

3.2 Playspace Analysis

Introduction

Playspaces are a critical element of the Northern Beaches open space network, providing essential spaces for children, families and carers to socialise, have fun and be active.

There are currently 217 publicly accessible playspaces across the Northern Beaches, which are progressively renewed and upgraded. Like open spaces, the Northern Beaches playspace network is diverse and consists of a range of spaces of differing sizes, play experiences and supporting amenities. This network needs to be appropriately planned, managed and maintained to support the needs of the Northern Beaches community.

This section reviews the current quantity, distribution and condition of playspaces across the Northern Beaches and according to the five planning catchments. It outlines the typical facilities for each of the playspace hierarchy classifications of regional, district, neighbourhood and local. Best practice criteria such as access, diversity, inclusivity, quality and walkability are outlined.

The limitations of open space benchmarks are discussed in section 4.3, however, benchmarks have been considered here as a useful reference point for comparing similar areas and when comparing provision in relation to population growth, rather than as a sole driver for the quantity of playspaces.

A comparison of metropolitan Sydney Council's (see section 4.3) found a large variance of between 1,000 and 2,300 people per playground based on 2016 population data, with Northern Beaches having one playground per 1,247 people. A review of playspace provision across Australian metropolitan LGAs found that one playground per 1,000 - 1,300 people or one playground 300 children (aged 0 - 14 years) were common benchmarks for play provision*. The current quantity of playspaces in the Northern Beaches is therefore considered to be very good. For the benefit of a comparative reference point the analysis in this section draws on a ratio of playgrounds per 1,300 people.

Some proposed new playspaces have been included in this section to accommodate gaps or likely future gaps in equitable provision. The analysis in this section informs the Strategic Directions and Action Plan.

*Source: State of the Sector Report on Playgrounds 2014, City of Burnside Playground Strategy, Waverley Council Play Space Strategy



Playspace classification

Consistent with Council's Northern Beaches Draft Asset Management Plan (September 2021), the playspace network includes a hierarchy of the following classifications:

Local playspaces

Located in residential areas and serves the immediate street catchment, being within an approximately five-minute walk (400m distance) to residents. Provide limited play diversity and basic play equipment.

Typical Facilities: Single swing set or free-standing slide. Grassed area with some natural shade and/or a seat.

Neighbourhood playspaces

Located in residential areas and serves the partial suburb catchment, being within an approximately ten- minute walk (800m distance) to residents. Provides a few playspace elements which cater to different age groups and can incorporate different play activities.

Typical Facilities: Two or more pieces of play equipment, typically including a playspace unit with supporting recreation elements. Provides basic supporting amenities e.g. seats, picnic tables, natural shade

District playspace

Destination playspace which serves multiple suburbs, being within an approximately 2km - 5km radius of residents. Generally co-located with other open spaces such as sportsfields, foreshores, natural areas or other community infrastructure.

District playspaces provide a range of play equipment which cater for different ages and play activities and generally support a longer play time. They are likely to be an attractor for the local area, with users more willing to travel and use these playspaces as meeting points for social activities (e.g. mothers groups).

Typical Facilities: Multiple play elements which are typically fenced and protected with shade sails/cloths. Provides supporting amenities such as water fountains, seats or picnic facilities, and may also provide toilets and barbeque facilities. Typically serviced by some off street car parking and connections to the active travel network.

Regional playspace

Destination playspace which attracts users from outside of the LGA. Regional playspaces provide a multi-age area which can support a diversity of play activities (e.g. nature play, adventure play) and multiple users. Likely to be used as an attraction, with users typically travelling here for a 'day out' or to spend more than 1 hr playing.

Typical facilities: Multiple play elements, including more advanced equipment for older children. Provides supporting amenities including toilets, seats, picnic/barbeque facilities and dedicated on-site parking. Typically serviced by good connectivity to public and active transport networks and co-located with other supporting community infrastructure.

To better accommodate the needs older children and youth it is proposed that future playspace design, in particularly district and regional spaces, include recreation opportunities such as bike parks, basketball facilities and fitness equipment.

Planning for playspaces

Leading practice

Like open spaces, leading practice planning for playspaces favours an integrated approach, assessing playspace needs using performance criteria and key indicators as benchmarks.

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment outlines the core principles and processes for designing, planning and managing more inclusive play spaces in the Everyone Can Play Guidelines (2019). The Guidelines also provide a playspace evaluation checklist to assist in reviewing existing playspaces to enable more people to access, play and stay at playspaces.

The Guidelines are underpinned by three core principles. These principles are most relevant for playspace provision in the Northern Beaches LGA and include:

- **Can I get there?**
Consider location, layout, signage, wayfinding and accessibility to ensure everyone can find their way to, in and around the playspace.
- **Can I play?**
The play experience, including the equipment and surfacing, should allow everyone to experience a variety of challenging and engaging play opportunities in a way that suits them.
- **Can I stay?**
Consider safety, facilities, landscaping and the wider environment to ensure everyone can stay at the playspace for as long as they would like.

