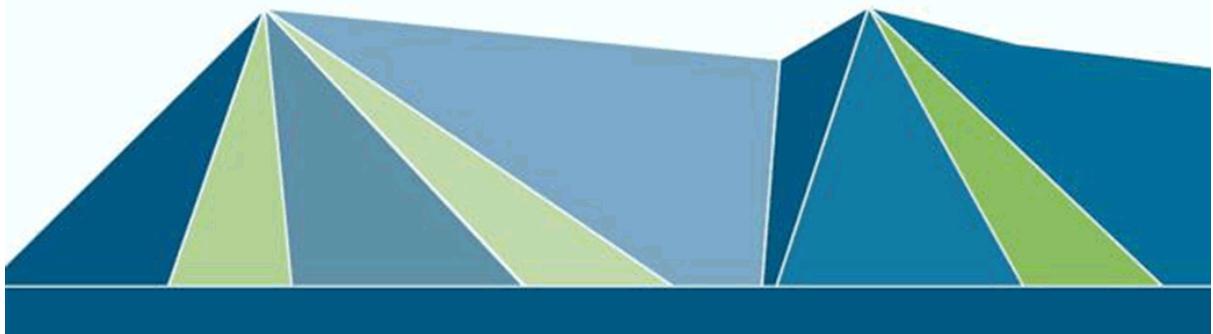




Playground Upgrade and Management Plan (draft)

Version 2.0 October 2021



8.6 Playground Upgrade and Management Plan

Ballina Shire Council – Playground upgrade and management plan

Version	Date	Reason/Comments
1.0	August 2021	CM 21/75182 – Draft for OS section review
2.0	October 2021	CM 21/75182 – Amended Draft for report to Council



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Introduction

Council currently manages 45 playgrounds for the benefit of the community. Playgrounds provide an opportunity for both active and passive play for children and people of all ages. They are important community facilities to encourage the development of key motor and socialisation skills.

There is a high level of community expectation that Council will provide playgrounds in locations and in a condition that provides safe enjoyment by children. The decision whether or not to install a new playground should not be made on an ad hoc basis. A wide range of matters needs to be addressed in reaching such a decision. This plan outlines Council's procedures for the management of playgrounds.

Playground design, safety standards, equipment ranges and community expectations are constantly changing. Council completes regular inspection, maintenance and upgrade of its playgrounds to meet these requirements. The development of asset management principles has resulted in the implementation of a more systematic approach to managing playground assets through a risk management approach.

Provision of Playgrounds

In order to evaluate the provision of playgrounds for Ballina Shire there are many things that must be considered.

- What are the demographics of the local government area?
- Do they currently use existing playgrounds?
- Is there suitable natural shade or is artificial shade structures required?
- Have there been formal requests for a playground?
- How far would people travel to the playground?
- How would they get there?
- Are they coming to the area to use other facilities?
- What other facilities are available at or near the site?
- Are budget resources available to construct it?
- Are there site condition or planning constraints?
- What impact will there be to maintenance budgets and resources?
- Are there risks or hazards to accessing and using the site?
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) considerations?

Development of this plan has taken these considerations into account to;

- identify existing playground provision;
- define the hierarchy of playgrounds in the shire; and
- outline systems for management and maintenance of playgrounds; and
- develop a strategy for the upgrade and renewal of playgrounds.

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Playground Hierarchy

Council has an existing playground hierarchy that utilises catchment areas to provide playgrounds within accessible distances to residential populations. The following hierarchy determines standard catchment sizes and typical levels of embellishment for equipment and ancillary infrastructure that each level of playground may contain.

Local

Typically located on smaller open space reserves within residential areas;

- servicing a 500m catchment;
- include 1-2 items of play equipment;
- rely on natural shade where possible;
- have minimal supporting infrastructure; and
- cost \$25,000 - \$100,000* to construct the playground.

District

Typically located on larger open space reserves and sports grounds close to residential areas, community precincts and destination locations;

- servicing a 750m catchment;
- include 3-4 items of play equipment;
- include shade structures and natural shade;
- supported by some ancillary infrastructure, such as seating, landscaped gardens, picnic settings and public amenities; and
- cost \$100,000 - \$250,000* to construct the playground.

Regional

Typically located on larger open space reserves at key destination locations;

- servicing a 1km catchment* for the purposes of playground provision planning, but designed to provide destination and event locations for the communities of shire and visitors to the region;
- include 5 or more items of play equipment for a wider range of ages and abilities, incorporating play themes and integrated landscape features;
- supported by ancillary infrastructure and facilities to encourage longer stays, such as car parking, footpaths, public amenities, seating, picnic shelters and BBQ's;
- connected to path networks, and co-located with event or recreational facilities; and
- generally cost more than \$250,000* to construct the playground.

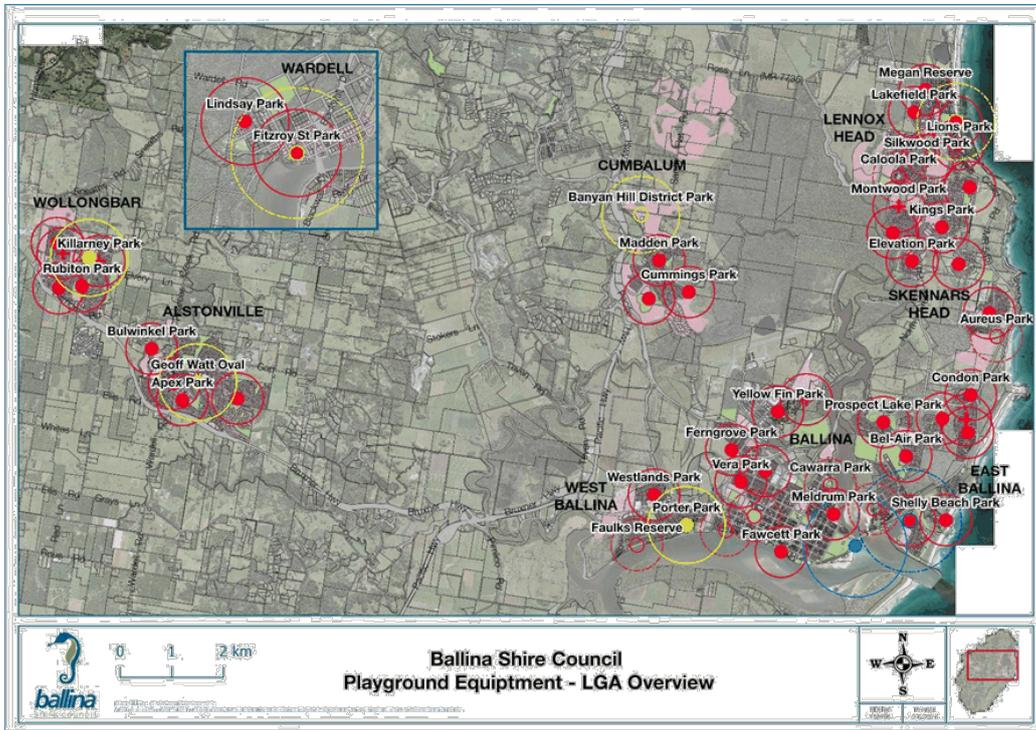
* *Note: The indicative costs are for supply and install of the playground equipment with impact attenuation surfacing (softfall) and shade only. The ancillary infrastructure and additional landscaping required for district and regional playgrounds will cost additional where they do not already exist at a site.*

