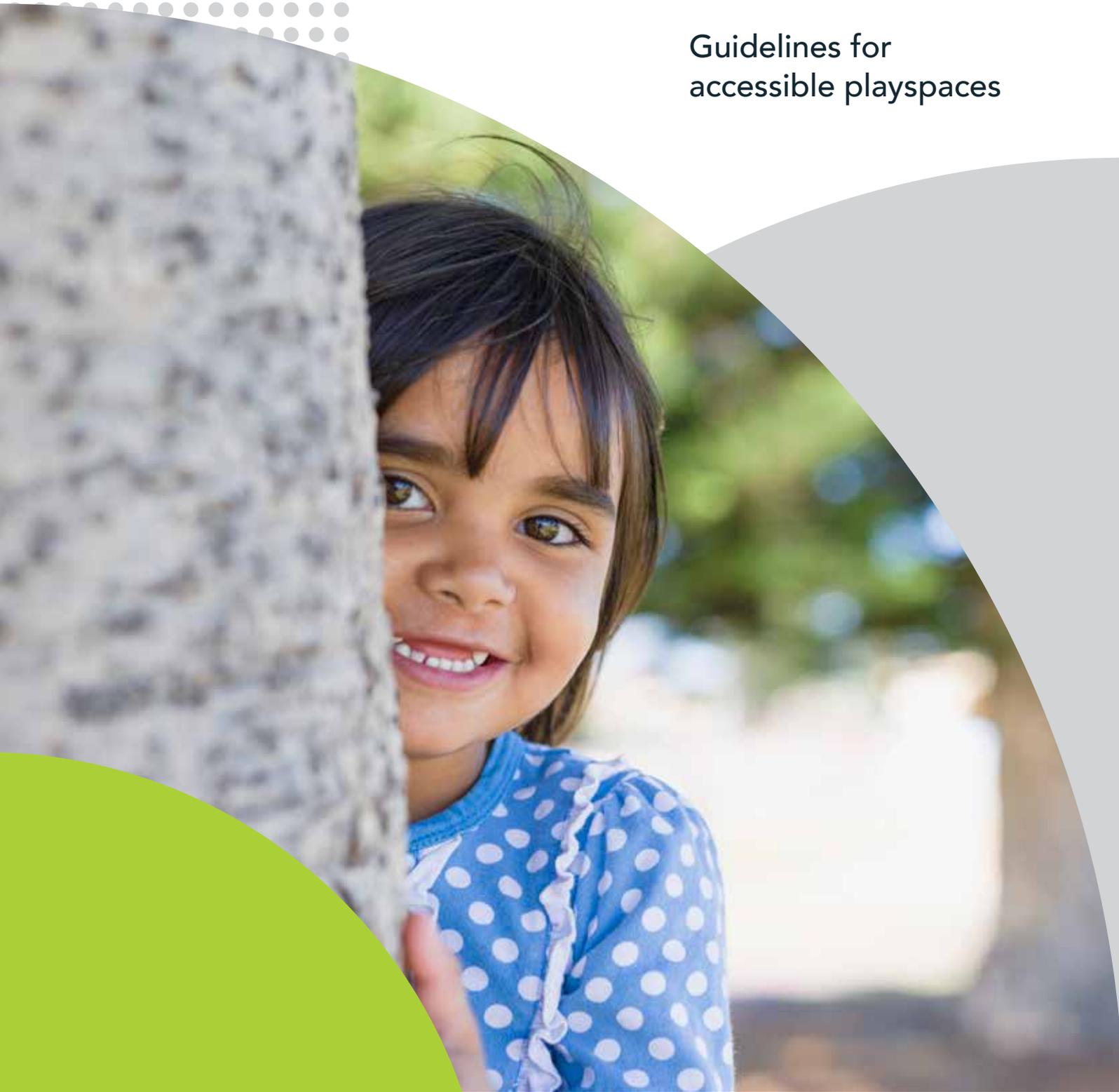




# inclusive play

Guidelines for  
accessible playspaces

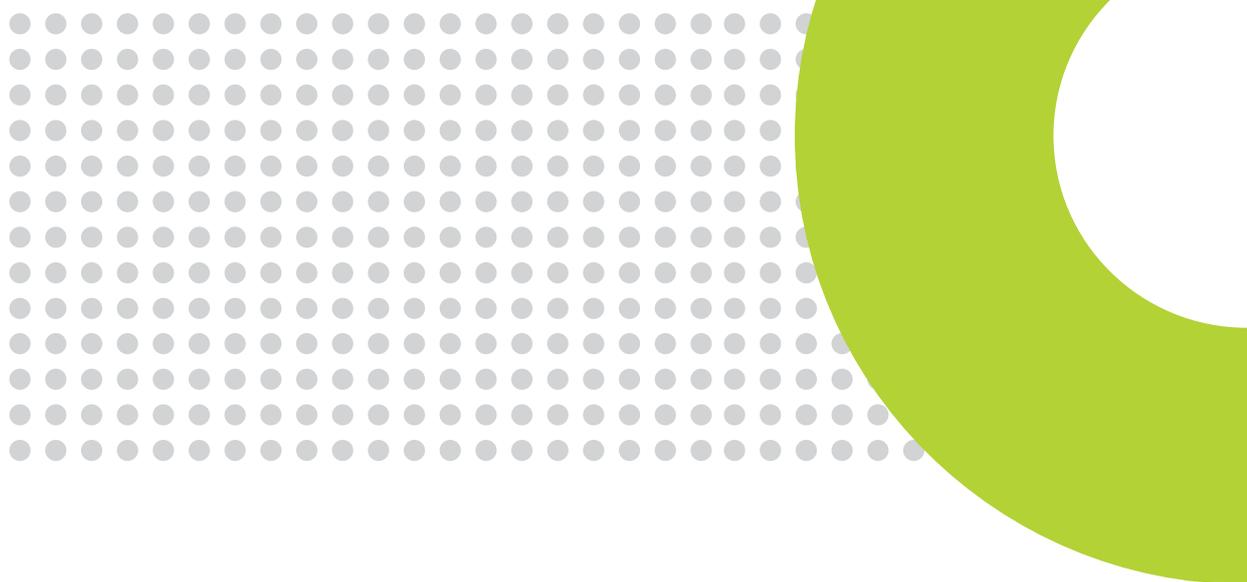




## Acknowledgement of Country

The South Australian Government acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the State's first people and recognises their traditional relationship with Country.

We acknowledge that the spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices of Aboriginal people come from their traditional lands and waters, and that the cultural and heritage beliefs, languages and laws are still of importance today.



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## Minister's message

### Every child needs play.

Play is an essential part of our children's development and wellbeing. It helps them to build confidence, develop social and communication skills, learn how to care for others and the environment, develop physical, cognitive and emotional skills and increases their overall health and happiness.

The United Nations High Commission for Human Rights recognises play as a right for every child. However, many children and adults living with disability have difficulty finding playspaces that families can enjoy together.

*Inclusive Play* seeks to address this by providing a set of guiding principles to assist in the design and development of playspaces that enable all children and their families to engage in play and play together.

The guide also builds on *Inclusive SA* our *State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019-2023*, which is our vision for an accessible and inclusive South Australia.

*Inclusive Play* was developed through a Working Group with stakeholders who have expertise in disability, children, built environments, sport and recreation as well as through community consultation with people living with disability, families, carers and children. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank everyone who contributed to the creation of this guide.

I encourage everyone who is involved in developing playspaces within our community to utilise this guide, so we can ensure playspaces can be enjoyed by everyone equally.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Lensink".

