

Mount Alexander Shire

Playground hierarchy and Levels of Service.

Working together for a healthy, connected shire



Background and purpose

The Public Playground Hierarchy and Levels of Service document has been developed to support decision making for investment into Council's current and future playground assets.

This document will be used by Council in conjunction with other relevant strategies (listed below), along with consultation with the community to ensure that Council's playgrounds are meeting the needs of the community whenever investment decisions are to be made.

- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025
- Public Open Space Strategy – May 2016
- Let's Play – Investing in Play 2014-2024
- Mount Alexander Early Years Plan 2022-2026
- Mount Alexander Middle Years Plan 2023-2026
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan – 2023-2027
- Resourcing Recreation – 2019

This document provides an update on existing hierarchy classifications and service levels for public playgrounds outlined in the [The Let's Play – Investing in Play strategy \(2014-2024\)](#) and supersedes the following information within that strategy:

- Appendix 1 (page 45): Play spaces in Mount Alexander – current and future proposed classifications.
- Table 3 (page 26) – play space planning and design framework

This document addresses existing playground assets only and it does not address any gaps in provision or consideration of new playgrounds.

If new playgrounds are to be built by developers or the community, they will need to adhere to the hierarchy and levels of service outlined in this document.

Definition

What is a “playground classification” (hierarchy)?

A playground hierarchy is a categorisation framework primarily used to classify the scale and primary design focus for each playground. A playground's classification directly informs its scope and size and it also guides the level of service and infrastructure provision.

Previously there were three play space categories outlined in the Let's Play – Investing in Play Strategy (2014-2024): Municipal, District and Local level.

These classifications have updated to include Local Level 1 and Local Level 2 playgrounds. See full description of each category below in Playground Classifications.

What is a “level of service”?

Levels of service are the defined quality of service for the playground assets, encompassing areas such as accessibility, amenities, play value and overall experience of a playground

The development of this levels of service framework was heavily informed by industry standards, recognised and well researched play objectives or 'play values'

The levels of service provides a detailed description of 13 different attributes in relation to Councils public

playgrounds. The descriptions of these attributes are aligned with the playground hierarchy and will inform the project scope, design and budget on any renewal works, upgrades or new playgrounds once a classification has been established.

The levels of service are aimed to provide a consistent approach for each classification and can be used to provide clear guidance to the community on where Council can or cannot meet the community's expectations.

Please note, Levels of Service for Pre-schools have not been included as these need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, along with any provision from the pre-schools of moveable play equipment.

Playground Classifications (hierarchy)

Play spaces are classified according to the role of the play space in the overall play space network:

Municipal

A Municipal play space provides for the entire municipality and beyond with assets and/or attractions that are of the highest level in the municipality. By nature, they are attractive enough to be a destination and a significant drawcard for bringing residents and visitors to the park or area.

Facilities supporting these playgrounds are comprehensive and support an extended stay, for example, quality toilets, bespoke designed playground, well-maintained amenity planting, paths, and family picnic facilities.

District

A District play space provides for the local township and sometimes beyond. The play space accommodates a range of assets, opportunities, activities and interests.

These spaces generally attract users from the town and surrounding district. Patrons may visit by car, bike or foot. High-quality materials are used to support the utilisation.

Local – L1

Local 1 play spaces are intended primarily for the local area used by residents.

These spaces generally attract users from the town and surrounding district. Moderate level of provision using robust materials with minimal design are used to support the utilisation. These spaces are typically a standalone playground which is the primary purpose for the park or reserve.

Local – L2

Local 2 play spaces may support ancillary facilities and occasional events.

These spaces generally attract users from the town and surrounding district. A basic level of provision using robust materials with minimal design are used to support the utilisation. These playgrounds are located at sites such as a recreation reserves or community halls and are typically the secondary feature of use for that location.

Playground hierarchy

Legend

M - Municipal playground

D - District playground

L1 - Local 1 playground

L2 - Local 2 playground

PS – Pre-school

Public Playgrounds

Category	Name	Location
M	Castlemaine Botanical Gardens	Castlemaine
D	Campbells Creek Community Park	Campbells Creek
D	Norwood Hill Recreation Reserve	Castlemaine
D	Victory Park	Castlemaine
D	Stanley Park (North)	Harcourt
D	Maldon Gardens	Maldon
D	Metcalfe Recreation Reserve	Metcalfe
D	Newstead Lyons Park	Newstead
D	Taradale Mineral Springs	Taradale
L1	Baringhup	Baringhup
L1	Campbells Creek Recreation Reserve	Campbells Creek
L1	Morrissey Reserve	Castlemaine
L1	Lawrence Park Drive Reserve	Castlemaine
L1	Chewton Soldiers Memorial Park	Chewton
L1	Sawpit Gully Reserve	Elphinstone
L1	Fryerstown Public Park	Fryerstown
L1	Big Tree Park	Guildford
L1	Harcourt Recreation Reserve	Harcourt
L1	Newstead Memorial Park	Newstead
L2	Barfold Hall	Barfold
L2	Campbells Creek Community Centre	Campbells Creek
L2	Elphinstone Recreation Reserve	Elphinstone
L2	Muckleford North Recreation Reserve	Muckleford
L2	Sutton Grange Hall	Sutton Grange
L2	Taradale Recreation Reserve	Taradale

Pre-Schools

Category	Name	Location
PS	Castlemaine Kindergarten	Castlemaine
PS	Castlemaine South Kindergarten	Norwood Hill
PS	Newstead Pre School	Newstead
PS	Maldon Pre School	Maldon

Public playgrounds - Levels of service

Municipal Levels of Service

Attribute	Municipal
Location/Purpose	Generally, these play spaces: - are on a site that is larger than 2.0 hectares in size such as a major park or recreation reserve with highest usage levels. - users likely to travel by car from throughout the region plus visitors to the area. - visitors expected to stay at the site for up to 2+ hours, requiring ancillary facilities to support this length of stay.
Design	An overall master plan of approximately 25% of the budget will be prepared for the site that includes landscaping elements to ensure the play space has a unique theme or focus that links play elements, spaces and features and is an attractive place to visit and stay. The design will include the following: - manufactured and bespoke play equipment that supports physical and cognitive development in children - environments that support sensory, social and emotional development - features that bring children into contact with nature and encourage exploration. - interactive features e.g. sound/music making elements - artistic/cultural/heritage features, find playful ways to incorporate the stories of Country, including environment and ecological processes. - additional play environments such as open run about areas, treed areas, lakeside areas - ensure equipment pieces provide inclusive and engaging play experiences for all people.
Landscaping	Landscaping should comprise and focus on green elements with tree planting aiming to provide at least 50% shade over play items and seating. Garden planting, in addition to amenity values will provide integrated opportunities to enhance the “natural” play values of the site, (e.g. turf kick-about) and close by to provide opportunities for unstructured play and connections to the local environment. Hard features such as walls and rocks will aim to be multi-functional – e.g. provide seating and play values in addition to functional and amenity purpose.
Play Items	Between 18 - 25 play items, that deliver a wide range of play values. Ensure 50% of equipment pieces are universally accessible. The design will incorporate 2-3 standalone elements such as swings and seesaw, with the balance a combination or climbing unit. At least one item (or combination of items) will be a premier feature that is relatively unique in character or scale that creates a strong level of attraction or interest.
Age Groups	Play features need to meet the needs of all three main age groups which are typically <5yrs: 6 -12 and 13 -15. There will be a degree of physical separation between each of the groups, particularly for the <5yr equipment.
Natural Play	Natural play features will be incorporated into the design as appropriate using a range of possible features and elements such as trees, bushes, plants, shrubs, wildflowers and long grass, sand, water, rocks, and a variety