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Playground Catchment Maps

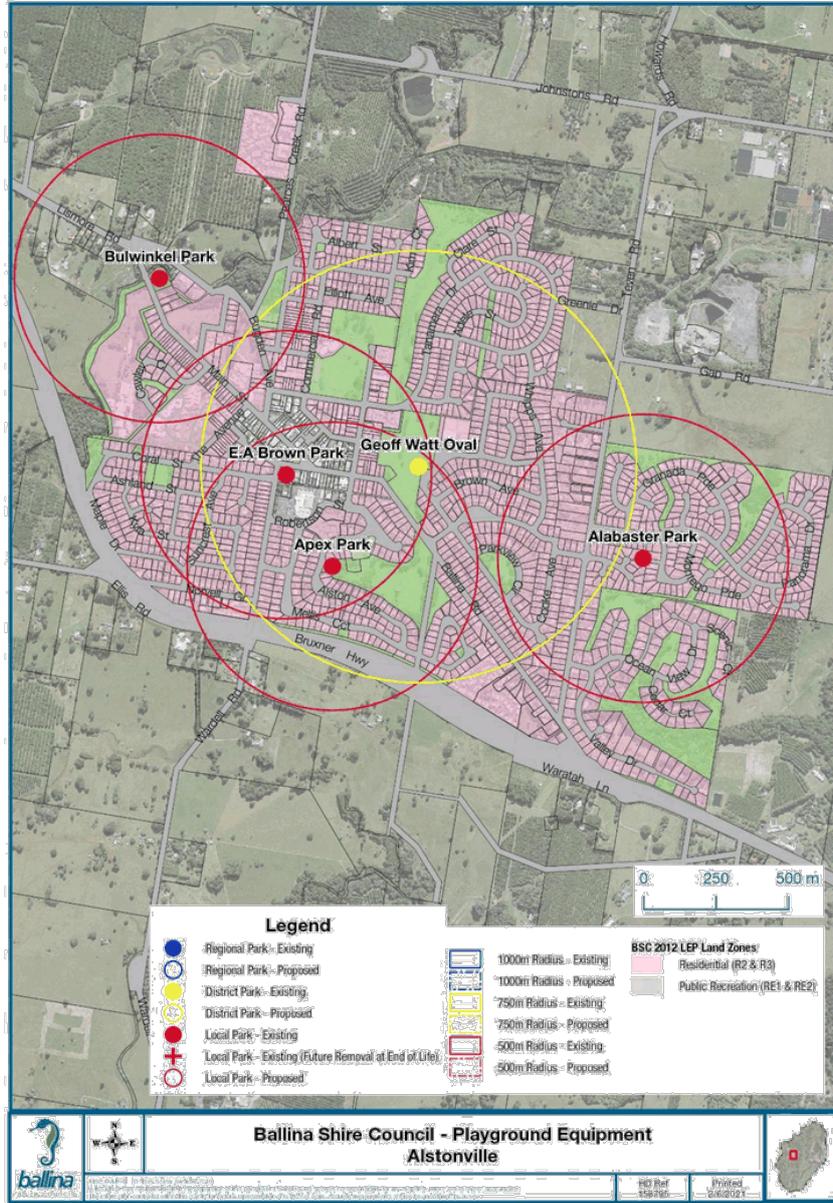
The following playground catchment maps identify the location of each playground, existing and proposed, with a radius for the community catchment area based on the playground hierarchy. The use of catchment maps provides a way to identify suitable sites and appropriate distances between them as well as the proximity of each site to residential population areas.

Ballina Shire Council Local Government Area – Playground Overview



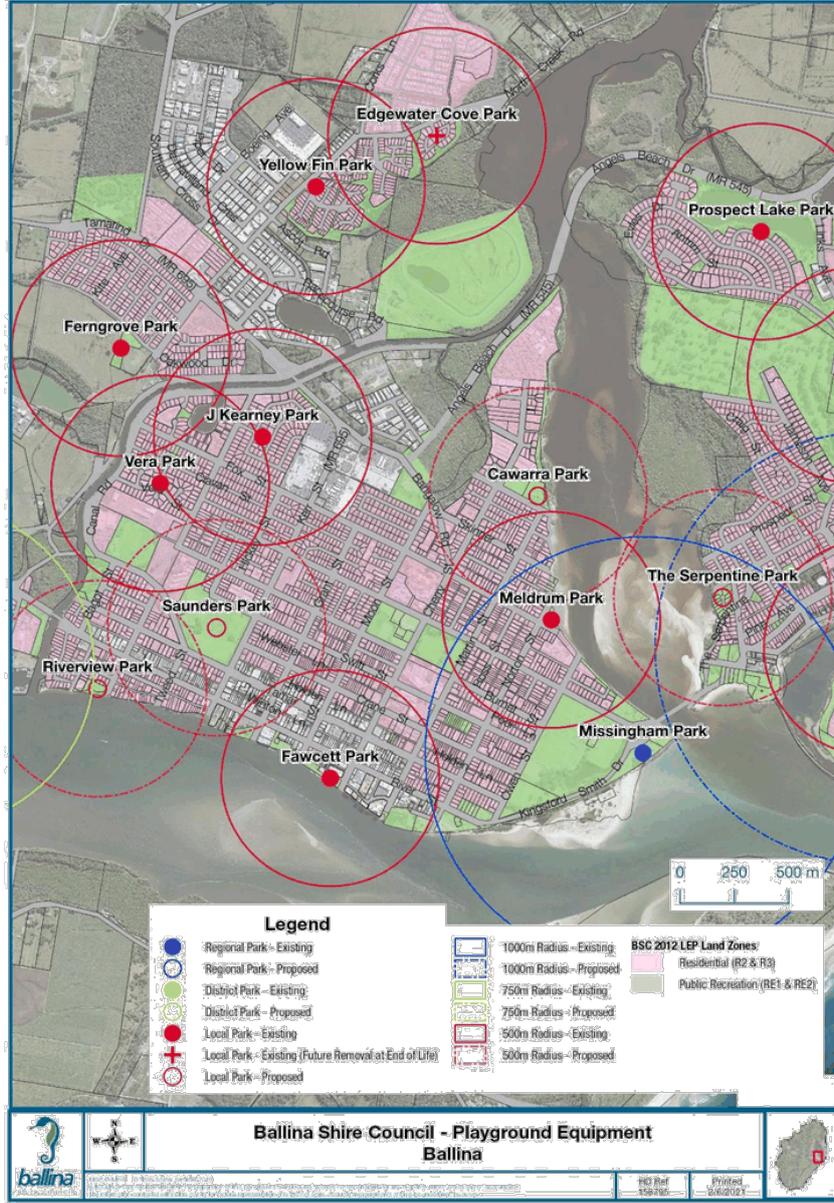
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Playground Equipment - Alstonville