**Michelle Lensink MLC**  
Minister for Human Services



## How to use this document

These *Inclusive Play* guidelines are a tool for local government, schools, early childhood learning centres, design professionals and others to assist in planning, considering and developing playspaces that are inclusive of all children. They can also be used by the community to advocate for playspace design or resources. The guidelines include a comprehensive checklist, which can help identify best practice in inclusive play design. Users are encouraged to read the full document and use the information to challenge standard practice and inspire innovative design solutions that ensure playspaces can be enjoyed by every South Australian.

## Inclusive play is important to all children

Play is a fundamental part of a child's physical, social and emotional wellbeing. It helps them to build social skills, independence and emotional resilience. Sensory play is crucial to their brain development; creative play helps them unleash their imagination; and physical play aids in the development of their motor skills, balance and spatial awareness.





Playspaces provide opportunities for community members to come together – to talk, to share and to connect. They are a place where friendships are formed and memories are made.

In South Australia approximately one-in-10 children live with disability and can face barriers using playgrounds and community playspaces. Children with disability, just like any other child, need opportunities to play with others, be physically active, learn, grow, connect and have fun.

When playspaces are designed to be inclusive, it means everyone, no matter their ability, age, cultural and social background, can play together side-by-side. It means parents, grandparents and carers feel welcome too.

Inclusive play promotes play between children of all abilities and cultural backgrounds and encourages acceptance and friendship. It breaks down barriers, allows people to share different life experiences and helps them learn from each other. Inclusive playspaces can change people's attitudes and promote diversity and inclusion.

## Inclusive play is a topic close to the heart of South Australians

We heard from over 235 people during our consultation period for *Inclusive Play* – including children and adults who live with disability, those who care for a child with disability – parents, guardians, carers and grandparents – and people who work in the sector.

We heard that inclusive play is important for everyone:



“All children should be able to access and play on an equal footing – so important for all socialisation.”



“...if people are aware that the space is for children with disabilities you are less likely to feel ostracised and isolated.”



“All abilities can play.  
All ages can play.  
Everyone’s included.”

## When asked about what inclusive playspaces should be like, respondents said:



"Inclusive playspaces need to be about the needs of children and all potential carers, who may have impairment or age-related challenges themselves."



"Sensory equipment, walls with bumps and different textures, steering wheels, things to twist and turn. Buttons to press. Cause and effect-type thing."



"Play equipment that he can access independently in his walker."



"Swings for children and adults (adults tend to have wide bottoms)."



"Make bigger slides. Way harder monkey bars!"



"An area that provides a quiet retreat when overwhelmed by noise or sight of other people."



"Things that challenge them to try new skills, such as balancing or climbing, and give them a sense of achievement and accomplishment."



## Inclusive play enables everyone to connect with their surroundings, with other people and with themselves

What we see and feel every day varies from person to person. We all deserve the opportunity to connect. When we have time to connect, we gain a better understanding of ourselves, each other and the world around us. These guidelines encourage connection and offer practical ways for you to support inclusive play.



## **Connect with place**

A place without barriers that is easy for everyone to access and enhances the existing environment.



## **Connect with each other**

Facilities and equipment that encourage people of all ages and abilities to interact and play with each other while feeling safe and welcome.



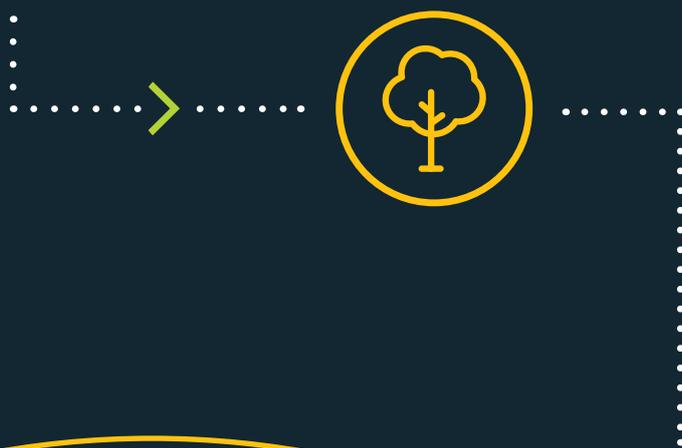
## **Connect with self**

An experience that helps every individual activate their senses, stimulate their imagination and challenge their limits.



## Connect with place

### Steps



### Why inclusive play is important to me

“Lucy loves the beach and water and eating endless amounts of cheese!

Lucy likes to walk by herself when she can, but most of the time she needs her wheelchair, so access is really important for us.

Until I became a mother of a child with a disability, I didn't think about how hard it might be for some people to get around – to do simple things, like visit a park and play.

Sometimes we go for a beautiful walk down a long path and then at the end there are steps and you have to go all the way back. This can really be frustrating.

It is important for us to have flat paths and accessible car parks close by, so if Lucy doesn't want her wheelchair we can help her walk to the playground by herself.”

Kristy and her daughter Lucy



Being outdoors and connecting with the environment is crucial for a child's development, health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, there are many families and children who find it hard to access and connect to a place. Playspaces offer a great opportunity for people to get outside and have fun, and the right design can help everyone.

Consider the following to help people connect with your unique place:

.....

1

**The first step is checking that everyone can access the place.**

Can they find it? Can they get there? Are there any barriers?

2

**Once they are there, make sure everyone can easily find their way around.**

Are the paths accessible? Is the layout easy to navigate? Can everyone understand the signs?

3

**Don't forget access to the fun stuff.**

Is the play equipment accessible? Can everyone access 'the coolest' thing?

4

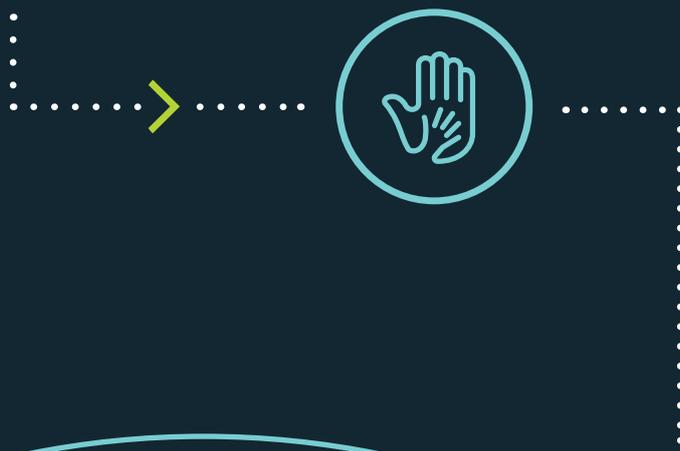
**Finally, ensure the unique setting and environment is considered.**

Is there enough shade? Are there existing natural features that can be used? Are there existing accessible facilities close by?



