
Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report

Michaela Howie Playground Renewal (Stage 1 of 1)

Consultation period: 4 April 2023 to 7 May 2023

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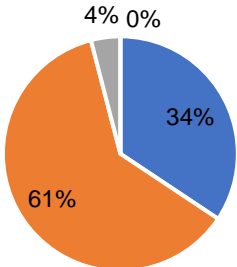

1. Summary

This report outlines the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement as part of a proposal to upgrade the existing Michaela Howie playground at Dee Why Beach.

The feedback collected during consultation indicated a high level of support for the proposed upgrades, with comments proposing alternative design suggestions and enhancements.

Respondents who were not supportive of the proposal raised concerns about the environmental impact of synthetic grass, and another suggested upgrading the playground at James Meehan reserve instead.

1.1. Key outcomes

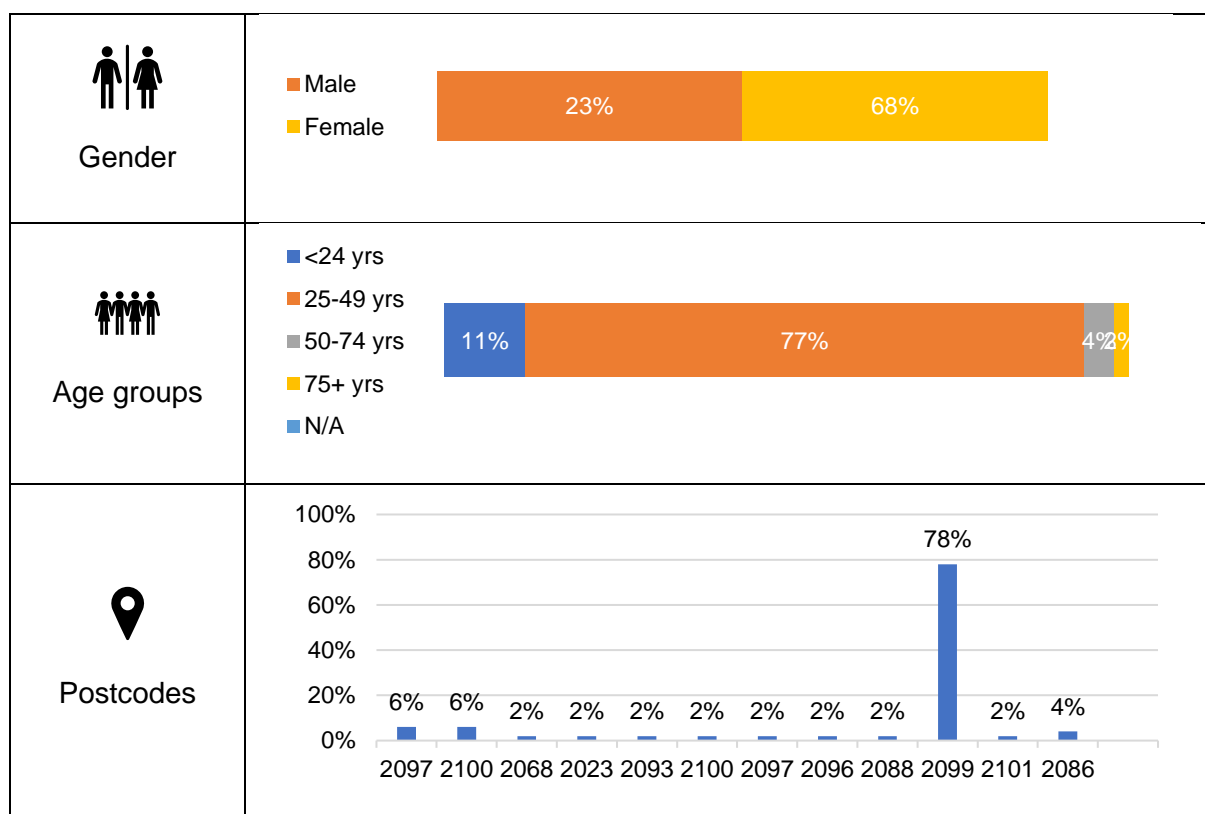
 Total unique responses	51 [*]											
 How responses were received	Submission/Comment form Written responses (email/letter)	Completions: 47 Number received: 2										
 Online sentiment question ¹ : <i>“Do you support plans for the playground?”</i>	 <table><thead><tr><th>Sentiment</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Support</td><td>34%</td></tr><tr><td>Support with changes</td><td>61%</td></tr><tr><td>Don't support</td><td>4%</td></tr><tr><td>Neutral/undetermined</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table> <ul style="list-style-type: none">SupportSupport with changesDon't supportNeutral/undetermined <p>Total responses = 47</p>		Sentiment	Percentage	Support	34%	Support with changes	61%	Don't support	4%	Neutral/undetermined	0%
Sentiment	Percentage											
Support	34%											
Support with changes	61%											
Don't support	4%											
Neutral/undetermined	0%											
 Feedback themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support for renewal• Play equipment types• Size and design• Age range• Nature and environment• Additional facilities											

¹ Only submissions made via the online submission form answered this question.

1.2. How we engaged

 <p>Have Your Say: visitation stats</p>	Visitors: 1137	Visits: 1383	Average time onsite: 1 min
 <p>Print media and collateral</p>	Letterbox drop: Onsite signs used: Schools and children's centres:		Distribution: 302 Number of signs: 8 Distribution: 8
 <p>Electronic direct mail (EDM)</p>	Community Engagement (fortnightly) newsletter: 2 editions (11 April and 24 April 2023) Council (weekly) e-News: 2 editions (6 April and 5 May 2023)		Distribution: 24,000 subscribers Distribution: 61,500 subscribers

1.3. Who responded²



² Demographic data was gathered by request only. The data represented only includes those respondents who provided this detail.

2. Background

Michaela Howie Playground is a popular District playground situated in the prime location of Dee Why Beach Reserve.

Council has allocated budget for the renewal of the playground to provide new play equipment, surfacing and associated landscaping within the current footprint.

A concept plan was developed by Council's Parks Asset Team to provide an indication of the proposed renewal for Community Engagement.

The Concept would be refined after Community Engagement and prior to undertaking procurement for the works.

3. Engagement objectives

Community and stakeholder engagement aimed to:

- Build community and stakeholder awareness of participation activities.
- Provide accessible information so community and stakeholders can participate in a meaningful way.
- Identify community and stakeholder concerns, local knowledge and values.
- Seek out and facilitate the involvement of those affected by or interested in a project.
- Communicate to community and stakeholders how their input was incorporated into the planning and decision-making process.
- Provide vulnerable and marginalised groups access to the engagement process.

4. Engagement approach

Community and stakeholder engagement for the Michael Howie Playground renewal was conducted between 4 April 2023 to 7 May 2023, and consisted of a series of activities that provided opportunities for community and stakeholders to contribute.

The engagement was planned, implemented and reported in accordance with Council's [Community Engagement Strategy](#) (2022).

A project page was established on our have your say platform with information provided in an accessible and easy to read format.

The project was primarily promoted through our regular email newsletter (EDM) channels.

Feedback was captured through an online comment form embedded onto the have your say project page. The form included a question that directly asked respondents for their level of support on the proposal.

An open-field comments box provided community members a space to explain or elaborate on their support, not support or neutral sentiment as well as any other feedback they wished to contribute.

As well as the sentiment question and free text, a rating tool was used to ask participants to rate the importance of the following elements of play:

- Natural features

- moving elements (swings, springs, spinning)
- quiet places
- accessibility
- imaginative play
- challenging climbing
- group play
- toddler play equipment.

Email and written comments were also invited. Two written responses were received via email.

5. Findings

The majority of respondents were pleased that the playground is due to undergo renewal, however it seemed that many people had higher expectations with a feeling that the playground would benefit from a complete redesign and expansion.

34% of respondents supported the project and 61% supported, however would also like to see some changes. Only 2 respondents (4%) did not support the project.

