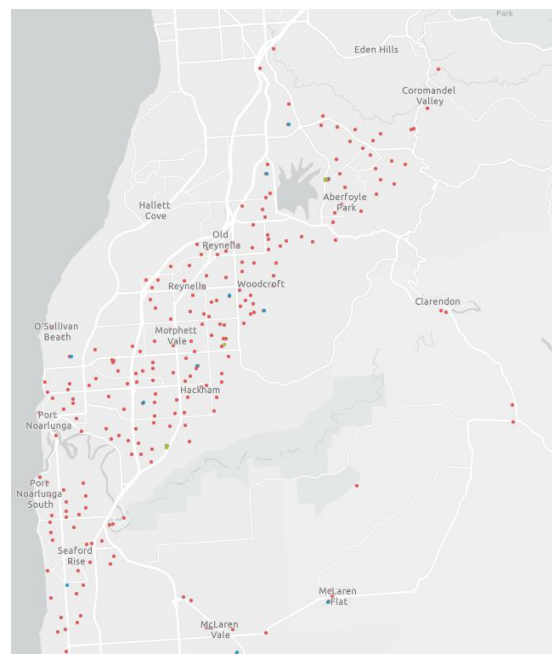


Figure 1 Current CoO playgrounds

Playgrounds condition information.

The following condition information is based on age. The typical design life for a playground is 20 years. As you will see from the data below, 50% of playgrounds in the City of Onkaparinga are at the end of their design life and due for replacement with a further 21% falling due in the next 7 years.

Age (years)	%Total
1-12	29%
13- 20	21%
20+	50%

Figure 2 - Playgrounds age as a % of the total number

Industry benchmark

Benchmarking against national standards and other councils assists us to provide adequate playgrounds to meet community expectations. Comparing supply against the benchmark provides an indication/guide as to whether we have too many or too few playgrounds.

The information below benchmarks our playground supply against specific population groups.

According to Parks and Leisure Australia (PLA), the industry's peak body, one playground per 1,500-2,000 people is considered adequate provision of playgrounds.

Moreover, and as noted in the social research report, in relation to playspace planning and management, the age group 0-14 is assessed separately as these are the primary users of playgrounds. The social research notes that an average ratio of approximately 1 playground for every 400-500 children is a good benchmark in Australian towns and cities. For the purposes of the City of Onkaparinga OSSMP review, the more conservative 1:500 benchmark for those aged 0-14 has been adopted.

Table A below demonstrates where the City of Onkaparinga playground provision sits with respect to these two benchmarks. As illustrated, our provision is nearly four times the benchmark for those aged 0-14 years and nearly double the total population benchmark.

Population to the number of playgrounds		
	Ratio 0-14yrs	Ratio All Ages
Target	1:500	1:1500
Current (Feb 2024)	1:124	1:714

Table A - Population v supply ratio

The OSSMP 2018 - 2023 also has a service level to provide a playground within a 500m walking distance of most households.

An optimal scenario would have the 500m catchment (also referred to as a buffer) evenly distributed (just touching). However, as illustrated in Figure 3 below, there are a number of locations with high catchment overlaps and a significant number with medium overlaps.

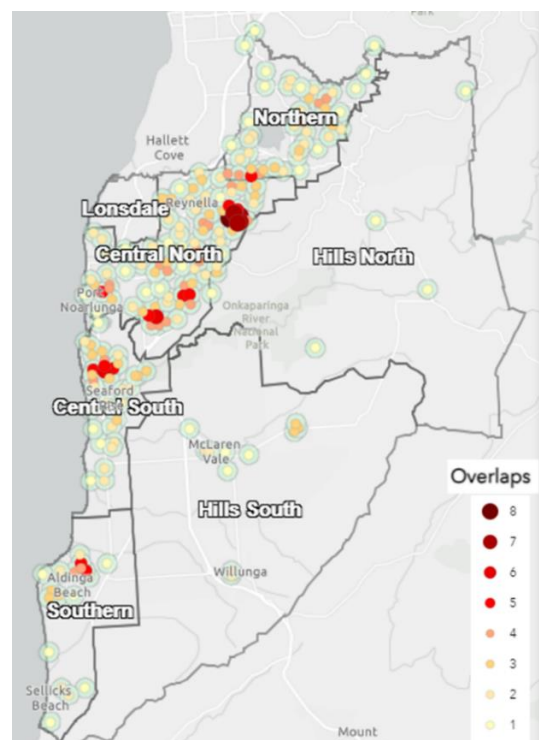


Figure 3 Current CoO playgrounds catchment (buffer) overlaps

OSSMP Survey Report

The OSSMP Survey was open for over 8 weeks running between 29 Nov 23 – 31 Jan 24. In response to this, we received 543 completed surveys which included; 109 face-to-face interview and 434 online survey responses, all of these (100%) being Onkaparinga residents.

At a high level, the survey indicates that:

- Leisure and children’s play dominate usage.
- Playgrounds focus areas should offer/provide:
 - variety of equipment
 - creatively designed spaces
 - opportunities for learning and skill development.

As illustrated in Figure 4 below, the survey also identified that almost four in five (77% of respondents) indicated a preference for less playgrounds with more equipment within a 10-minute walk of most households.

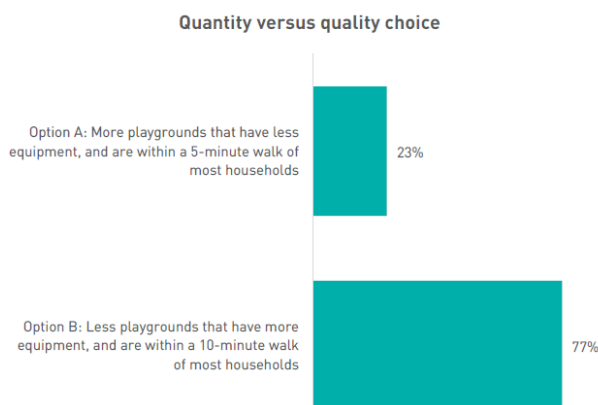


Figure 4 OSSMP Survey response Quality V's Quantity

This suggests that residents seek stimulation and diverse play experiences and are willing to extend their walk (travel time) for a more engaging play experience. Accordingly, while travel time is still important, it is not the deciding factor.

The survey also identified that the top three suggestions to encourage visitation are better/more toilets, more/better shade/shelters and enhanced safety/fenced off areas.

Cost

Capital cost to construct our playspaces including play equipment, seats, shelters, shade and irrigation has increased post COVID.

All equipment also requires ongoing maintenance. While there is a cost associated with the general maintenance required on all items; unusual, bespoke and/or elements that are outside our general maintenance practices may incur additional costs to inspect and maintain.

Moreover, while there is a general preference in the community for natural wood play equipment due to its aesthetic and environmental (climate change) benefit, these require higher levels of monitoring and can exhibit issues with wood splitting, which can increase pressure on limited resources and may cause the equipment to fail prematurely.

While the initial and ongoing costs as well as the accessibility of parts should not preclude innovation in our playspaces and play equipment, their potential impact on the sustainability of the open space network needs to be understood and considered when planning playspaces.