## Connect with each other

### Steps



### Why inclusive play is important to me

"I am lucky to have two children who I adore. Greta is 4 and Fergus is 9 years old.

Greta has Rett Syndrome, so she can't express herself through her body. She uses a PODD communication board to identify images with her eyes to tell us what she needs.

It is hard for me to find playgrounds where both my kids can play together in the same space. It's so important that Greta is able to join in with her brother and other kids so she doesn't feel left out.

Playgrounds need to be a safe space where I can let the kids play without having to always be supervising and watching out for equipment that can pose a danger.

Being able to play with others is great for both my kids – they can learn more this way. I hope to see more inclusive playgrounds that cater for everyone."

Olivia and her daughter Greta and son Fergus

Connecting with others is a fundamental human need. Inclusive playspaces can bring people of all ages and abilities together. These spaces can change attitudes, build relationships and help people understand and accept others.

Reflect on these questions to encourage people to connect with each other:

.....

1

**First things first – let your local community have a voice.**

Have you asked the community what they want? Can you help them to participate in making key decisions about the playspace?

2

**Encourage people of different ages and abilities to play together.**

Can all children play together or side-by-side? Can parents/carers play too?

3

**Provide facilities that allow people to connect.**

Are there accessible picnic tables, bench seats, BBQs or toilets?

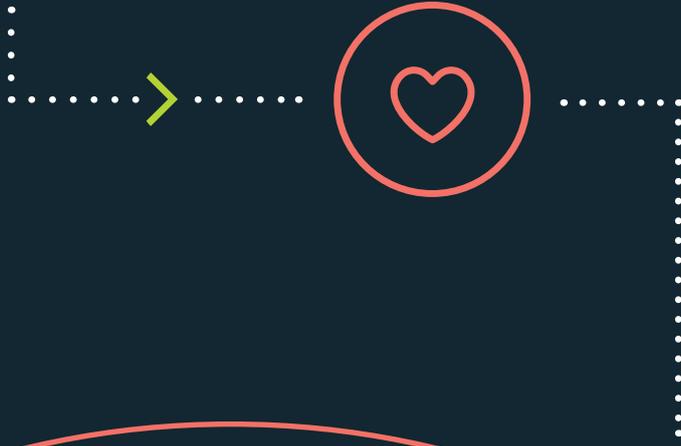
4

**Last but not least, help people to relax by making it safe.**

Have you considered lighting, supervision and a boundary enclosure?

# Connect with self

## Steps



### **Why inclusive play is important to me**

“My twin sons, Rhys and Nate, both have autism. They have a special connection; I often say they are like yin and yang to each other. Rhys is non-verbal and is a sensory avoider while Nate uses key words to say what he needs and is a sensory seeker.

Rhys and Nate don't have any awareness of danger and they have long, fast legs. One of Rhys's favourite games is to run away, so we can only go to a playground if it has a secure fence.

They are both physically very capable so it is nice to see them play on equipment that can physically challenge them. Sensory play is also important. Nate loves exploring and feeling different textures or playing with moving parts like noughts and crosses. Sometimes Rhys needs to be alone so he will go and sit in a tunnel or make a cubby under a slide.

I hope to see more inclusive playgrounds in Adelaide. We usually choose to stay home because there aren't any suitable playgrounds near us where it is safe for Rhys and Nate to play.”

Jessica and her sons Rhys and Nate

We all need time to interact with the world and also time to be quiet and connect with ourselves. Inclusive playspaces can help children of all abilities connect with their physical selves and understand their unique inner world. The right setting can challenge them to go beyond limitations and spark a little bit of creative magic from within.

Consider the following ideas to help people connect with themselves in your playspace:

.....

1

**To begin with, help children connect to their senses.**

Are there a variety of experiences to activate each sense?

⋮

2

**The greatest power can come from within – unleash their imagination.**

Is there unstructured play? Are there hidden stories to find? Are there loose materials for making things?

⋮

3

**Children who challenge themselves can discover their potential.**

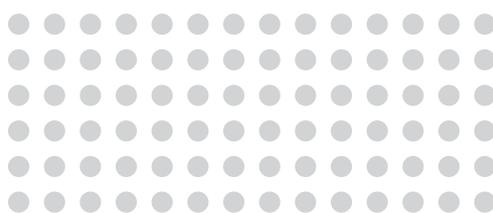
Are there challenges for a range of ages and abilities?

⋮

4

**And remember to make people feel significant.**

Are there unique places for solo play? Is there something different and memorable?







## Checklists

There are many elements to consider in the design and review of playspaces. These checklists provide recommendations for best practice inclusive play design.

Not all elements will apply to your playspace and there may be some things specific to your playspace which are not covered. Each place is unique and should respond to community needs, environmental setting and budget. If you would like to know more, please refer to the reference list provided.

The checklists should be used to challenge standard practices and inspire innovative design solutions, which help everyone to connect.

While these guidelines provide recommendations for design, you must review local, state-wide and Australian standards and policies to ensure your design is compliant.

# Connect with place

## Checklist



### Access/surfaces

- **Are there any barriers which prevent access?**
  - Steps, kerbs, trip hazards
- **Is there a circulation path which is accessible and easy to navigate?**
  - Wide path: 1.2m minimum, 1.8m allows two wheelchairs/ prams to pass each other
  - Gentle slopes: Maximum 1:20 slope (refer Australian Standards)
  - Consistent material: different to surrounding surfaces
  - Edge: flush with surrounding surfaces, consider high contrast colour to edge
- **Are there tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) to indicate hazards?**
  - Use warning tactiles: for example top of slide flush with ground, top/bottom of stairs, ramps
- **Do raised platforms, walkways and ramps have a safe edge?**
  - Ensure there is a kickplate or handrail on the edge (refer Australian Standards)



➤ **Can the entry gate be opened by an adult in a wheelchair or with limited mobility?**

- Consider additional means of access (swipe card, buzzer, 'MLAK' key)

➤ **Is the play equipment accessible?**

- Equipment flush with adjacent surfaces (for example carousels, top of slide)
- Entry/exit point of equipment has accessible surface (for example rubber softfall path to access swing seat)
- Interactive elements are at a reachable height
- Play tables to allow for wheelchair access

➤ **Can everyone access the 'coolest thing' in the playspace?**

- If elevated, ensure the 'coolest thing' has a ramped access point

➤ **Does everyone have an opportunity to play with nature?**

- Not all nature play elements can be accessible however, ensure there are some that can be accessed by all



## **Landscape**

➤ **Has the space been reviewed to understand the natural environment?**

- Sun: face equipment away from northern sun (for example slides face south)
- Wind: use screening to protect picnic/quiet areas from wind (if required)
- Natural features: utilise existing nature (vegetation, trees, views, creeks)

➤ **Does the playspace have adequate shade over key play areas and seating?**



Connect with place (continued)



## Layout

### > Is the playspace easy to navigate?

- Provide a clear logical layout from entry to exit with play zones arranged adjacent to a main circulation path

### > Is there a defined entry with adequate space?

- Ensure there is enough paved area for people to congregate, wait, sit and supervise

### > Is there a secure boundary enclosure around the space?

- Ideally the entire playspace should be within a secure boundary enclosure including open grass, natural play and picnic areas

### > Are the different activity zones easy to identify?

- Consider active/passive/quiet/circulation zones
- Consider different colour groups/surfaces to define each zone. The quiet zones should be away from the active zones

### > Is there adequate space between play equipment?

- Consider play equipment fall zones, movement zones, areas to 'wait your turn' and space for multiple users





## Location

- **Are there public transport links close by?**
  - Bus, train or tram
- **Are there accessible car parking spaces?**
  - Ensure car parks comply with Australian Standards
  - A highly used playspace will need more than the minimum requirement for accessible car parks
  - A bus parking/drop-off zone should be considered
- **Are there existing safe and accessible path/cycle networks and pedestrian crossings?**
  - Smooth surfaces, wide paths, gentle slopes or kerb ramps
- **Has a traffic analysis of nearby roads been completed?**
  - Locate the playspace a safe distance from adjacent roads. Consider traffic calming devices if traffic volumes are high
- **Are there existing accessible facilities nearby?**
  - Toilet, café or supermarket
- **Are there existing community groups in the area that the playspace can connect with?**
  - Schools, kindergartens, playgroups, sporting clubs or community centres



Connect with place (continued)



## Signage/wayfinding

### > Is the entrance/exit easy to find?

- Provide at least two entry points

### > Does the signage make everyone feel welcome?

- Signage promoting inclusivity
- Cultural signage (for example Aboriginal language/symbols)

### > Can the playspace be found easily online?

- Provide a map, identify playspace features (toilets, shade, car parking, change table or fencing) and provide directions on how to get there

### > Is the signage easily understood by everyone?

- Text: Use sans-serif fonts, select appropriate colour contrast, avoid using ALL CAPS or underlines
- Not just text: include simple images/symbols and Braille
- Height: readable by children and those in wheelchairs (suggest 1m from ground)
- Map: consider a tactile map at the entry showing access paths and key features
- Audio: consider providing audio information about the park



“Slides my carer can take me down, more ramps to help, and some more round swings to lay on instead of sitting up.”