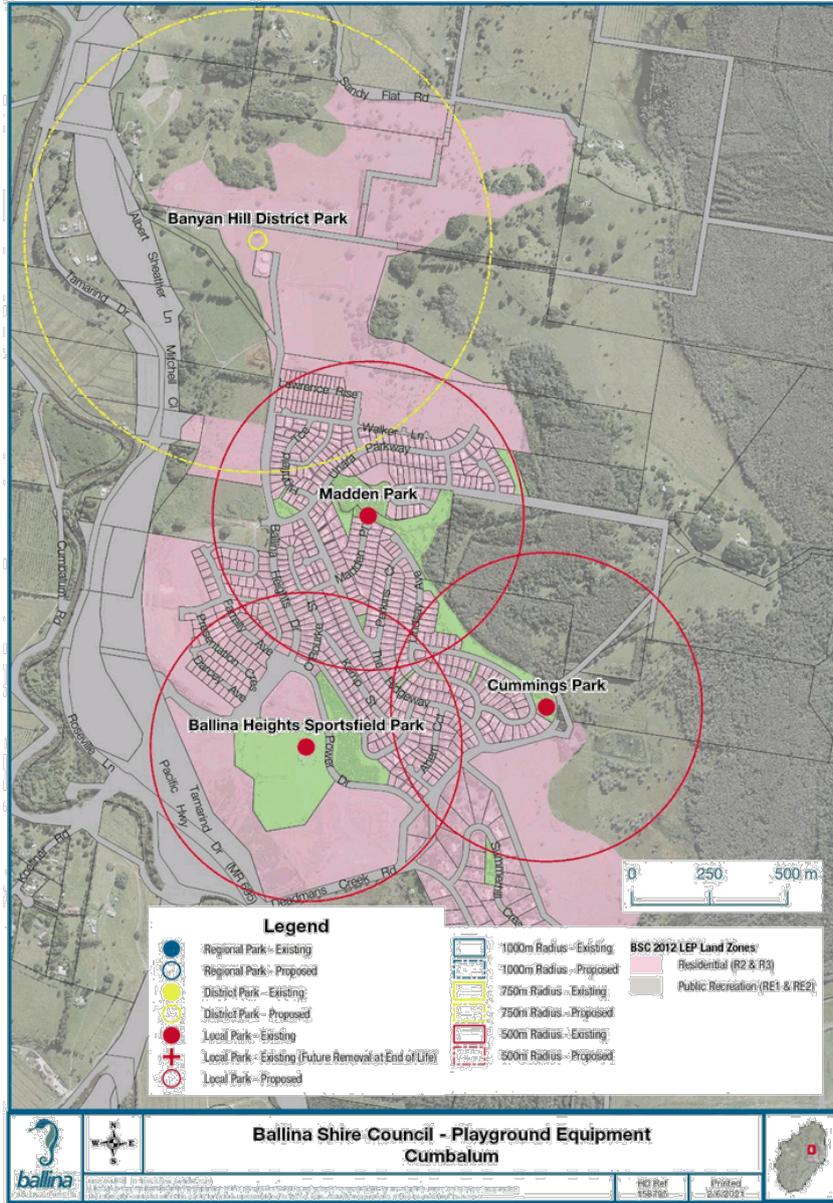
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Playground Equipment - Ballina



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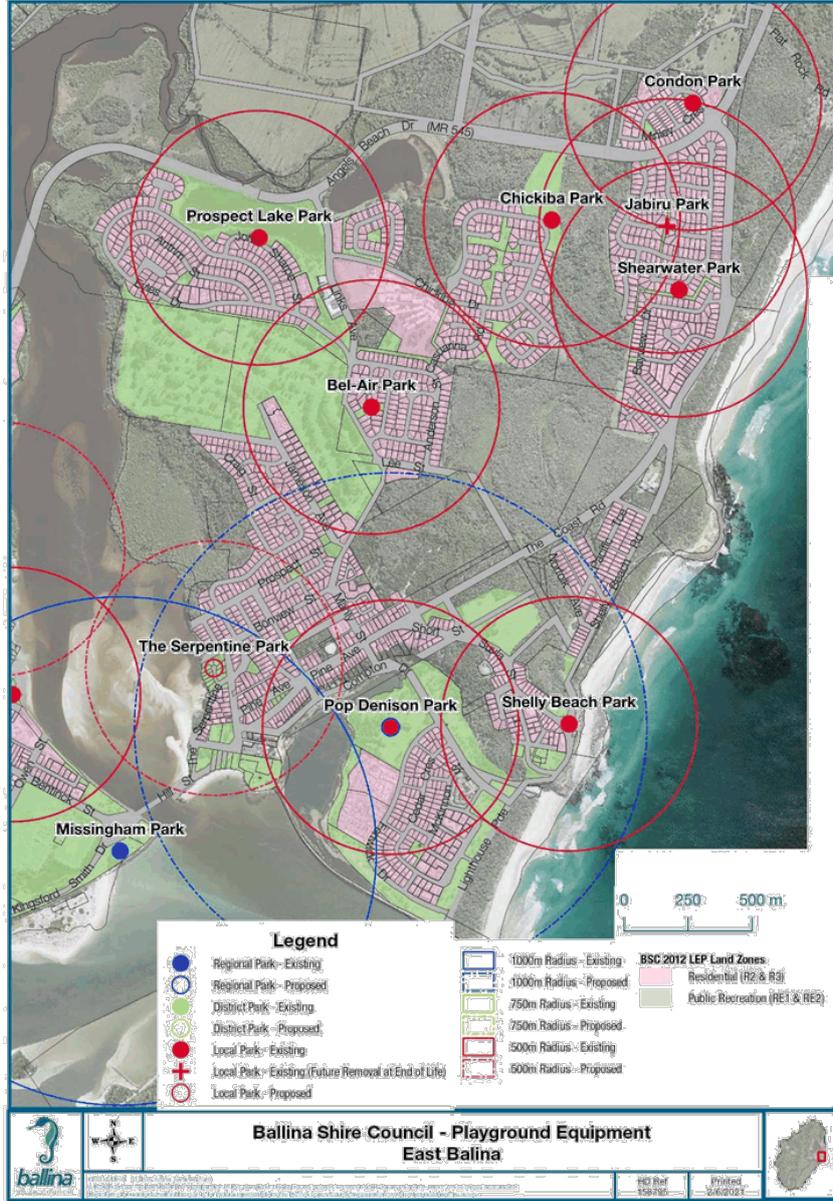
Playground Equipment - Cumbalum



