



7.2 Petition to Save Adventure Playgrounds

A Petition/Joint Letter containing 1397 signatures, was received from Katrina Findlay, and presented to a Council Meeting on 06 July 2022

The Petition states the following:-

St Kilda and Skinner's Adventure Playgrounds are unique places which differ from conventional playgrounds. Until recently, they have been safe, supervised play spaces only open to the public during operating hours with Adventure Playground Staff onsite when open and conditions of entry in place. These measures maintained the safety of all those using the space.

Supervised Adventure Playgrounds traditionally feature:

Trained specialist play workers who facilitate risky play and social inclusion for children and families during operating hours.

Fixed play equipment and non-fixed objects which children can manipulate and interact with, enhancing creative play.

Equipment which is not required to meet the strict Australian standards of conventional unsupervised playground equipment. The presence of play workers mitigate certain risks associated with free-play apparatus.

Equipment in Supervised Adventure Playgrounds has the potential to be engaged with in a way that is not possible in other playgrounds. Through play, children are able to challenge themselves on their own terms, develop the important skills of resilience, problem solving and teamwork, and engage in the most important of childhood pursuits- exploration and play.

St Kilda and Skinner's Adventure Playgrounds are 2 of only 5 Supervised Adventure Playgrounds in Australia. These much-loved and important places mean different things to different people- urban backyard, community hub, safe play space for children, popular destination for families across Melbourne and further afield.

WE DON'T WANT THE ADVENTURES TO END!

The unique aspects of both St Kilda and Skinner's Adventure Playgrounds are being threatened. Under a newly implemented trial, the City of Port Phillip (CoPP) has extended the Adventure Playgrounds' operating hours- they are now open from dawn till dusk, 7 days a week. The CoPP has not, however, increased the presence of Adventure Playground Staff, leaving these special sites predominantly unsupervised. Although seemingly insignificant, the flow-on effects of these actions have already and will continue to dramatically impact all aspects of these sites. The Adventure Playgrounds are no longer the safe places they have historically been.

Whilst the trial has not resulted in major changes to the play equipment and landscape to date, changes to these features must occur if the Adventure Playgrounds will continue to be mostly unsupervised in order to comply with regulations.

The conditions of entry have been drastically altered and this, along with the fact that the staff are not always on site to ensure the remaining conditions are adhered to, has already had a negative influence:



Cigarette butts, discarded women's underwear, used condoms and drug paraphernalia found on or around play equipment.

The iconic Reading Chair, carved from an old gumtree by one of the founders of the St Kilda Adventure Playground over 20 years ago, has been stolen.

Damage to equipment and other items.

Lone male adult frequently loitering in the St Kilda Adventure Playground.

People consuming alcohol on the grounds.

No longer a dog free zone resulting in anxiety for some children and the presence of dog's droppings near equipment

The kitchen is no longer always open- less opportunity for people to meet one another/ community connection is weakened/ respite opportunities for parents and carers are reduced.

The community was not adequately forewarned of the CoPP's intention to implement this trial, nor has the rationale for doing so been outlined. Additionally, the community have been given no indication of how the outcomes of the trial will affect the short and long term future of the Adventure Playgrounds. This has understandably created a sense of anxiety and concern amongst members of the community, both parents and children.

The strong sense of community we all tangibly feel when walking into the Adventure Playgrounds will be lost due to the inevitable changes that will continue to occur if the sites are left largely unsupervised. It's up to us, the community, to stand up and preserve these magical places for the future generations.

Our Requests:

1. We want the purpose and culture of the Adventure Playgrounds to continue: a community backyard for local children, young people and their families.
2. We want the current service provided by the Adventure Playground staff to stay the same.
3. If the Adventure Playgrounds are to have their opening hours extended on a permanent basis, they must be staffed during those hours to ensure the safety of children, young people and families, prevent damage from occurring, and allow the kitchen to remain open.
4. We want all new equipment to comply with Supervised Adventure Playground Standards, not normal playground standards. We don't want a big upgrade or any major changes to equipment, landscape or buildings. We want current equipment and the equipment that has been removed to be replaced like for like, including reinstating the flying fox, pirate ship and aeroplane.
5. We demand that the upcoming community consultation, planned for 2022, seeks and acts upon the opinions of the community in relation to the extended opening hours and provision of supervision by the Adventure Playground staff. We require that the community be informed of the inevitable changes due to decreased supervision as part of the consultation process, and that the resulting views of the community inform the future operation of the Adventure Playgrounds.



We don't need another park. We want both Skinner's and St Kilda Adventure Playgrounds to remain authentic Supervised Adventure Playgrounds. Our children need a place to connect and engage.

We need your help to protect the Adventure Playgrounds for now and in the future. If we do not, the play of countless children will be affected, communities will suffer, and Australia will lose two of its last remaining authentic Supervised Adventure Playgrounds forever.