# Connect with each other

## Checklist



### Communication

➤ **Has the community been included in the development of the playspace?**

- Ensure key community groups get a chance to have their say
- Look for community building opportunities (for example mural, artwork, planting day)

➤ **Does the signage help people communicate and understand each other?**

- Communication boards, for example AAC – Augmentative and Alternative Communication
- Cultural language (for example Aboriginal language local to the area)
- Educational/instructional signage
  - promoting inclusivity (for example 'Wait for your turn')
  - include images that are easy to understand



## Facilities

- **Are there picnic facilities where people can connect with each other?**
  - Picnic tables: wheelchair accessible, under shade, support group gatherings
  - BBQ: wheelchair accessible, easy to operate
- **Is there ample seating scattered through the playspace?**
  - Seating at key locations for carers to watch children
  - Variety of seating types: arm rests, back rests, different heights for children/adults
  - Hard paved area next to seating to allow room for pram or mobility device
- **Are there accessible toilets within the playspace or nearby?**
  - Include changing facilities for children/adults
  - Doors are easy to open and lock
- **Is there drinking water available within the playspace?**
  - Ensure drinking water is wheelchair accessible and easy to operate with space around the drink fountain for users to wait their turn
- **Are there electronic device charging stations?**
  - People may use tablets or electronic devices to communicate





Connect with each other (continued)



## Safety

- **If the playspace will be used at night, is there adequate lighting?**
  - Ensure supporting facilities are also adequately lit (nearby car park, toilets or access paths)
- **Are there clear lines of sight from seating areas to allow supervision by carers?**
  - Consider the alignment/location of vertical screens and the mature height of plants
- **Can the playspace be easily observed from the street or neighbouring properties?**
  - Keep sightlines into the space clear to encourage passive surveillance
- **Is there a secure boundary enclosure around the space?**
  - Consider nearby risks such as roads or open water
- **Has a playground safety audit been completed?**
  - Independent auditors are available to ensure the playspace complies with Australian Standards



“All children should be able to access and play on an equal footing – so important for socialisation.”



## Social Play

- **Does the playspace encourage everyone to play with each other?**
  - Equipment where you need a buddy to make it work (push/pull, winch/pulley)
  - A high point with multiple ways to get there (including an accessible path)
  - Equipment that can hold lots of friends (basket swings/seesaws/carousel)
  - Adults play too – wide slides or tandem swings help adults to play with children
  - Buddy bench – to sit on if children want to play with new friends
  - An area to retreat to for quiet play activities
- **Does the playspace cater for a range of ages and abilities?**
  - Provide a range of play options within close proximity that encourages side-by-side play