The NSW Government Architect's (GANSW) Draft Greener Places Design Guide (2020) also outlines considerations for the planning, use and design of outdoor playspaces. The draft guidelines provide indicative performance criteria for the establishment of play areas for children of different ages. The performance criteria broadly encompasses the following:

- **Access, connectivity and location:**
playspaces should be connected to active transport links and be within a 5 - 10 minute walk of homes, depending on size and age ability. Play spaces should be ideally located to facilitate a high degree of visibility and passive surveillance.
- **Diversity:**
play spaces should be diverse, providing a different play experience from areas immediately opposite. This may involve consideration of different play types e.g. nature play, adventure play, structured play, water play
- **Features and facilities:**
consider inclusive design and supporting amenities which enable people and/or carers to stay and use the space comfortably. Supporting amenities may include picnic facilities, seats, water fountains, shade, toilets and fencing/landscaping barriers.
- **Size, shape and boundaries:**
consider the size and street frontage of play spaces relative to the site's urban location and road siting. Smaller play spaces are generally more supported in areas of higher housing density.



Playspace analysis

Provision criteria

Playspaces should be planned as an integrated network, integrating the principles of accessibility, equitable distribution, quality, diversity and inclusive design. To help achieve this, this study has combined both quantitative and qualitative measures to guide future provision. Key measures used in this study include diversity, walkability and quality.

Diversity

A variety of play areas should be provided throughout the LGA to cater for different demands and ages. The playground classification has been applied to assess the distribution of provision to help ensure there is an equitable mix of playspaces which meet community needs. It is also used to help assess potential duplication of provision. To accommodate older children and youth it is proposed to incorporate recreation opportunities such as bike parks, basketball facilities and fitness equipment into future play space design as appropriate.

Walkability

Like open space, everyone should be within a comfortable walking distance to a playspace. While there is no universal standard, the GANSW Draft Greener Places Design Guide recommends most children (up to 15 years old) should be within walking distance (e.g. 400m) to a playspace. It is also understood that people are more willing to travel further distances to larger, more diverse playspaces. Based on this, a walkability standard has been applied to the playspace classification (other than regional playspaces) as follows:

- Local playgrounds - 400 m (5 minute walk)
- Neighbourhood playgrounds - 800 m (10 minute walk)
- District playgrounds - 2 km - 5 km (short drive or 30+ minute walk).

Quality

It is important that playspaces are maintained to an appropriate standard to encourage participation and for the safety of users. Council's Northern Beaches Draft Asset Management Plan (September 2021) technical condition scale outlines the desired quality and condition of all playspaces. This scale ranges from 1 (very good: no visible signs of deterioration) to 5 (very poor: major service problems and needs priority for renewal). At a minimum, Council aims for all playspaces to be at a rating of 3 (average) or higher.

In 2020 - 21, external consultants completed an audit of all playspaces within the LGA. All playspaces were assessed on their technical condition, based on the above scale. The outcomes from this audit has been used in this chapter to understand the current quality of playspaces within the Northern Beaches LGA.