OFFICER COMMENT

Council considered the consultation and engagement results from the Adventure Playground Extended Opening Hours Trial at its meeting on the 04 May 2022, and passed the following resolution:

That Council:

- 1.1 Notes the findings of the Adventure Playground Extended Open Hours Trial.
- 1.2 Recognises that the Skinners Reserve and St Kilda Adventure Playgrounds are much loved, respected, and valued community resources.
- 1.3 Notes that immediate work has commenced on addressing safety issues at Skinners Playground and that the trampolines that had to be removed from both playgrounds for safety reasons will shortly be replaced.
- 1.4 Notes that the draft budget 2022-23 includes an allocation of \$300,000 for rectification work at Skinners in 2022-23.
- 1.5 Reaffirms Council's Commitment to the Adventure Playgrounds, as noted in the Council Plan and 10-year financial plan that allocates \$3,445 million to invest in upgrading the Adventure Playgrounds at St Kilda and Skinners Reserve.
- 1.6 Adopts the following vision and design principles to frame and guide the upgrades, program review and consultation for the Playground upgrades.
- 1.7 The CoPP vision for Adventure Playgrounds is that they provide safe and welcoming spaces that honour diversity, build resilience and creativity, provide social connections, and encourage all children and families to maximise their development outcomes.
- 1.8 Endorses the following CoPP design principles to guide the consultation and planning for the upgrades. Adventure Playgrounds will:
 - 1.8.1 Facilitate risky (but safe) play
 - 1.8.2 Be accessible, safe and welcoming for all: meeting DDA compliance and CEPTED best practice
 - 1.8.3 Provide a connection to nature and the natural environment
 - 1.8.4 Place children and young people at the heart of design
 - 1.8.5 Provide a unique aesthetic that recognises the past and is delivered for the future



- 1.9 Directs officers to commence consultation and engagement over 2022/23 on the planned upgrades informed by the above vision and principles, with a particular focus on hearing from children and young people.
- 1.10 Directs officers to also review the operations and program models for the Adventure Playgrounds over 2022 /23 to:
 - 1.10.1 Ensure programs and operations best deliver on the above vision for Adventure Playgrounds.
 - 1.10.2 Identify strategies and opportunities to increase the use of and participation at the Adventure Programs which considers the feedback from stakeholders regarding the extended opening hours trial.
- 1.11 Notes that the planned upgrades will cause disruptions and commits to relocate services to alternative facilities wherever possible for the duration of upgrade works.

The title of this petition is “Save Adventure Playgrounds”, the future of the playgrounds themselves were never at risk. The detail of the petition gives further clarity to its intent and concludes with 5 requests to Council.

The five requests have been considered and are being addressed in the following ways:

1. The purpose and culture of the Adventure Playgrounds is captured in the 04 May 2022 Council report and resolution which recognised value and connection the community has for Adventure Playgrounds. The vision and design principles for these facilities further detail this commitment and strategic purpose.
2. Maintaining the current service provided by staff has been confirmed in the 22/23 budget. The 04 May 2022 resolution also directs officers to undertake a service review.
3. The request for extending staffing to match any extended opening hours has not been addressed as the opening hours have not been extended.
4. The Supervised Adventure Playground Standards (AS 2555-1982) were withdrawn in 2017. The current Australian Standard (AS4685:2017) will be used to guide future design, these guidelines recognise that “risk is an inherent feature of playtime and there are many acceptable risks as part of a stimulating and challenging learning environment... the standard is all about challenging children and developing important life skills” (*Professor David Eager, Chairperson of the Technical Committee CS-005, Playground Equipment*). AS4685:2017 will be considered alongside the adopted design principles, which seek to deliver spaces that facilitate risky (but safe) play, be accessible, provide connection to the natural environment and a unique aesthetic whilst also placing children and young people at the heart of the design. This design intent is in line with the petition request for “not normal playground standards” and delivering on what the community consultation results identified as special and valuable about the current sites.
5. The final petition requests Council to act on the consultation findings, which Council has resolved to do through the following means:
 - a. Delivering short term improvements to the Skinners site, through an allocation of \$300K for rectification works

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL

6 JULY 2022



- b. Delivering longer term upgrades at both sites, through and allocation of \$3.445M in the 10-year Financial Plan
- c. Directing officers to commence consultation and engagement over 2022/23 on the planned upgrades informed by the above vision and principles
- d. Ensuring a particular focus on consultation and engagement with children and young people to inform the design of the upgrades
- e. Conducting a service review to determine how the service can best deliver community outcomes and benefit in line with Adventure Playground Vision.

The final request also asks that the community be informed of the reduced supervision at the playground. However, supervision or staffing has not been reduced.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Receives and notes the Petition.
2. Commits to engagement over 2022/23 on the planned upgrades informed by approved vision and principles, with a particular focus on hearing from children and young people, as per the Council Resolution of 4 May 2022
3. Will continue to inform the community of the outcomes of the upgrade engagements so they are informed of the planned changes, timelines and any service disruptions caused by the upgrade construction.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil