

Fully Fenced Playgrounds in the ACT

Children from the youngest age need to be connected with natural environments. For many families this is the local park or playground. The ACT Government has developed many innovative recreation programs and playgrounds. Canberra has an excellent range of parks and playgrounds which must be accessible and inclusive to all residents.

Many parents and carers I am in contact with through my work clearly express their need for fenced playgrounds.

People who benefit from fully fenced playgrounds include those with limited mobility for a variety of reason including

- Pregnant mothers
- Older grandparents
- Parents or carers who are injured or have a disability or health issue that limits their movement.

This need is increased when a parent or carer is managing more than one child under five or the child has a disability, for example an autism spectrum disorder.

A frequent comment is that parents with more than one child under five are reluctant to visit a park that does not have a fully fenced area.

Though this submission focusses on children, please note that Queanbeyan Council's decision to fence a playground recognised the needs of people with dementia on group excursions.

Considering the complexity and high cost of playground refurbishment, fully fencing playgrounds may be a relatively inexpensive way of increasing the accessibility and inclusivity of playgrounds to all Canberra families

All children and their families have a right to full inclusion in public spaces, to associate with peers and access age appropriate activities.

ACT Government policy is explicit on the need for children to access playgrounds.

Opportunities for play

The ACT Government is committed to encouraging active lifestyles as part of the [Healthy Weight Initiative](#). In helping communities lead healthy, active lives the government recognises the value of play in contributing to active lifestyles for children and their carers. In line with this commitment Canberra provides a great variety of fun play spaces that engage and challenge children in their play. These range in size from neighbourhood play spaces in local parks, to the larger play spaces common in district parks. Opportunities for play are abundant and can be found with the equipment itself, with the natural play elements and nearby landscape and in the open "kick about" space surrounding the formal equipment.

http://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/parks-and-reserves/recreational_activities/play-spaces

Play Spaces Policy Position

The ACT Government recognises the value of play and an active lifestyle for all children and their carers. They are committed to providing accessible, diverse, stimulating and manageable play spaces which foster healthy social, physical and mental child development. It is also recognises that play spaces integrated with other community activities and amenities have potential to strengthen the social fabric.

http://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/parks-and-reserves/recreational_activities/play-spaces/play_spaces_policy

Better Suburbs

<https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/BetterSuburbs>

City Services and a Better Suburbs Statement for Canberra

Minister Fitzharris said the Citizens' Forum will also be asked how funding for playground improvements should be utilised.

"Playgrounds are a recognised priority in the Better Suburbs program. They were listed by the community as a top five feature, with the quality of playgrounds valued more than how many there are in each suburb.

"Playing and having fun is important for all children, and with over 500 playgrounds across Canberra competing for investment, I'm keen to work with the Citizens' Forum on a new approach to playground investment that more closely involves the community in the process.

"Therefore I will ask the Better Suburbs Citizen's Forum to directly allocate \$1.9 million set aside in this year's Budget for local community upgrades, \$1 million of which must be spent on playgrounds.

https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/meegan-fitzharris-mla-media-releases/2018/better-suburbs-citizens-forum-to-help-plan-canberras-future

Parks and Playgrounds got considerable comment.

https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.act-yoursay.files/3415/2642/9905/Better_Suburbs_Community_Consultation_and_Engagement_Summary_Report.pdf

Many Australian governments place a priority on providing fully fenced playgrounds.

Queanbeyan City (population 40,000) has four fully fenced playgrounds. The park descriptions include information about fencing. The ratio of one fully fenced playground for every 7,000 residents is outstanding nationally.

[Apex Park](#)

[Barracks Flat](#)

[Esmond Avenue Park](#)

[Fernleigh Park](#)

[Marj Christian Park](#)

The recently upgraded Queanbeyan Central Park.

There are 38 fenced playgrounds in Brisbane (population 2 million) and Brisbane City Council has a fenced playground finder on their website. These are predominantly in the northern suburbs where the density of fenced playgrounds may well be higher.

<https://www.brisbanekids.com.au/activities/fenced-brisbane-playgrounds/>

<https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/facilities-recreation/parks-venues/parks/park-facilities/fully-fenced-playgrounds-parks>

Adelaide (population 1.2 million) has over 90 fully fenced playgrounds with two fully fenced playgrounds in many suburbs and six in Northgate. This is a ration of at least one fenced playground to 13,000 residents.

<http://adelaideplaygrounds.com.au/Filter.php?type=outdoor> add the fully fenced filter.

Please note that Canberra's Boundless playground designed for children with a disability does not mention that it is fully fenced on its [webpage](#). Visit Canberra's [Boundless page](#) does not mention fencing either.

ACT Government playgrounds where fences have been installed in the last 12 months.

- Phillip Tank St: Closed off Playground as it is in middle of Roundabout with in 20m of road. Closed off a bigger area so that kids have a large area to run around other than just playground. Requested by family that live in local area as one of their kids has Autism

- Holt Hardwick Cres Kippax shops: Closed off the side of the playground that is closest to bus station as it is within 20m.
- Florey Kesteven St (shops): Closed off the playground as it is within 20m of the shop car park. Fence is installed on car park side closes off playground as the rest of park is surrounded by retaining wall.
- Some of the new playgrounds in the new Developments are starting to get fenced off as well.

For the ACT to have a similar ratio of fully fenced playgrounds to population as in Adelaide there would need to be approximately 30 fully fenced playgrounds. If the ACT Government matched Queanbeyans Cities ratio of fully fenced playgrounds to population there would need to be approximately 50 fully fenced playgrounds in Canberra.

Children and carers with a disability, and their families have a right to full inclusion in public spaces, to associate with peers and access age appropriate activities.

Noting the considerable cost of refurbishing just one playground, fully fencing playgrounds in a range of locations is a simple and relatively inexpensive way of increasing the accessibility and inclusivity of playgrounds to all ACT families.

Recommendation

- The ACT Government formulates a 5 year plan for to provide 30 fully fenced playgrounds in appropriate locations.
- The ACT Government provides an app or website that supports accessing a nearby fenced playground