There were multiple requests for types of play equipment and examples of playgrounds that were at a much larger scale and budget to Michaela Howie Playground.

There were also requests for more nature play, natural elements, seating and to cater for a greater age range.

The quantitative results showed a preference for moving elements, imaginative play, natural features and challenging climbing.

These findings will guide the revision of the concept plan. All community requests may not be suitable for the size, budget and location of Michaela Howie Playground, however these findings will be taken into account with the development of the whole precinct and future renewal of James Meehan Reserve Playground.

Table 1: Response to question: Do you support the plans for the playground?

Do you support the plans for the playground?		
Yes	Yes with Changes	No
34%	61%	4%

Table 2: Response to question: Importance of the following features.

Importance of the following features (Score out of 5)	
Feature	Average Score (out of 5)
Natural features	4.2
Moving elements (swings, springs, spinning)	4.5

Quiet places	2.9
Accessibility	3.7
Imaginative play	4.3
Challenging climbing	4.2
Group play	3.8
Toddler play elements	3.9

Table 3: Issues, change requests and other considerations

Theme	Issues, change requests and other considerations raised	Council's response
Support for renewal	Most submissions supported the renewal of the playground, with many offering suggestions to improve the concept.	Council acknowledges the support and suggestions. The concept will be revised taking on board comments including incorporating greater space for nature play and more seating opportunities.
Play equipment types	Many submissions suggested specific types of play equipment that the users liked and would like to see installed within the playground.	By specifying the area and style of equipment within the revised concept for Request for Quotes, council will guide playground providers on the sort of equipment to provide.
Size and design	Some respondents felt that the prominent location of the playground should be worthy of a larger playground and a grander design.	Dee Why Beach Reserve is a very popular location for the whole community. The playground is one of two in the precinct to offer a variety of play value for different ages and abilities. The project is a renewal of the existing playground and hence the size has been maintained. The existing size is consistent with the masterplan for the area and balances recreation space for the whole community.
Age range	The concept stated that the playground would be suitable for 0-8 year olds. Some respondents requested that there should be play equipment suitable for older children.	Dee Why Beach Reserve caters for a large amount of people in a relatively limited space. The playground size is also limited to allow for recreational needs for the whole community, hence

		Council is proposing that play equipment is more focused to younger age groups. Older ages are able to use the playground, however, there are also other recreation facilities within the precinct focused to older aged children such as the ping pong table, beach, pools, open space and James Meehan Reserve Playground.
Nature and environment	Some respondents requested that there should be more nature play and natural elements within the playground.	The concept will be amended to create more space for nature play and provide better access to the existing tree within the playground.
Additional facilities	Some residents requested that toilets be installed closer to the playground.	Public toilets are located within the precinct at the rock pool and surf club. Providing additional toilets is out of scope for this playground renewal.

During the consultation/exhibition. Council received a number of questions either through direct contact or within feedback received.

Table 4: Questions raised and Council's response

Question raised in feedback	Council's response
Why can't the playground size be increased?	Dee Why Beach Reserve is a very popular location for the whole community. The playground is one of two in the precinct to offer a variety of play value for different ages and abilities. The project is a renewal of the existing playground and hence the size has been maintained. The existing size is consistent with the masterplan for the area and balances recreation space for the whole community.
Why is the playground designed for 0-8 year olds? What about older children?	Dee Why Beach Reserve caters for a large amount of people in a relatively limited space. The playground size is also limited to allow for recreational needs for the whole community, hence Council is proposing that play equipment is more focused to younger age groups. Older ages are able to use the playground, however, there are also other recreation facilities within the precinct focused to older aged children such as the ping pong table, beach, pools, open space and James Meehan Reserve Playground.
Could we replace the ice creams with shovels,	The ice cream shop was used as a concept to suggest beachside theming. Playground suppliers will be asked to

strawberries, sushi or something else that is fun?	address theming with their submission. We will remove ice cream from the revised concept to not be bias in theme suggestion surrounding unhealthy foods.
Would it be possible to get photos or concept images of the play equipment that will be installed as part of the renewal?	Specific pieces of play equipment will not be decided until Council received submissions from playground suppliers.

Appendix 1 Verbatim community and stakeholder responses*

Submissions via Your Say Website Comment Form	
Number	Comment/submission
1	Would be great to see some in-ground jumping pads. We recently went to a playground in Belmont WA which had the most excellent toddler facilities I have ever found highlights included the four seater springy.
2	We need more swings and slides. More shades for sunny days because things get very hot during summer.
3	I would like to have toilets close by. That will be handy for the parents and kids.
4	Can we please have toilets. We have lots of kids and babies and we need a closer bathroom
5	We definitely need more swings at the playground. The swings are the number one play equipment and there is always a line for them.
6	Would like monkey bars or flying fox added if possible.
7	Council should upgrade James Meehan Reserve before upgrading this one as James Meehan Reserve. has older/outdated playing equipment than this playground. The construction timeframe should be in June-August when less kids are in the area rather than in October.
8	There's no detail so I can't judge what has been proposed but in the main play area (4) please can you ensure that whilst there is challenging climbing there is also an easy way to access the slide etc. This means that children who are old enough to enjoy the equipment but perhaps not quite tall enough to climb up to it can still use it. This comment is because the upgrade at Clontarf resulted in a fantastic slide that kids younger than 5-6 could not access at all because all the ways to get to it were complex climbing, resulting in some very upset kids (and exhausted parents!)
9	A TOILET!!!! Every time our daughter needs to go to the toilet, we have to RUN a down to the pool toilets before she wets herself! Please please please - it's absolutely essential for a bathroom
10	This playground is in desperate need of an upgrade and so thrilled to learn changes are being made- however there is insufficient shade- they are actually useless for the positioning due to the sun's positioning and movement. The shade needs to be a more bigger and not just replaced with new cloths. The table in the corner also needs shade and a second table should be added.
11	There isn't too much change, it would be great to see a carousel and a see-saw here.
12	I am concerned that the synthetic surface, soft surface areas, will deteriorate over time and create plastic pollution feeding directly into the ocean. The breakdown of soft synthetic surfaces is observed at Newport and documented as other places across NSW. Council needs to revisit the design and avoid this type of material.
13	I visited a public park in Noumea a few weeks ago and really appreciated the design. There were four little playgrounds spaced away from each other, for four different age groups. For example, one was for
14	I strongly believe that there should be a wider age range included in the playground and personally I do not think there needs to be walls in a playground because that is silly, and incompetent children and or younger children might injure themselves by running into said walls. Another unnecessary element is the foretold "quiet areas". They are pointless and should not be included in an area where children are naturally loud and irritating.
15	Add more natural elements, ie car tyres , Mud kitchen, risky play elements, loose parts elements. Let's live away from plastic equip and engage in more natural and recycled elements. Happy to draw up a plan if needed, add a water feature etc

*Personal details and inappropriate language have been redacted where possible. Spelling and grammatical errors have been amended only where misinterpretation or offence may be caused.

	Make it more challenging for the older children Flying fox etc monkey bars
16	<p>Hello, It's great to see the park getting a makeover. Can we please suggest the following...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - larger area and additional play equipment for the toddler area, for example a small slide and climbing equipment. The Mona Vale "Flying fox park" (toddler section) is a great example. In ground trampolines such as Tram Shed Narrabeen would also be great. - challenging and tall climbing equipment and slide for the older kids section. St Ives Showground has some great examples. In particular high, but with good safety fencing or netting for most of it. Avoid metal slides as they get very hot. The current park is a bit hard to supervise the kids as there's quite a few sections that don't have a barrier at height... Bit hard for the parent to work out where to stand to supervise (ie if just 1 or 2 unfenced high sections that's manageable/ok). - the suggested imaginative play / pretend gelation shop sounds good. - big kids swing, 1 as a basket swing for multiple kids at once <p>Thankyou</p>
17	It needs more natural element, sandpit sand, rocks, trees...not just hard rubber everywhere.
18	I think the use of synthetic grass in a children playground should not be allowed. Synthetic grass can get very hot and can also cause friction burns. This playground is frequently used by small children with no shoes on.
19	Whilst I appreciate Michaela park is for 0-8 year olds, my two grandchildren ages 9 and 12, love using the park (I live on The Strand and can watch them from home thus giving them secure independence) I would love a couple of activities suitable to a slightly older age; even another couple of bigger swings would be great.
20	Excellent idea of imaginary play with a gelato shop front. Kids will love it
21	Would be great to have more challenging /risky play equipment for older kids (7-9) some rope climbing/flying fox or similar or some kind of water play(?) if it can fit at all also I'm not a huge fan of using recycled tyres for the flooring. Not sure if there are alternatives that are more environmentally friendly and with less chemical exposure?
22	We are daily users of this playground and love that there are elements of play for older children. However, from speaking with many parents at the playground there needs to be more toddler play elements. We can see that there is to be a climbable sandcastle- will this have other elements such as a slide or developmentally appropriate elements? The playground currently has interactive panels such as the abacus beads and tic tac toe. We rarely see these get used, is there another element that could be put in its place? How about a small boat with steering wheel or portholes to look out of, they love role play and this would fit the beach theme.
23	It looks like a repaint of existing equipment. The area is old, the playground needs an entirely new look, and feel to attract people. Could you consider putting in more modern and advanced play equipment, with some sensory functionality and more seating for parents to supervise children. This is a great opportunity to make something of a popular area on a wonderful beach.
24	<p>I think more seating and tables are required</p> <p>More nature /natural environment inspired artwork</p>
25	This 'plan' is utterly disappointing compared to upgrades made to other playgrounds in the area. Adding 1 seat and painting the gate and concrete in 'ice cream' colours sounds very lazy, ill-thought out and dismissive. Why would you not look at its location and get inspiration from that? Why no nature play? Why such awful colours? Why only 1 picnic table for a playground in such a densely populated area? It sounds like this job has to be rushed through in a very short period of time and no effort has been put into it at all. Such a shame.
26	Please make sure there are some challenging climbing aspects for the older children in the age group. Most of the Northern Beaches parks are for babies and toddlers, and the older kids really miss out. It would be great to have some monkey bars! Risky play is so important in child development.
27	Please lower the existing cylindrical tunnel that is already on the fixed play structure. Last week a 4/5 year old had his head stuck underneath, it was highly traumatic for Al involved to try and pull him out without injuring his head and neck.

28	<p>Disappointing design.</p> <p>You say you're aiming to 'inspire social interaction for families'. There's minimal opportunity for this. There is one picnic bench!!! There is barely any seating for families, there is minimal imaginative play, and zero nature play.</p> <p>The playground is in a beautiful location on the beach and as such, should blend nicely with its surroundings. Gelato coloured gates, coloured concrete flooring, and coloured fencing are just garish and ugly. It should be natural colours and natural materials, wild/nature play. Not bright colours and plastic/metal equipment that will break and/or age quickly.</p> <p>Dee Why is one of the highest density suburbs with a huge demographic of young families. Many of which live in unit blocks with no access to outdoor areas. For many Dee Why residents, the beachfront is the primary outdoor area. This playground should be designed for families, a place to foster children's inquisitive nature and be a place where parents/carers can teach kids about the natural environment. Look at the Wild Play area in Centennial Park for inspiration. None of the traditional playground equipment yet families love it and travel from all over the Sydney metro area to visit it. People come from all over the area and beyond to go to the beach and use the playground here, but essentially all you seem to be proposing is some replacement equipment and some paint. Why so little attention given to Dee Why when other playgrounds on the beaches have clearly had so much effort and thought given to them? Eg: Lionel Watts, Clontarf, Berry Reserve?</p> <p>You also said that this playground is aimed from 0 – 8 years old. I would suggest that you add some signs that say this because there is frequently pre-teens/teenagers in the playground 'playing' inappropriate games or behaving disrespectfully. Signage would give other users agency to ask these age groups to stop the behaviour or to go elsewhere.</p> <p>Some suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate the Black Swan which is a matter of local heritage and some history about Dee Why • A water pump/bucket/shallow water creek • Tree stump stepping blocks or balance logs – use reclaimed from other council projects • Stepping stones • Herb garden, some local flora and fauna – isn't the Curl Curl Community Garden also a plant nursery? You could use those. An example of sustainability. You could have community working bees to help maintain this. Something to 'inspire social interaction with families..' as you say. • A chalk wall <p>Do better !</p>
29	More interactive for toddlers like water play ect
30	<p>I would like to congratulate the Northern Beaches Council on this wonderful initiative. The Michaela Howie Playground is the closest playground to my house, and I take my 18-month-old son to play there almost every day. The playground is always quite crowded, so it would be interesting to evaluate whether an expansion would be possible. I recently completed a group assignment as part of the master's degree in planning I am undertaking at Macquarie University. In the assignment, we proposed principles for playground design (https://echo360.net.au/media/0aafdab5-b9ff-4ae5-888e-c06458e680c4/public).</p> <p>It would be really cool if, in addition to the playground renovation, a program of activities was also created. For example, the local council could hold regular events at the playground, such as children's music shows, plays, puppet theatres, Santa Claus visits, etc.</p>
31	More role play areas, nature walk or ropes walk with rock climbing type poles.
32	I would include some elements for adults with intellectual disability. Northern Beaches need a space where they can be included.
33	Covered area Bathroom
34	Please consider all families and provide a public toilet. Thanks
35	A toilet is necessary. Change room is necessary,
36	Hello, I would love to have there a solid swing. For instance, the same one which is in Lagoon Reserve, Queenscliff close to Manly exercise area. In my opinion is much safer swing than a usual one with a chain because babies and toddler can slipper from it as there is no nothing in the middle of a swing.
37	The current proposal completely lacks creativity and innovation and the Northern Beaches community deserve more effort to be put into this project. Dee Why is the Northern Beaches' biggest booming

	<p>suburb with more families occupying units and townhouses with no gardens or play areas. The increasing demand is overwhelming the severely limited shared open spaces. The beachfront is currently the suburb's only significant outdoor area where families can access nearby amenities whilst enjoying the outdoors and this playground is a key facility with enormous demand from a broad community. The redevelopment of Michaela Howie Playground is a significant opportunity that should not be squandered. The former Warringah Council repeatedly fell short of other Sydney councils when it came to developing playgrounds, public spaces and street furniture, with many of these amenities failing to endure with public use. Northern Beaches Council needs to create a sustainable, natural, imaginative and modern space which engages and challenges children.</p> <p>With regards to the 'ranking' of play elements, with accessibility being one of these, the nearby playground at James Meehan Reserve has greater scope to expand to incorporate more accessible features and equipment. Group Play is also listed for ranking and some playground equipment which facilitates this, such as a cubby house, are better suited to the space that James Meehan Reserve has.</p> <p>INNOVATION: discover fresh ideas and design features which are DIFFERENT to other local playgrounds to provide interest and variation which will stimulate children. Research other playgrounds which have achieved excellence in these areas and build on their best qualities. Eg: in-ground trampolines, merry-go-round, spinning chair, sit-on diggers, horizontal climbing net, musical instruments. Our kids deserve a playground akin to the inclusive play space that is Paperbark Playground in Parramatta Park.</p> <p>NATURE OASIS: incorporate garden beds with unique and interesting flora which children can actually interact with and grow their appreciation of nature. Introduce a shallow flowing creek in which children can cool off, get wet. Have a water pump feature for the industrious. Include some nature play elements such as wooden logs to walk across and stepping stones. Make use of the existing sloped areas to provide a ride-on or scooter path around the perimeter.</p> <p>CHILD DEVELOPMENT: play equipment should challenge children's motor skills and muscle strength, and promote self-confidence, emotional resilience and invoke a desire to challenge themselves. Bring back the see-saw = balance, communication, coordination & physics!</p> <p>SENSE OF TIME & PLACE: Stimulate children's minds and curiosity. Include some history of Dee Why beach front with photographs of the area to provide a sense of the change that has occurred to the natural and social landscape in the last hundred years. This history should be incorporated to shape some of the landscape and structural elements.</p> <p>BEAUTY & SUSTAINABILITY: finishes of all materials used should be their original natural colours, with no painted surfaces, to be sustainable, reduce maintenance and most importantly, blend with and compliment the environmental beauty of the beachfront. eg: don't paint existing shade cloth poles - the metal/steel finish is good and doesn't require repeated coats of paint! Children's surroundings have become excessively stimulating and disrupting with the cacophony of colours in toys, play centres, preschools, shopping centres and playgrounds. It's a visual bombardment which overloads their senses, which creates a stressful environment. A new approach to this playground can disrupt this barrage of rainbow and gelato colours.</p> <p>PS: the feedback form is poorly designed doesn't demonstrate knowledge of questionnaire design to gather quality feedback. It asks for age range but then also year of birth which will succeed only in gathering worthless invalidated responses.</p>
38	<p>Please ensure ground cover and equipment is suitable for direct sun where applicable, current black floor cover and red slide are unusable in the sunshine from about 10am</p> <p>Often along wait for toddler / baby swings</p>
39	<p>I love the theme iconic childhood surf and beach but I'm not in support of the ice cream and gelato shop. Imagination is the best part of play, would be great to see a generic shop where children can sell sushi, surf boards or something else. Why specify and limit their imagination of what they can sell to gelato. Ice creams are fun, but I feel this is not supporting healthy eating, it's already everywhere and the evidence of the damage of exposure and what it does to your health is clear. Could we replace the ice creams with shovels, strawberries, sushi or something else that is fun? Museum of Arts and Applied Sciences previously did a theme being Gold Coast and their artist designed a Tourist shop for children to use as imaginative play.</p> <p>I want my child to go to candy land once a year, not every Sunday =)</p>