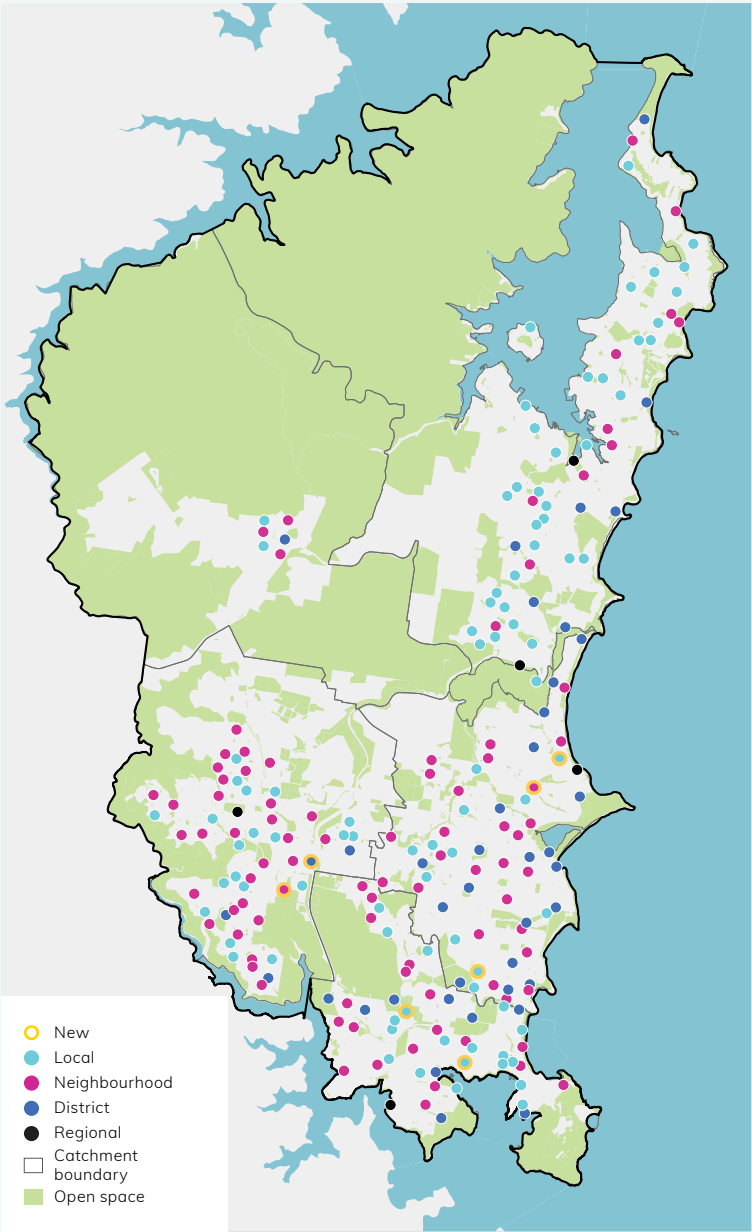


Inclusivity

The Everyone Can Play: A Guide to Create Inclusive Playspaces is NSW Government's best practice toolkit to creating playspaces. As indicated in the title, the toolkit has a strong focus on the provision of inclusive playspaces. It describes an inclusive playspace as being "easy to access, easy to move around, provide a range of play options and challenges, and have appropriate facilities in a comfortable environment" (2019: 10). The document is structured around six design principles for playspaces: find, fit, choose, join in, thrive and belong.

Everyone Can Play also includes a detailed evaluation checklist to assess existing playspaces against a range of criteria. The scope of this project did not include assessment of Council's many playspaces against these criteria. However, the checklist provides a useful tool for detailed planning of individual spaces.

The toolkit also contains a design principles checklist, which can be used to support Council's landscape architects and other playspace designers in the LGA to create inclusive spaces.



Hierarchy	2021	2036
Local	86	90
Neighbourhood	88	90
District	39	40
Regional	5	5
Total	217	224

New playspaces to 2036

- 7 new playspaces

Further details can be found in the catchment breakdowns on the following pages.

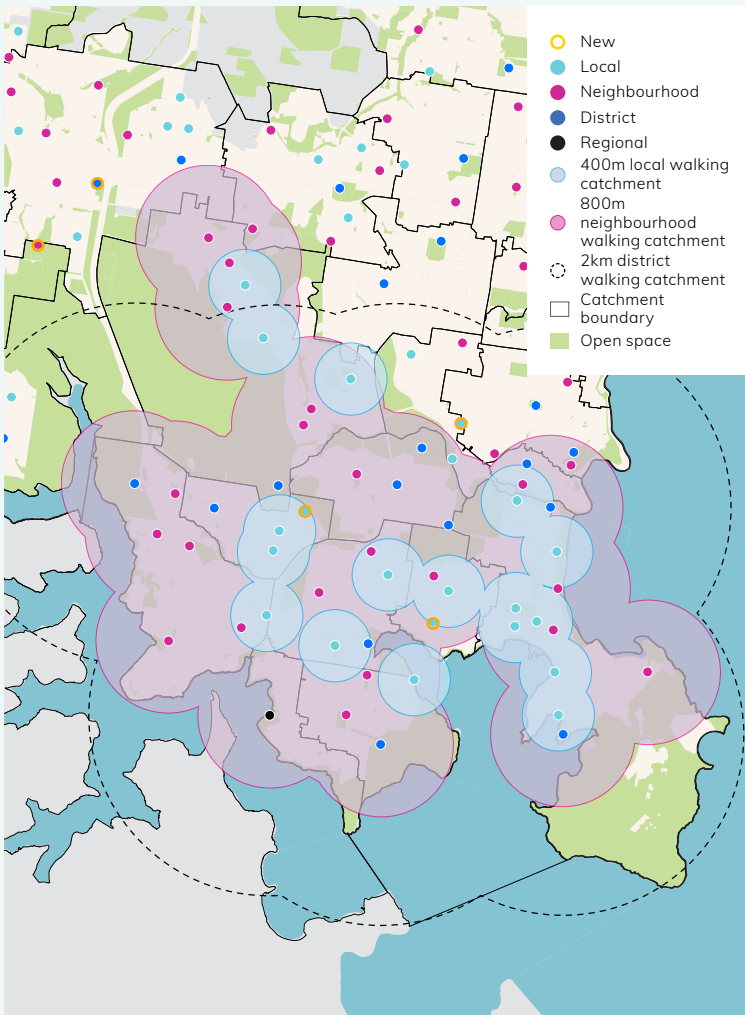
A full list of playgrounds and planned changes can be found at Appendix B.