# Connect with self

## Checklist



### Activate the senses

#### > What can children see?

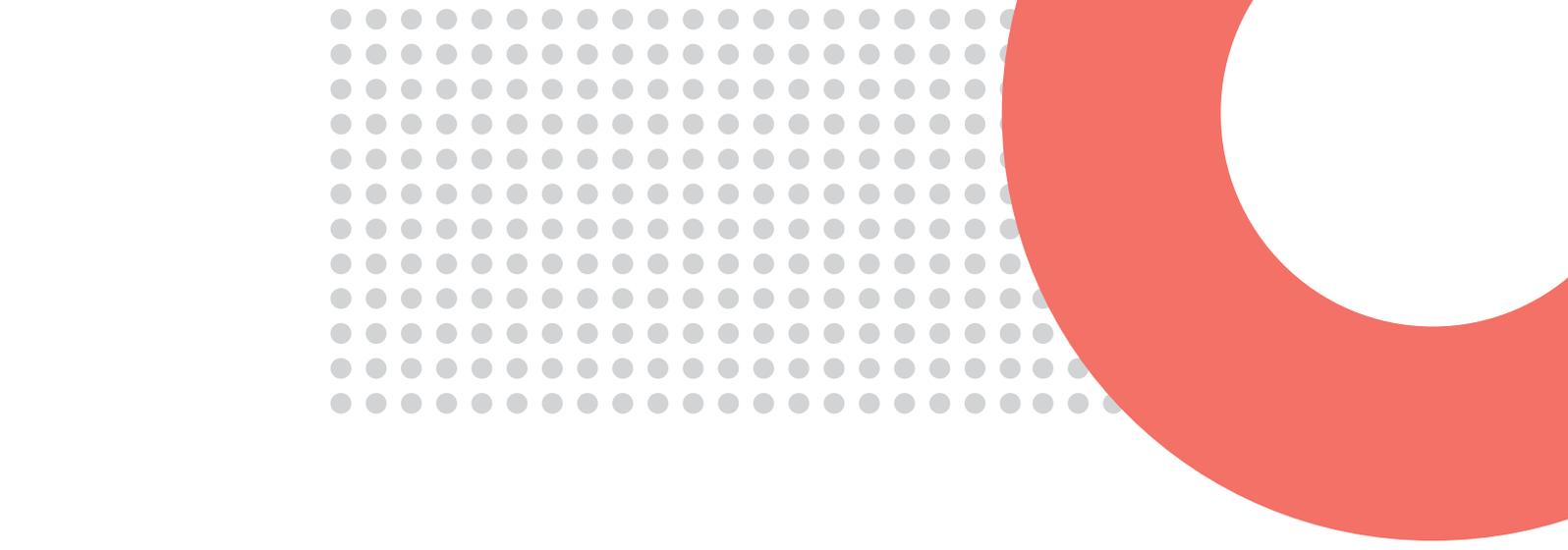
- Provide a rich visual experience – shapes, colour contrasts, patterns, mirrors
- Reduce glare – don't place reflective items in full sun
- Have a consistent colour scheme to help define activity zones

#### > What can children smell?

- Landscape features – fragrant plants
- Interactive/educational – identify plants by smell

#### > What can children taste?

- Edible plants, fruit trees, vegetables, bush tucker (native edible plants)
- Non-toxic materials – consider children may put things in their mouth



> **What can children feel?**

- Play elements with tactile parts – rough, smooth, prickly, furry, uneven
- Access to natural elements – sand, water, mud, loose rocks, plants
- Textured ground surfaces – feel vibration with pram/bike/wheelchair
- Appropriate materials – consider some materials get hot in sun

> **What can children hear?**

- Musical play (bells, drums, chimes or xylophones)
- Talk tubes (tubes which children can talk to each other through)
- Plants that attract native birds
- Quiet play retreat:
  - place to stop and listen (birds, wind, running water, leaves)
  - small, enclosed or hidden niche with seating
  - consider sound buffers to loud areas/roads

> **How can children move their bodies?**

- Whole body:
  - develop gross motor skills
  - balance, climb, slide, swing, spin, rock, jump
  - consider obstacle course or track for bike/scooter/wheelchair
- Small scale:
  - develop fine motor skills
  - loose parts play, puzzles, building, sorting, drawing, etching



Connect with self (continued)



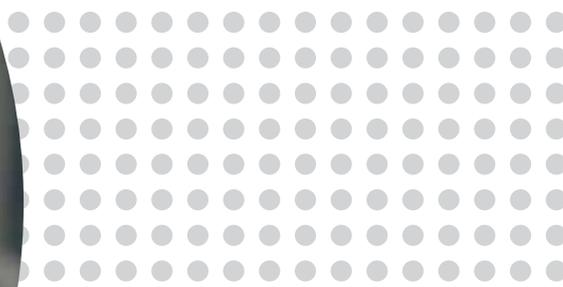
## Challenge

### > Does the playspace offer appropriate levels of challenge?

- Range of challenges for children of different abilities (gross motor and fine motor)
- Graduating challenges – easy to hard (to help build confidence)
- Elements of uncertainty or unpredictability (to help children evaluate risk)
- High structures which everyone can access by different routes varying in difficulty
- Not just physical challenges – consider problem solving or memory games



“An area that provides a quiet retreat when overwhelmed by noise or sight of other people.”





## **Stimulate imagination**

- **Are there open spaces with no equipment for unstructured play?**
- **Can children connect with nature?**
  - Access to nature – plants, trees, mud, rocks, water, logs, flowers, sticks, seeds
  - Encourage nature play – bug hunting, digging, gathering, constructing
- **Does the place tell a story?**
  - Use interactive elements to tell stories that are unique to the site, surrounding area, culture, values, history
- **Is there themed equipment which encourages imagination play?**
  - Stage/platform, amphitheatre, boat, race car, house, shops, animals
- **What makes the playspace unique?**
  - Consider custom equipment or art to make the play experience special
- **Are there places to go exploring?**
  - Maze, winding path, navigation, braille trail, seek and find