	of levels, and visual and sensory stimuli. There is opportunity to use the natural environment in play.
Access	Adequate parking and bike racks will be provided in proximity to the playground. Hard surface (accessible) footpaths will be provided from carparks and other access points to the play equipment and amenities to optimise access for all abilities.
Litter Bins	Litter bins provided.
Toilets	Toilets located within proximity to playground. Include an accessible toilet/s and feature change facilities (babies, children, adults) near the play space.
Shade	Minimum 50% shaded area to be provided by shade sails and enhanced to greater than 50% with tree planting.
Soft fall	Permanent synthetic surfacing for high impact areas and to facilitate all abilities access (up to 50% approx.) with balance area loose fill (processed wood chip).
Ancillary facilities	The following ancillary facilities will be installed: Seating (with shade cover over at least 50%): 4-6 standard park seats (additional seating may also be provided though landscaping features such as walls/rocks). Include sufficient hard surface adjacent to all seats, allowing wheelchair and pram parking. Picnic tables (at least 50% within a roofed shelter): 2-4 standard picnic settings. Drinking fountain: 1-2 standard drinking fountains BBQ's: Electric BBQs with roofed shelter located nearby with visual connection maintained to the playground: 2-3 single or 1-2 double units
Fencing	There may be occasions where full or part fencing of play spaces is required for safety for example, if in close proximity to a major road or other specific hazards.

District Level of Service

Attribute	District
Location/Purpose	Generally, these play spaces: - are on a site that is between 0.5 to 2.0 hectares in size and may be considered for sites in some towns with moderate usage levels. - users likely to travel by car, foot, and cycle from either the immediate community or for roadside locations, the wider region, and visitors. - visitors expected to stay at the site for up to 1.5+ hour, requiring ancillary facilities to support to support this length of stay.
Design	A concept design will be prepared for the site focusing on connectivity and all abilities access that includes landscaping elements to ensure the play space is an attractive place to visit and stay. For small sites (<3,000m²) the design will aim to incorporate the whole site. For larger sites, the design/development will be limited to the Play Space and its immediate surrounds (approximately 1,000m²) The concept design will include the following: - manufactured play equipment that supports physical and cognitive development in children - play environments such as open run about areas - interactive features e.g. sound/music making elements

	• features that bring children into contact with nature and encourage exploration • ensure equipment pieces provide inclusive and engaging play experiences for all people. • might have artistic/cultural/heritage features, playfully incorporating the stories of Country, including environment and ecological processes.
Landscaping	Landscaping should comprise of approximately 15% of the budget and will focus on green elements with tree planting aiming to provide at least 50% shade over play items and seating. Garden planting, in addition to amenity values will provide integrated opportunities to enhance the “natural” play values of the site. Hard features such as walls and rocks will aim to be multi-functional – e.g. provide seating and play values in addition to functional and amenity purpose.
Play Items	Between 10 - 15 play items, that deliver a wide range of play values as possible with a particular emphasis on movement. Ensure 50% of equipment pieces are universally accessible. Typically, the design will incorporate up to 2-3 standalone elements such as swings and seesaw, with the balance a combination or climbing unit. At least one item should be of a scale or impact that creates a strong level attraction or interest.
Age Groups	Play features suitable for a minimum of two (out of three) age groups, typically for <5- and 5–9-year-old age groups, with a degree of physical separation provided between the equipment where possible.
Natural Play	There is opportunity to use the natural environment in play. 1-2 natural play features shall be incorporated into the design as appropriate to the site but will be limited to low maintenance features. Such features typically include rocks, logs, and earth mounds.
Access	Typically accessed by vehicle. Parking will be provided in association with adjacent facility. Hard surface (accessible) footpaths will be provided from carparks, paths, and other access points to the play equipment.
Litter Bins	Litter bins provided.
Toilets	Toilets located within proximity to playground. Include an accessible toilet/s and feature change facilities (babies, children, adults) near the play space.
Shade	Minimum 50% shaded area to be provided by shade sails and enhanced to greater than 50% with tree planting.
Softfall	Permanent synthetic surfacing for high impact areas and to facilitate all abilities access (up to 30% approx.) with balance area loose fill (processed wood chip)
Ancillary facilities	The following ancillary facilities will be installed: • Seating (with shade cover over at least 50%): 2-4 standard park seats, (additional seating may also be provided though landscaping features such as walls/rocks). Include sufficient hard surface adjacent to all seats, allowing wheelchair and pram parking. • Picnic tables (with at least 50% including shade or shelter): 1-2 standard picnic settings. • Drinking fountain: 1 standard drinking fountain. • BBQ's: Electric BBQs located nearby with roofed shelter and visual connection maintained to the playground: 1 -2 single units