40	What is so wonderful about the current play equipment is the multiple climbing access to the main bridge, ladders, slides, stairs! Please keep all those fun climbing challenges. A lot of new playgrounds are quite boring and not challenging enough for the toddlers/preschoolers age.
41	Wherever possible please use natural materials or recycled, sustainable materials that will not cause issues for the natural environment, including the nearby ocean, in years to come.

Submissions via Email

Number	Comment/submission
1	<p>Hi there, Hope this email finds you well. It's really exciting to hear the playground will be renewed. Would it be possible to get photos or concept images of the play equipment that will be installed as part of the renewal? I am a very visual person and I am finding it hard to provide feedback or comments without being able to visualize the proposed new play equipment (beyond the concept plan). I am sorry if I missed this info on the 'Have your Say' page. If there, would you be able to send me the link? Thanks for your help Have a great day,</p>
2	<p>Dear Phillip I read with interest the proposal for the Playground renewal and have a few suggestions. 1 - Rubber softfall surface: There is frequently a missed opportunity to provide a design that actively engages the user experience such incorporating within the design a themed hopscotch , maze, labyrinth, line (to walk along), or pictures ie starfish etc close enough that children can jump between them. 2 - Synthetic grass - can a strip of this be extended within the playground to form a path that can take a meandering shape to provide interest, visually connect the spaces and again provide a level of interactivity on the floor space. 3- Include passive wooden pieces that children can use for imaginative play and are climbable such as wooden stumps of different heights on their ends as well as logs raised ever so slightly. These are ideal for perimeters of the playground. Great examples of this are at the Waringah Aquatic centre in the outdoor play area. 4 - Mini trampolines inset into the ground such as at the Narrabeen playground next to the Tramshed Cafe. Many thanks</p>

Document administration

Version	1.0
Date	12 May 2023
Approval	Content provided and approved by Park Assets Team. Responsible manager: Jeremy Smith
Status	Draft
Related Projects	Lets Play! Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Strategy & Action Plan
Notes	Community and stakeholder views contained in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Northern Beaches Council or indicate a commitment to a particular course of action.