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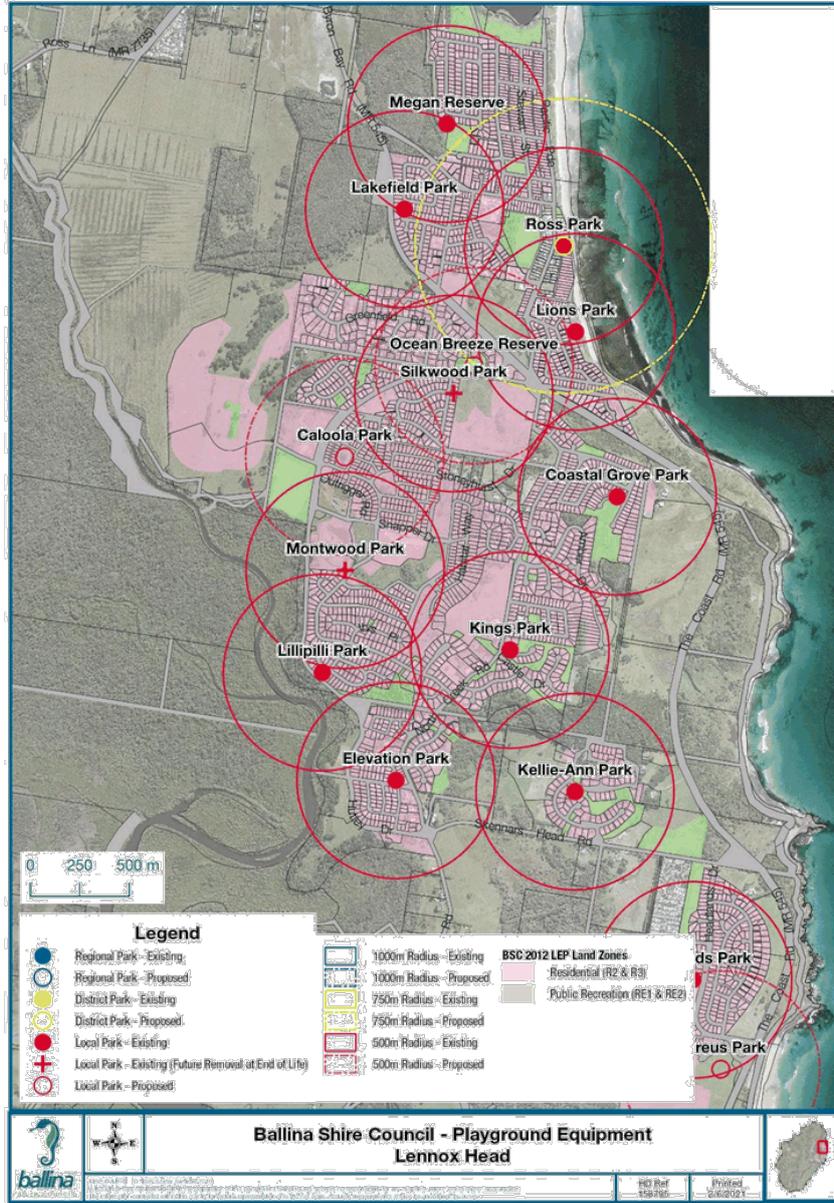
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Playground Equipment – East Ballina



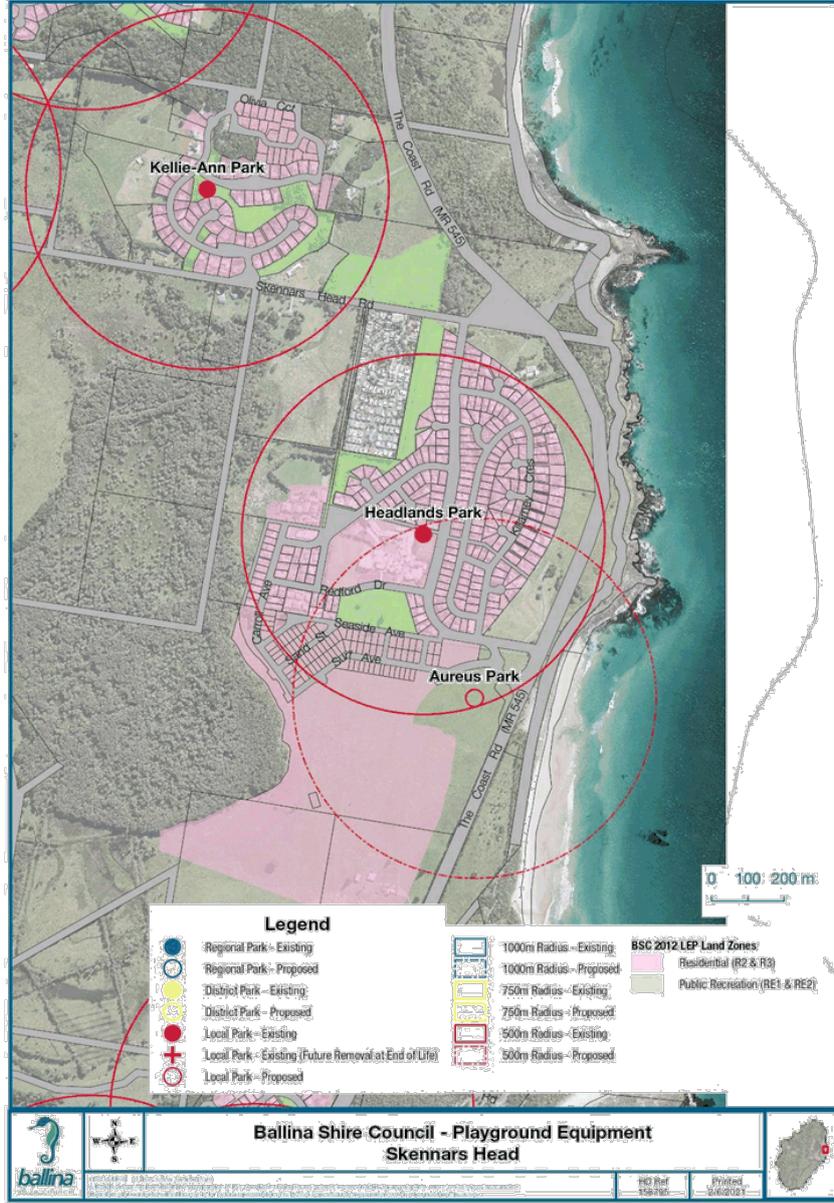
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Playground Equipment – Lennox Head