2021 provision	2036 provision (including 10 proposed new)
1.0 playspaces; 1,300 people 1 playspace per 238 children under 15	1.0 playspaces; 1,300 people 1 playspace per 243 children under 15

Provision standard

The LGA meets the current provision standard ratio with 1 playspace for every 1,300 people. The LGA also exceeds the benchmark of one playspace for every 300 children aged 0 - 15 years, with one playspace for every 238 children across the LGA.*

Looking forward, with 10 new playspaces, the LGA will continue to meet the benchmark ratio of 1.0 playspace provided for every 1,300 people in 2036 (for details on benchmarking see section 4.3). It will also continue to meet the benchmark of one playspace for every 300 children aged 0-15 years by 2036, with one playspace for every 243 children across the LGA.*

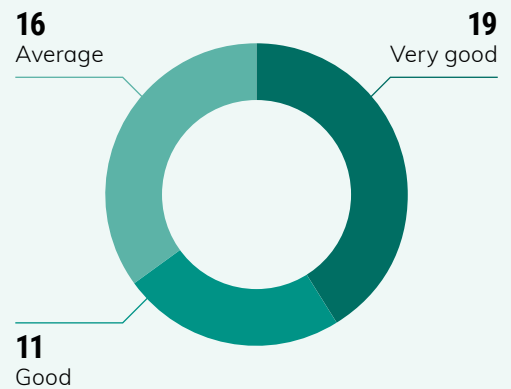


Hierarchy	2021	2036
Local	17	19
Neighbourhood	19	19
District	10	10
Regional	0	0
Total	46	48

New playspaces to 2036

- Ashley Reserve
- Condover Reserve

2021 technical condition



2021 provision

1.0 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 264 children under 15

2036 provision (including 2 proposed new)

1.0 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 246 children under 15

Provision and diversity

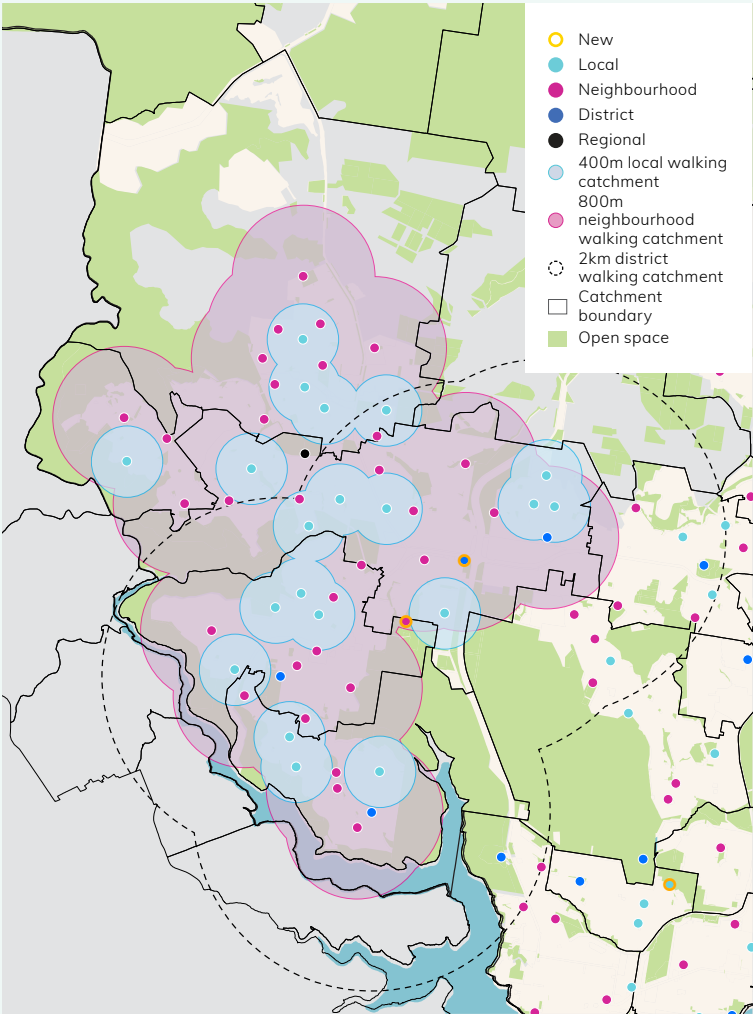
The Manly catchment has a good provision of playspaces and generally meets the provision standard ratio as well as the benchmark for playgrounds per child under 15 years of age. It has a relatively equitable mix of playspaces, with 37% of playspaces as local, 41% as neighbourhood. The Manly catchment one regional playspace at Clontarf and nine (20%) district playspaces, making it the catchment with the second highest number of district playspaces.

Most of the local playspaces are concentrated at the southern end of the catchment, particularly around the built-up suburbs of Fairlight and Manly. This distribution reflects good practice, providing more opportunities for people to access play areas close to home where private backyard or other open space is likely to be limited.

Walkability and quality

Residents of Manly are within walking distance to a local or neighbourhood playspace. Some communities around Manly Vale and Allambie Heights which appear to have a walkability gap are serviced by the playspaces within the neighbouring Brookvale-Dee Why catchment.

Playspaces in Manly are generally of a high quality, with 65 percent of all playspaces in 'very good' or 'good' condition and 30 percent in 'average' condition. There are no playgrounds in 'poor' condition. The planned upgrade of Little Manly Point Reserve will boost the quality of provision and overall play experience for district playspaces as did the recently upgraded regional playspace at Clontarf.