Fencing	There may be occasions where part fencing of play spaces is required for safety for example, if in close proximity to a major road or other specific hazards.
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Local – L 1 Levels of Service

Attribute	Local 1
Location/Purpose	Generally, these play spaces: - are on a site that is between 0.25 and 0.5 hectares in size, attract short-stay visits and are likely to travel by car, foot and cycle from the immediate community. - used by smaller numbers of people at any one time, are small in size, and are generally on stand alone sites that do not cater for other open space needs such as sport or wildlife and focus on play opportunities for younger children. - visitors expected to stay at the site for 1 hour, requiring minimal ancillary facilities.
Design	An overall plan will be prepared for the site that includes landscaping elements to ensure the Play Space is an attractive place to visit and stay. The design/development will be limited to the Play Space and its immediate surrounds (approximately 500m ²).
Landscaping	Landscaping should comprise of approximately 10% of the budget and will focus on green elements with tree planting aiming to provide at least 50% shade over play items and seating. Garden planting, in addition to amenity values will provide integrated opportunities to enhance the “natural” play values of the site.
Play Items	Between 5 - 10 play items, that deliver a wide range of play values as possible with a particular emphasis on movement. Typically, the design will incorporate 1-2 standalone elements such as swings and seesaw, with a minimum of one universally accessible element, with the balance a combination or climbing unit.
Age Groups	Play features suitable for a minimum of two (out of three) age groups with a focus on play opportunities for younger children.
Natural Play	Natural play elements may be considered to the site but will be limited to low maintenance features. Such features typically include rocks, logs, and earth mounds.
Access	Typically accessed by vehicle. Parking will be provided in association with adjacent facility.
Litter Bins	Litter bins will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
Toilets	Not provided specifically for playground users.
Shade	Minimum 50% shaded area to be provided by tree planting (no shade sail)
Softfall	Loose fill (processed wood chip)
Ancillary facilities	The following ancillary facilities will be installed: - Seating: 1 standard park seat - Picnic tables: 1 standard picnic setting. - BBQ not typically provided unless site is attractive for picnic stays

Fencing	There may be occasions where part fencing of play spaces is required for safety for example, if in close proximity to a major road or other specific hazards.
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Local – L 2 Levels of Service

Attribute	Local 2
Location/Purpose	Generally, these play spaces: - are on a site that is between 0.25 and 0.5 hectares in size, attract short-stay visits and are likely to travel by car, foot and cycle from the immediate community. - Maybe used by smaller numbers of people. Often sites are supporting ancillary facilities (halls, organised sport facilities) or occasional events. - Visitors expected to stay at the site for 1 hour
Design	An overall plan will be prepared for the site that includes landscaping elements to ensure the Play Space is an attractive place to visit and stay. The design/development will be limited to the Play Space and its immediate surrounds (approximately 100-300m ²). Design to be led by inhouse staff.
Landscaping	Landscaping will focus tree planting aiming to provide at least 50% shade over play items and seating.
Play Items	Between 3 to 5 play items, that deliver a wide range of play values as possible with a particular emphasis on movement. Typically, the design will incorporate up to 1-2 standalone elements such as swings and seesaw, or a combination or climbing unit with a minimum of one universally accessible element.
Age Groups	Play features suitable for a range of ages between 3 to 10 year old's.
Natural Play	Natural play elements may be considered to the site but will be limited to low maintenance features. Such features typically include rocks, logs, and earth mounds.
Access	Typically accessed by vehicle. Parking will be provided in association with adjacent facility.
Litter Bins	Litter bins will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
Toilets	Not provided specifically for playground users.
Shade	Minimum 50% shaded area to be provided by tree planting (no shade sail)
Softfall	Loose fill (processed wood chip)
Ancillary facilities	The following ancillary facilities will be installed: Seating: 1 standard park seat
Fencing	There may be occasions where part fencing of play spaces is required for safety for example, if in close proximity to a major road or other specific hazards.

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