

The Importance of Research for Playground Development

Planning a new playground or an upgrading an existing playground can be time consuming however the benefits of research will empower you to make informed decisions resulting in a safe and exciting playspace for children.

Research, Research, Research

Before making decisions about a playground project it is important to research and collect valuable information.

Visit other playgrounds, preschools and schools and pay attention to details such as the type of equipment and surfacing provided and how both have worn. Look out for interesting, non-traditional play items that make the space unique. Ask questions of playground owners regarding any problems with the playground design, equipment or suppliers.

Ensure to make time to engage educators, teachers, parents and in particular the children in the planning of the playspace. Children are more likely to use and enjoy the playspace if they have been involved in the project.

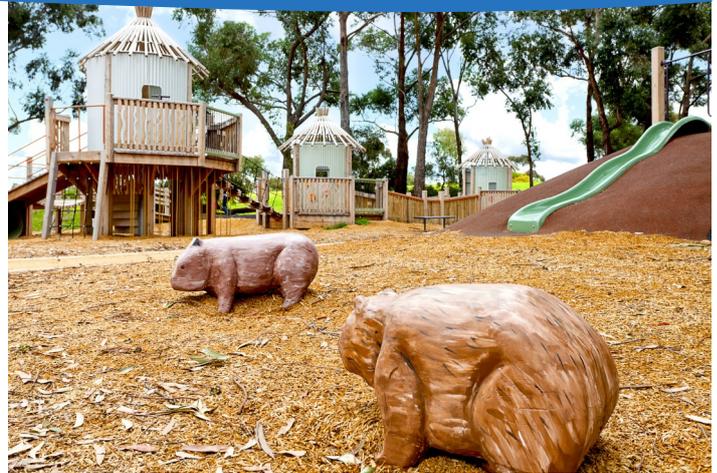
A great way of involving children is to develop a wish list with desired play activities and put on a 'mud map'. This process will assist with decisions when selecting a supplier who best fits the needs and style of the school, education and care service or local community. Browsing the internet can assist in finding suitable playground item suppliers in your area.

The Australian Standards

Kidsafe recommends that all products chosen for the playground conform with the Australian Standards as follows:

- AS 4685 Playground equipment;
- AS 4486 Development, installation, inspection, maintenance and operation; and
- AS/NZS 4422 Playground surfacing.

It is important to request manufacturer's certification of conformity to AS 4685. File with the records for your playground safety management system.



Planning the Playground

- ☑ Contact Kidsafe for design information and advice regarding playground projects.
- ☑ Prepare a realistic budget. Schedule and prioritise stages of works in keeping with the budget and extent of the project.
- ☑ Consider engaging a landscape architect or playground designer experienced in designing playspaces for children to achieve special and unique playground outcomes.
- ☑ Provide inclusive play activities for use by all ages and abilities.
- ☑ When selecting playground equipment/surfacing suppliers, request written evidence of certification of conformance to the Australian Standards.
- ☑ Enquire about follow up services and warranty periods. Request references for three previous customers and speak with each customer to ask questions including:
 - ◇ Are you pleased with the equipment/surfacing?
 - ◇ How has the equipment /surfacing lasted since installation?
 - ◇ Were you satisfied with the customer service?
 - ◇ Were the suppliers responsive if required on site for follow up works?
 - ◇ Did they provide documentation of conformance to the Australian Standards?
- ☑ Visit equipment manufacturers and playspace designer's websites - these websites are full of good ideas and information.
- ☑ Conduct a risk assessment to ensure you meet requirements of the WHS Act 2011.



Installation

Nominate an on-site supervisor whilst the playground is being installed who is briefed on the planned location of the equipment and surfacing.

Kidsafe recommends that all certification of conformity to AS 4685 is collected for the equipment/surfacing and an independent post installation compliance inspection is carried out before handover of the project and making your final payment. If there are any issues with the installation, be sure to address them with the installer/maker promptly.



Playground Inspection

Kidsafe recommends that an independent post installation inspection is conducted once the playground is installed. The purpose of the inspection is to ensure that the playground meets the Australian Standards prior to opening the playground to children. Hazards identified in the inspection report should be discussed with the installer/maker promptly and appropriate repairs or modifications made prior to children playing on the playground equipment.



Refer to the *Kidsafe* information sheet : *Playground Safety Management System* for information regarding recommended inspection frequencies, maintenance schedules and documentation.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Once your playground is in use, it is important to evaluate and monitor it regularly to ensure you are maintaining a safe and exciting playspace.

Ask the children what they think of the playground! If areas are found to be unpopular or not utilised as anticipated, design modifications can be planned to keep the playspace alive and thriving. Similarly, well loved and used activity areas may require additional reinforcing of natural ground surfaces to ensure longevity and safe conditions.



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