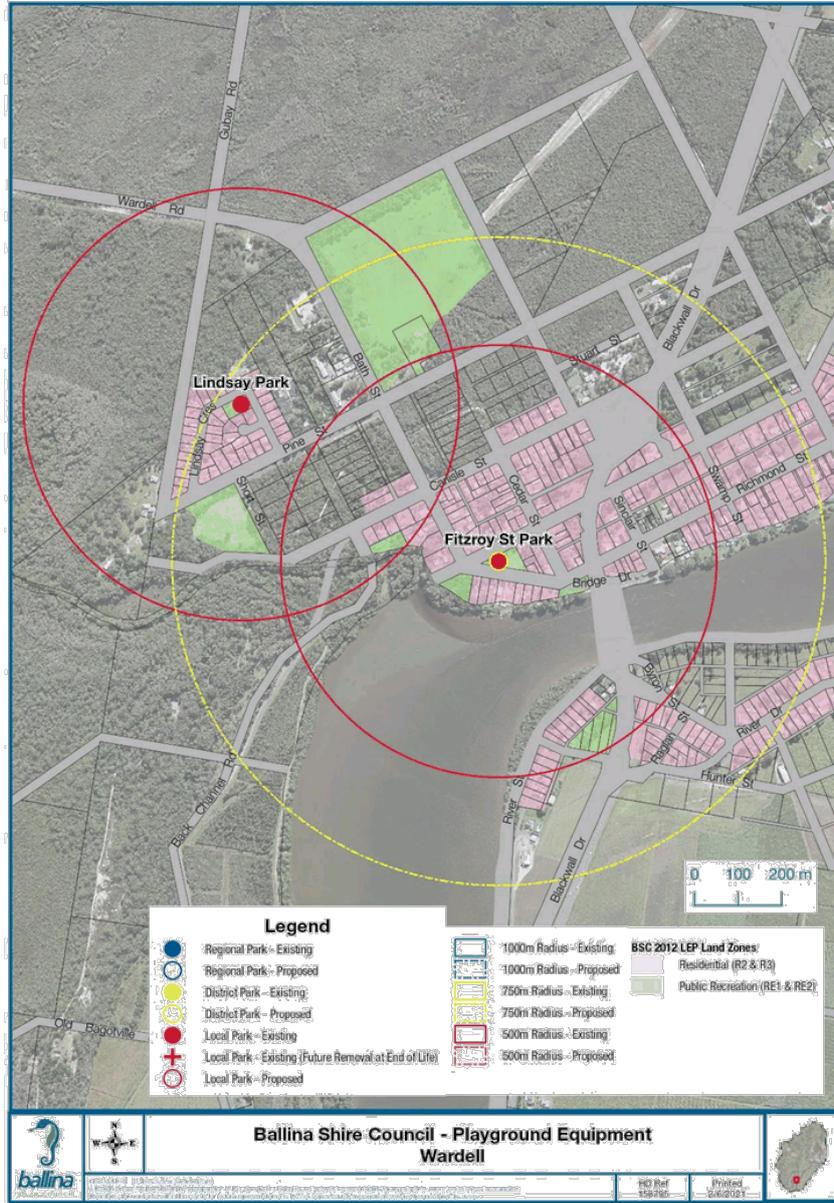
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Playground Equipment – Skennars Head



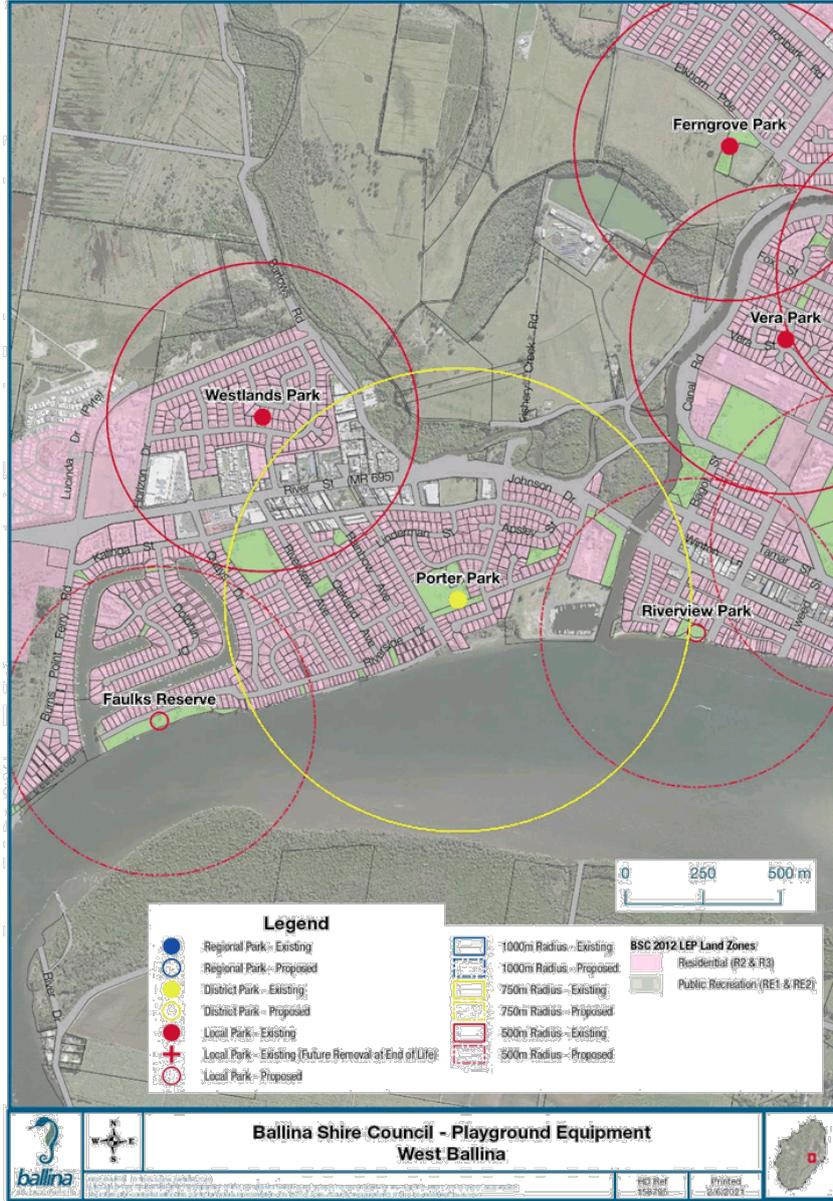
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Playground Equipment - Wardell



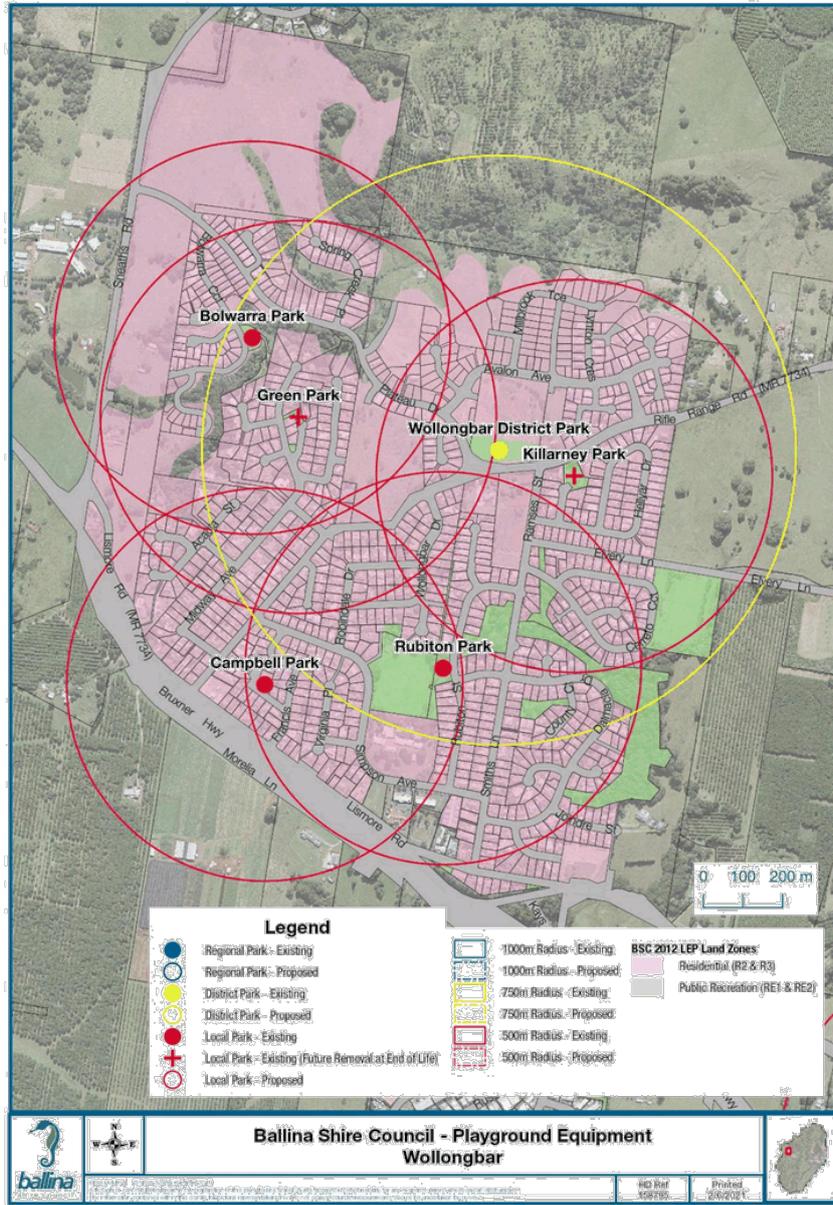
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Playground Equipment – West Ballina



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Playground Equipment - Wollongbar



Ballina Shire Council – Playground upgrade and management plan

Playground Management and Maintenance

The development of the playground upgrade and management plan follows the strategies documented in the Ballina Shire Council Asset Management Plan Open Spaces and Reserves, including the key elements of:

- Providing a defined level of service and monitoring performance,
- Managing the impact of growth through demand management and infrastructure investment,
- Taking a lifecycle approach to developing cost-effective management strategies for the long-term that meet the defined level of service,
- Identifying, assessing and appropriately controlling risks, and
- Having a long-term financial plan which identifies required, affordable expenditure and how it will be financed.

Risk Management Approach

Ballina Shire Council manages and maintains its playgrounds using a risk management approach. Council is committed to a monitoring and maintenance regime that provides adequate resources for the long term safety and sustainability of its playgrounds.

Council will manage risks on a prioritised basis whilst acknowledging that no playground is absolutely safe but that acceptable levels of risk are to be sought. Playground inspections and assessment will be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced Council officers. When required, suitably qualified and experienced independent consults will also be engaged to undertake required inspections and assessments.

Risk Assessment

The level risk is dependent on the likelihood of an occurrence and its potential for causing injury or death. Risk assessment tools used as part of the playground inspection and maintenance program are completed by Open Spaces staff with relevant training and skills.

Risk Assessment Matrix

E	Highly Likely	VL	L	H	VH	VH
D	Likely	VL	L	M	H	VH
C	Possible	VL	L	M	H	H
B	Unlikely	VL	VL	L	M	M
A	Rare	VL	VL	L	L	M
Probability / Consequence Severity		Little/None	Minor	Moderate	Serious	Permanent
		1	2	3	4	5

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Probability	Consequence severity
A Rare (beyond 10 yrs)	1 Little or no injury
B Unlikely (6 yrs)	2 Minor injury requiring first aid
C Possible (3 yrs)	3 Moderate injury needing recovery for normal activity
D Likely (1 yr)	4 Serious injury with long term consequences
E Highly Likely (0-3 mths)	5 Permanent injury or death

Risk Rating and Response Time

	Priority	Response Time
VH	Very High - Requires urgent action	Immediate response with available resources
H	High - Action as soon as possible	24 Hours
M	Moderate - To be actioned but not urgent	1-7 Days
L	Low – To be monitored	Quarterly
VL	Very Low – No immediate action required	N/A

Inspections

Inspection and assessment of playground equipment is carried out by Council on a regular basis following the inspection schedules identified in AS 4685 (Parts 0-6 & 11) - *Playground equipment and surfacing* and AS 4422 - *Playground surfacing - specifications, requirements and test method*. Inspections carried out by Council include:

- **Comprehensive post-installation inspection**

An inspection carried out on new playground equipment following construction and prior to a playground be opened for public use.

- **Routine inspection**

The purpose of this inspection is to 'identify obvious hazards that can result from wear and tear, vandalism or weather conditions.' This inspection should include checking debris in the playground that could be hazardous, loose fill surfacing levels, damage to equipment etc. These inspections are carried out on a regularly formal basis by qualified Open Space staff.

In addition to the formal inspection process all open spaces staff have been instructed to carry out informal inspection of playground equipment when their duties require them to be at the location of a playground (e.g. for grass mowing or other operational tasks) and report any defects or need for maintenance.

- **Operational inspection**

Operational Inspections are more detailed than Routine Visual Inspections and check the operation and stability of the equipment. It includes checking for excessive wear of moving parts, security of bolts and fasteners, protrusions and sharp edges.

Council completes these inspections on a quarterly basis in accordance with the standards. Additional operational inspections may be carried out more regularly if a need is identified.

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- **Comprehensive annual inspection**

In addition to checking all the items covered by the Operational Inspection, the Comprehensive Annual Inspection determines the conformance of the equipment with relevant parts of AS 4685, and establishes the overall level of safety of the equipment, foundations and playground surfaces.

Records of all inspections are recorded and provide valuable asset information to determine the condition of the playground, support maintenance planning and lifecycle cost analysis.

Maintenance

Regular maintenance of playground equipment is carried out in conjunction with the inspection procedures as part of the risk management approach.

Councils undertakes maintenance of its playground equipment in accordance with information provided with the manufacturers operational manuals, based on site conditions and condition of the playground equipment identified through inspections to ensure that it functions properly and has a long serviceable life for the community.

The frequency of maintenance can differ between playgrounds based on numerous variables, such as the sites environmental conditions, usage, frequency of vandalism as well as the age, type and condition of equipment.

Council uses a playground condition rating system to identify the priority of maintenance works and identify ahead of time when it will need to be replaced.

Maintenance and repair work carried out in response to inspections and customer feedback are registered, tasked and tracked in Councils CRM system as part of the risk management and asset management frameworks.

Equipment lifecycle and renewal

Playground equipment can be safe and undamaged with gradual wear and deterioration occurring over years of use. Playground equipment can be very expensive to maintain once it deteriorates to a certain point due to constant need for repairs and parts being difficult to obtain. Playground condition ratings completed as a part of the inspection process assist in identifying when a playground will no longer be sustainable to maintain and will require replacement.

Each financial year Council reviews projects to be delivered through its Delivery Program and Operational Plan that identifies priority capital work projects to be delivered over the following four year period.

The priority playground development and renewal projects are adjusted each year based on priorities identified through the inspection program, condition ratings, provision of playgrounds for different sections of the community and budget available for playground projects in that financial year.

Playground condition rating is an important element in identifying priority works to ensure that the playgrounds available to the community can be maintained to the identified standards for as long as possible and replaced in a timely manner to avoid high maintenance

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costs or unacceptable levels of risk. The following condition ratings are used to prioritise playground upgrade and maintenance work.

Playground Condition Rating

1 - Excellent	Sound equipment, designed to current standards, well maintained with no defects. No work required.
2 - Good	As grade 1 but showing minor wear, tear and deterioration e.g. minor impact damage, weathering of timber, staining of fastenings and welds. Deterioration has no significant impact on strength, appearance and functionality. Only minor work may be required.
3 - Fair	Equipment functionally sound, but appearance affected by minor defects e.g. slight impact damage, decay/splitting of timber, cracking of plastics, staining of steel and fastenings. Deterioration beginning to affect the strength, appearance, or functionality of the equipment or not designed or constructed to current standards. Likely to require renewal within 3-5 years.
4 - Poor	Equipment functioning but with problems due to significant defects e.g. rotting/ splitting of timber, corrosion of steel, fastenings and welds, impact damage, loosening of fastenings and supports, plastics cracking or splitting, causing a marked deterioration in strength, appearance or functionality, or not designed or constructed to current standards. Likely to require renewal within 1-3 years.
5 – Very Poor	Equipment has serious problems and has failed or is about to fail in the near future, causing unacceptable deterioration in strength, stability, safety and appearance. Consider immediate closure and priority for removal or replacement.

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Playground Design and Development

Inclusive Play Space Design

Ballina Shire Council recognises the diversity of our community and the important part that our open space parks, reserves and playgrounds can have on health and wellbeing.

In line with the NSW Governments commitment to inclusive play spaces as outlined in the Everyone Can Play – Guideline to create inclusive play spaces, Ballina Shire Council is dedicated to providing play spaces that are inviting to people of all ages, abilities and cultures.

Inclusive play spaces consider more factors than just accessibility, but do include consideration for access and mobility standards. The concepts of inclusive play spaces are that they are easy to access, easy to move around, provide a range of play types and challenges, and are equipped with appropriate facilities in a comfortable environment – allowing people to stay as long as they choose.

The principles of inclusive play space design and development as outlined in the Everyone Can Play guideline will predominantly be applied to the regional and district level playgrounds and parks of the shire where the level of infrastructure and embellishment allow them to be applied effectively and sustainably.

Shade / Sun Protection

Providing suitable shade at our playgrounds is a high priority for Ballina Shire Council and we have resolved to install shade structures at new playgrounds where there is no existing adequate natural shade from trees.

The ability to provide shade and the type of shade to be installed are determined during the design of each individual playground area to suit the space and environmental conditions of the location.

Fencing

Council assesses site specific hazards and evaluates risk when considering each playground design and there are many considerations to a risk management approach to playground design. Where unacceptable risks are identified control measures may be implemented to reduce risk to an acceptable level. Physical barriers such as fencing are one measure to be considered in risk mitigation, however they are not always an appropriate control measure and can even introduce additional elements of risk.

The best control to prevent a child from being injured is adult supervision. No matter what other physical controls are present, nothing can take the place of attentive supervision. Council encourages active and engaged play and supervision of children at its playgrounds.

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Playground Development and Community Consultation

New playgrounds are designed and constructed for the community via different processes and the community have different opportunities to provide feedback on their design and development.

Designed and constructed through development

Playgrounds may be provided through development. Council will place planning conditions on the development of new playgrounds delivered this way and the community will have opportunities at various stages throughout the development approval processes to provide comment.

Designed and constructed by Council through capital works

Council will renew, upgrade and build new playgrounds in accordance with this plan through capital works. New playgrounds and priority playground upgrades are identified each year for inclusion in Councils Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

Local playground projects will typically involve the development of a number of different playground options for the site and consultation with the local community on the preferred option prior to construction.

Regional and district playground development projects will typically include the creation of a concept design or master plan. The development of these plans will typically include public exhibition of the draft plans and the opportunity for community input and feedback before they are finalised and adopted by Council.

The construction of playgrounds that have undergone a master planning process may occur sometime after the consultation process due to the requirements to complete detailed designs, achieve planning consent and secure the funding that can be required to deliver more higher levels of embellishment and more complex and playground designs.

Community Feedback

Council receives valuable feedback from the community about our playgrounds that typically aligns with trends and changes in playground design, the types of equipment available, and what they have seen in other local government areas.

Regular feedback from the community for larger playgrounds that cater for a wider range of age groups and abilities, as well as greater variety in play types and use of different materials. It is not always practical or sustainable to provide requested facilities at all parks. Council has given all requests and suggestions consideration in the evaluation of suitable sites in developing this plan.

In response to feedback we are already working towards improvements to the playgrounds available to the community through significant projects currently underway or in planning for Pop Denison Park, Wollongbar District Park, Ross Park, Ocean Breeze Reserve, Kingsford Smith Reserve and Missingham Park.

We value feedback from our community and will continue to develop improved play spaces for our community through the provisions of this plan.

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Playground Upgrade Projects

Development of this plan and review of the playground catchment maps has identified that some areas of the community have overprovision of playgrounds with multiple playgrounds in close proximity as well as gaps in the provision of playgrounds. Some existing local playground locations also cannot be upgraded to the level expected by the community or incorporate elements of inclusive design due to site constraints and environmental site conditions.

Due to this the actions of this plan seek to prioritise the upgrade of playgrounds at the most suitable sites to provide a greater level of playground equipment and play value for the community, rather than renewing multiple local playgrounds to a lower service level.

The following is a list of key projects and actions that have been identified with regards to playground planning for the shire that will be carried out in addition to the yearly renewal program that will continue to include replacement, upgrade and renewal of a number of existing playgrounds each year based on priorities determined through our inspection and auditing processes.

New Playgrounds

Wollongbar District Park, Wollongbar (Under Construction) – The Wollongbar District Park will provide a range of recreational features including a playground, fitness equipment, ping pong table, skate park, BBQ's, basketball half court, native gardens and toilets.

Riverview Park, Ballina – A local level playground supported by existing park features including a beach, public toilets, picnic shelters and adjacent boat ramp.

Saunders Park, Ballina – A local level playground is to be included at this popular sporting venue and public reserve to provide an improved recreational play space for the surrounding residents, and visitors.

Cawarra Park, Ballina - This site is to be master planned to consider the best way to develop the site with new sporting and community facilities. A playground will be considered as part of the master planning design process.

Faulks Reserve, West Ballina - This site was identified to provide a destination park that also caters for a key community area in West Ballina.

The Serpentine Park, East Ballina - This location on the banks of North Creek was identified as a future destination park due to the popularity of this beach area for local families and visitors.

Ocean Breeze Reserve, Lennox Head – A Master plan for Ocean Breeze reserve has been adopted by council that will see the creation of a new local level nature play based playground designed and built for the site along with a community garden area and other park infrastructure.

Caloola Park, Lennox Head – A new local playground planned for construction in Caloola Park to provide a play space for the new Epiq estate community area.

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Aureus, Skennars Head – A new local playground is being constructed as part of the construction of the Aureus development.

Banyan Hill, Cumbalum – A new district park and playground is being constructed as part of the Banyan Hills development.

Playgrounds to be removed

Playgrounds proposed to be removed, will only be removed at the end of their serviceable life and when a new or upgraded playground has been built to provide improved play facilities and infrastructure for the same area of the community.

These playgrounds have been identified for removal, but may not be removed for some time as, some of them are still in good condition with a serviceable life that may continue for a number of years. These parks will be considered for embellishment with other features to improve the enjoyment of these open spaces by the community.

Edge Water Park, Ballina – Is a small local park constrained by space and surrounding residential development. It is planned that the playground in this location will be removed at the end of its serviceable life, when the nearby Yellow Fin Park is upgraded as the local play space for this community.

Jabiru Park, East Ballina – An over provision of local parks has been identified in this area. The location of the playground in Jabiru Park is constrained by surrounding residential development and infrastructure. It has been determined that this playground be removed at the end of its serviceable life with Shearwater Park and Condon Park upgraded through the renewal program to provide improved play spaces for the community.

Silkwood Park, Lennox Head – Development of the nearby Ocean Breeze Reserve will result in over provision of playgrounds in this area. Silkwood is planned to be removed following construction of the playground at Ocean Breeze Reserve.

Montwood Park, Lennox Head – There has been significant change to the population in this area of Lennox through development. Review of the playground catchment maps has identified that a new playground more centrally located for this community at Caloola Park will provide greater benefit, safety and play value.

Killarney Park, Wollongbar – Wollongbar District Park is within 100m of Killarney Park. Based on the existing criteria of playground's serving a 500m catchment for a local playground and 750m for a district playground, it is appropriate that consideration be given to alternative uses for Killarney Park.

Green Park, Wollongbar – Bolwarra Park and Wollongbar District Park share overlapping catchments with Green Park that has been assessed as being in poor condition. It is planned to be removed.

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Playgrounds to be upgraded in the hierarchy

Pop Denison Park, East Ballina –The Master Plan for the site developed through extensive public consultation upgrades the playground at this park from a local to a regional level playground with junior and senior playground areas, path networks, fitness equipment, new parking areas, BBQ's, picnic facilities and beach areas.

Ross Park, Lennox Head – A new design for Ross Park has been completed as part of the Lennox Village Vision project and will see the popular existing local park upgraded to a district level park.

Fitzroy Park, Wardell – Council has resolved that the playground at Fitzroy Park in Wardell be upgraded to a district level playground. A design for the park will be carried out through community consultation to create a new social hub for the Wardell community.

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References

Ballina Shire Council – Playground Upgrade Plan 2015

Ballina Shire Council – Asset Management Plan – Open Spaces and Reserves 2016

Australian Standard AS 4685 Playground equipment and surfacing

Australian Standard AS 4422 Playground surfacing - Specifications, requirements and test method

Australian Standard AS 1428: Design for access and mobility

Everyone Can Play – A Guide to Create Inclusive Playspaces

Statewide Mutual - Best Practice Manual – Playgrounds - Version: 5, January 2020

ISO 31010-2009 Risk Management — Risk management techniques

ISO Guide 50 Safety aspects — Guidelines for child safety