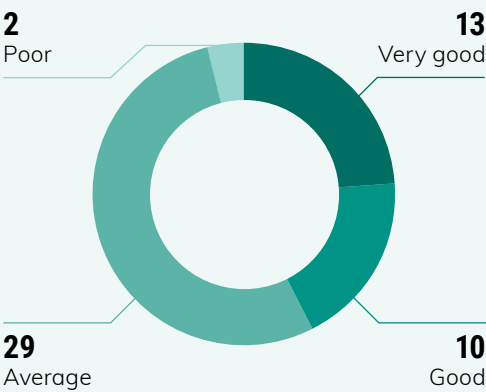


Hierarchy	2021	2036
Local	20	20
Neighbourhood	30	31
District	3	4
Regional	1	1
Total	54	56

New playspaces to 2036

- Brick Pit Reserve
- Forestville Park

2021 technical condition



2021 provision

1.8 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 153 children under 15

2036 provision (including 2 proposed new)

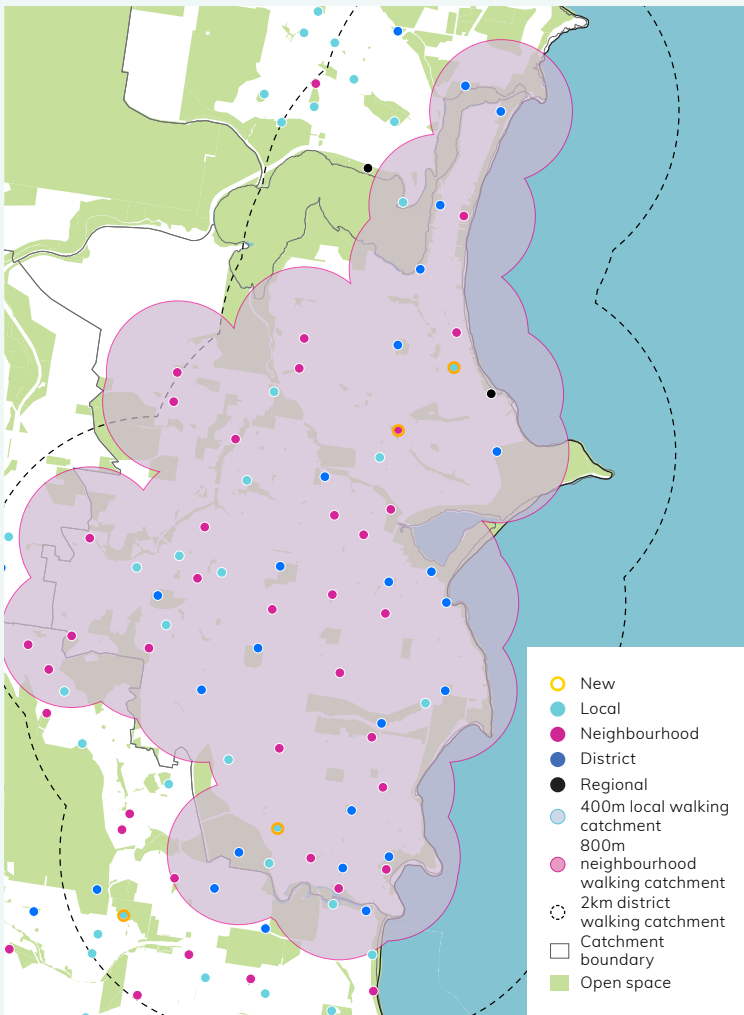
1.3 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 202 children under 15

Provision and diversity

The Frenchs Forest catchment currently has a very high provision of playspaces according to the benchmarks and relative to most of the other catchments, with a ratio of 1.8 playspaces per 1,300 people. Even with population growth by 2036, the catchment will still be well supplied with playspaces, with 1.3 playspaces per 1,300 people. Frenchs Forest has a high proportion of Local and Neighbourhood playspaces (93%), with a recent upgrade to the Regional playspace at Lionel Watts Reserve. Within the growth area around the Northern Beaches Hospital a new District playspace is planned for Brick Pit Reserve and upgrades planned for Rabbett and Akora Reserves.

Walkability and quality

Most residents are within walking distance to a local or neighbourhood playspace, aside from residents to the north and west of Forestville Park which is impacted by barriers to access due to Warringah Road and the Sydney Water pipeline. There are some areas, particularly around Forestville and Frenchs Forest, which currently have multiple playgrounds within a 400 m - 800 m radius. As playspaces reach the end of their useful life consideration should be given to the most appropriate locations to provide new facilities. The Frenchs Forest catchment has the lowest quality of playspaces across the LGA, however, most at least meet the minimum preferred standard of 'average.' The quality of playspaces is expected to improve over the coming years as renewals are undertaken.

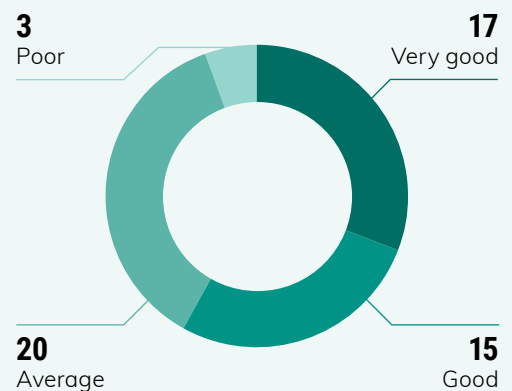


Hierarchy	2021	2036
Local	10	12
Neighbourhood	25	26
District	19	19
Regional	1	1
Total	55	58

New playspaces to 2036

- Parkes Road, Collaroy Plateau
- Fielding Reserve, Collaroy
- McDonald Road Reserve, North Manly

2021 technical condition



2021 provision

0.7 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playground per 335 children under 15

2036 provision (including 3 proposed new)

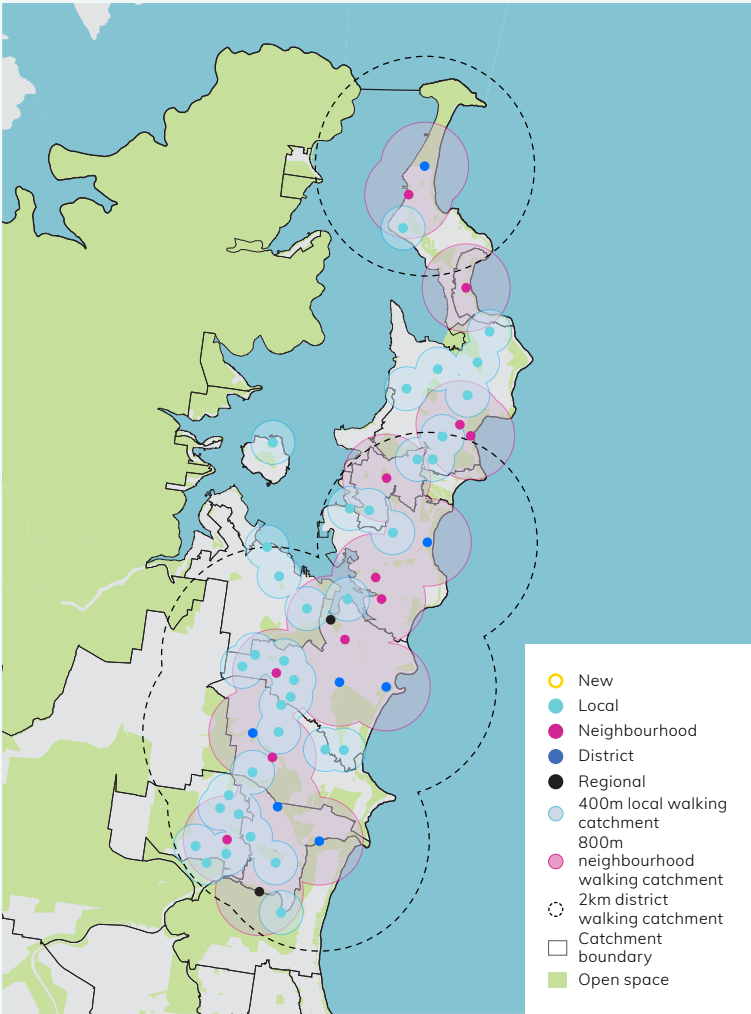
0.7 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 324 children under 15

Provision and diversity

The Brookvale-Dee Why catchment has the lowest playspace provision across the LGA and currently does not meet the provision standard ratio, with 0.7 playspaces per 1,300 people and falls slightly short of the benchmark of 1 playground per 300 children under 15 years of age. However, the catchment contains more higher-order playspaces, with the highest number of district playgrounds (19) across the LGA. This reflects a focus on providing larger high quality spaces catering to diverse recreational interests, for example, Walter Gors Park in Dee Why. The Brookvale-Dee Why catchment also has a good supply of alternate play and recreation experiences including beaches and associated beach activities.

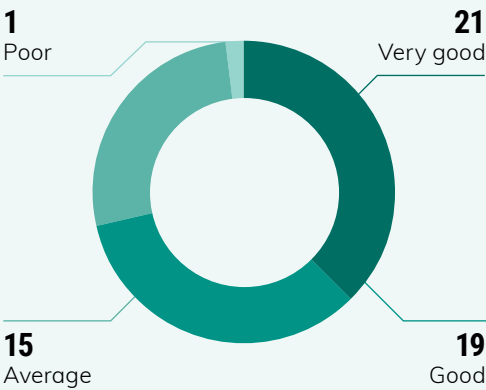
Walkability and quality

Most residents are within walking distance to a local, neighbourhood or district playspace which indicates that good access can still be maintained with less facilities if provided in the right locations. The majority of playspaces in Brookvale-Dee Why are assessed being 'average' or above, with improvements planned including at Ankali Reserve. The topography and roads in North Manly present a barrier to accessing playspaces and consideration should be given to the feasibility of providing a local level play experience at the Western Avenue and McDonald Street road reserve.



Hierarchy	2021	2036
Local	36	36
Neighbourhood	11	11
District	7	7
Regional	2	2
Total	56	56

2021 technical condition



2021 provision

1.1 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 216 children under 15

2036 provision

1.1 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 222 children under 15

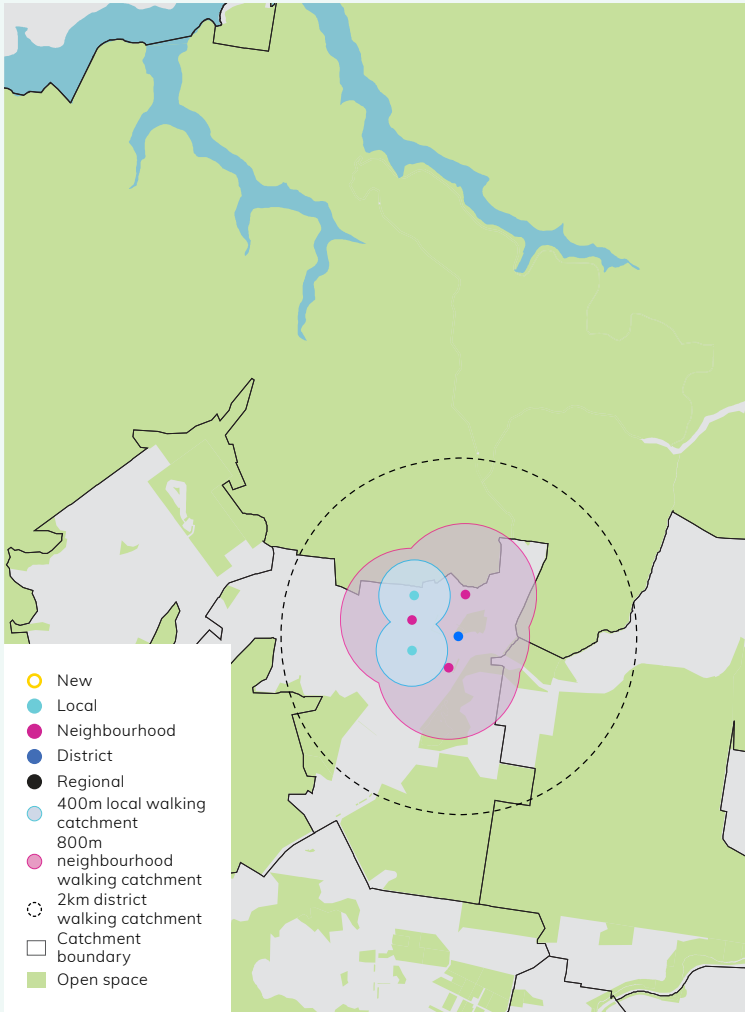
Provision and diversity

Mona Vale has a good provision of playspaces and meets the provision standard ratio and will continue to meet the benchmarks by 2036. The catchment is largely dominated by local playspaces (64 percent) which may indicate some limited opportunities for play diversity. For example, there are three local playgrounds in smaller reserves in the vicinity of the larger Whitney Reserve in Mona Vale. Whitney Reserve may be a more suitable location for a larger neighbourhood playspace when the smaller playspaces reach the end of their useful life. This can be considered with community input at the time. However, the regional and district playspaces in the Mona Vale catchment are among the best in the LGA.

Walkability and quality

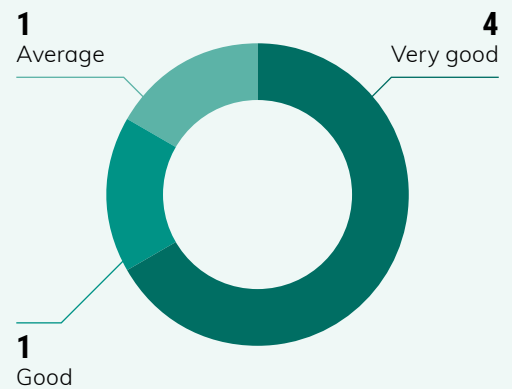
Most residents are within walking distance to a local, neighbourhood or district playspace.

The playspaces in Mona Vale are generally of a high quality, with 71 percent of playspaces in 'good' or 'very good' condition. Iluka Park (local playspace, Palm Beach) is the only playspace in 'poor' condition and improvements will be made in 2022-23.



Hierarchy	2021	2036
Local	2	2
Neighbourhood	3	3
District	1	1
Regional	0	0
Total	6	6

2021 technical condition



2021 provision

2.0 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 128 children under 15

2036 provision

1.8 playspaces; 1,300 people
1 playspace per 137 children under 15

Provision and diversity

Terrey Hills has the highest provision of playspaces per capita and will continue to exceed benchmarks in 2036. The catchment has a good mix of playspaces reflective of its population size and location.