## Want to know more?

### **Australian Standards**

- Car Parking  
*AS/NZS 2890.6-2009 Off-street parking for people with disabilities*
- Pathways and Tactile Ground Surface Indicators  
*AS 1428 (Parts 1-5) Design for access and mobility – General requirements for access*
- Playground equipment and surfacing  
*AS/NZS 4685 (Parts 0-6) Playground equipment and surfacing*  
*AS 4422 Playground Surfacing. Specifications, Requirements & Test Methods*

### **Play documents**

- Nature play SA  
*Learning Outdoors Benefits / Risks, Department of Education and Child Development, Government of South Australia*
- Education  
*Helping children learn – How the whole family can learn together, Department of Education, Government of South Australia*

## **Inclusive play documents**

- **New South Wales**  
*'Everyone Can Play' – Let's Create Inclusive Playspaces, NSW Government, 2018*  
*'State of Play', To create a more inclusive world, Touched by Olivia, 2019*
- **Victoria**  
*The Good Play Space Guide: "I can play too", Department for Victorian Communities, 2007*
- **Queensland**  
*Queensland All Abilities Playground Project (QAAPP) User Participation Design Framework, Department of Communities Disability Services, 2010*
- **United Kingdom**  
*PiPA - Plan Inclusive Play Areas, Best practice document for playground design, UK Design Council*
- **United States**  
*Inclusive Play Design Guide, Play World*

## **Inclusive playspace examples**

- **South Australia**  
*Hendrie Street Reserve, Park Holme, City of Marion*  
*Inclusive Nature Playground, Adelaide Zoo, Adelaide (Variety SA and Zoos SA)*
- **Queensland**  
*Queensland Government 'All-Abilities playgrounds' interactive map for 17 inclusive playgrounds*  
[www.qld.gov.au/disability/children-young-people/early-childhood/playgrounds-profiles](http://www.qld.gov.au/disability/children-young-people/early-childhood/playgrounds-profiles)
- **Australia**  
*Touched by Olivia*  
*Over 26 inclusive playgrounds*  
[www.touchedbyolivia.com.au/open-for-play](http://www.touchedbyolivia.com.au/open-for-play)
- **United Kingdom**  
*PiPA accredited sites*  
*Over 26 inclusive playgrounds*  
[www.inclusiveplay.com](http://www.inclusiveplay.com)
- **United States**  
*Accessible Playground Directory*  
[www.accessibleplayground.net/playground-directory](http://www.accessibleplayground.net/playground-directory)

### **Inclusive protocols**

- *Inclusive SA, State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019-2023, Government of South Australia*
- *National Disability Strategy, Council of Australian Governments, 2010-2020*
- United Nations
  - *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007*
  - *Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989*

### **Universal Design**

- Universal Design
  - [www.universaldesignaustralia.net.au](http://www.universaldesignaustralia.net.au) (Australia)
  - [www.universaldesign.com](http://www.universaldesign.com) (International)

### **Signage/Wayfinding**

- Colour and contrast tool
  - [www.aremcoloursaccessible.com](http://www.aremcoloursaccessible.com)
- Auslan
  - [www.auslan.org.au](http://www.auslan.org.au)
- South Australian Government toolkit for accessibility online
  - [www.accessibility.sa.gov.au](http://www.accessibility.sa.gov.au)
- Cultural inclusion
  - Consult your local Aboriginal language group – refer to the map of Aboriginal Australia
    - [www.reconciliationsa.org.au/learn/map-of-aboriginal-australia](http://www.reconciliationsa.org.au/learn/map-of-aboriginal-australia)
- Seek approval to use Aboriginal language on signs from your local group
  - [www.gambay.com.au](http://www.gambay.com.au)

“

“Not all playground spaces need to be high energy. Some of the best playground adventures are those which use imagination.”



## Acknowledgment

The *Inclusive SA: State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019-2023* sets the State Government's vision for an accessible and inclusive South Australia. To achieve this vision, the State Plan sets out whole-of-government priorities and actions, which included the development of inclusive play guidelines. A working group was established to assist in the development of these guidelines with representatives from local government, non-government organisations, peak disability groups, planning and architecture bodies and education and recreation groups. The group drew from their experience in a variety of sectors and worked closely together to help ensure this document reflects the needs of our diverse community.

The Department of Human Services would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Inclusive Play Working Group in the development of these guidelines:

- Architecture and Access
- Autism SA
- Can:Do
- City of Adelaide
- City of Marion
- City of Playford
- Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Community Centres SA
- Community Visitor Scheme
- Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
- Disability Recreation and Sports SA
- Department of Education
- Inclusive Sport SA
- Kalaya Children's Group
- Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing
- Office of the Hon Michelle Lensink MLC
- Playgroup SA
- Purple Orange



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**Government of  
South Australia**