Walkability and quality

Most residents in the Terrey Hills suburb are within walking distance to a local or neighbourhood playspace. Like the open space provision, there are gaps within Duffys Forest. However, this area has predominantly larger, semi-rural lots surrounded by national park.

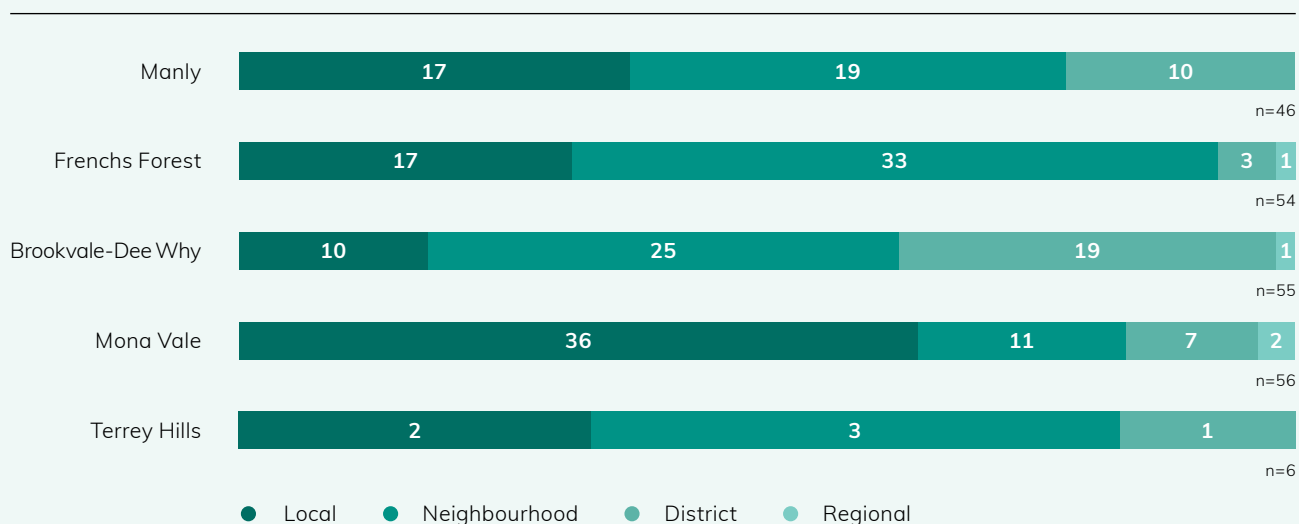
The playgrounds in Terrey Hills generally have a high condition rating, with most assessed as 'good' or 'very good'. This includes all of the catchment's neighbourhood and district level playspaces.

64 Comparison by Catchment

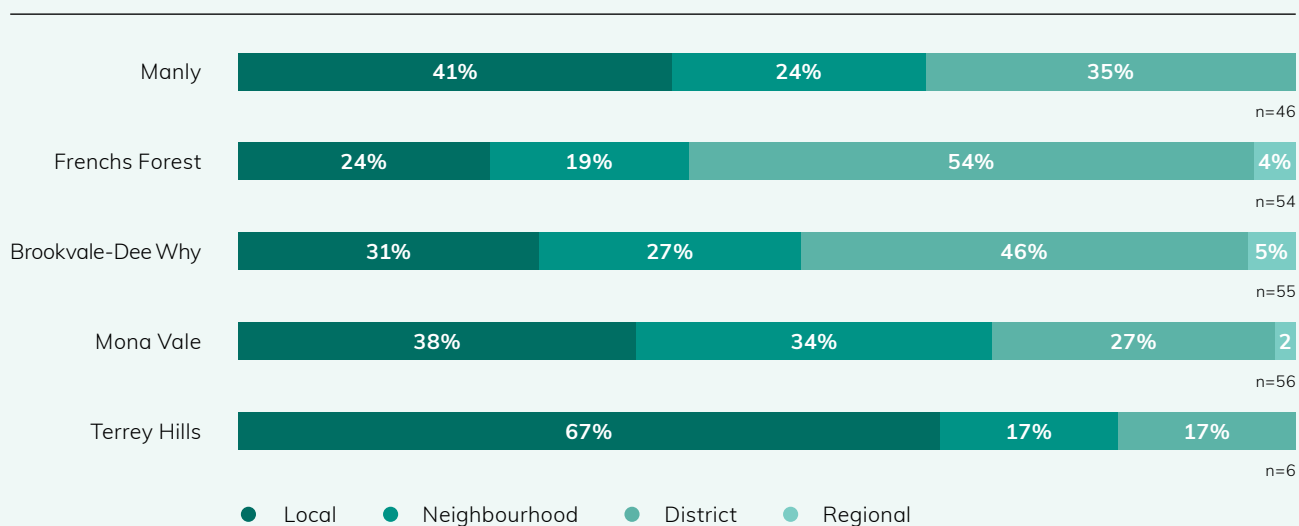
Playspace provision rates

Catchment	2021 provision	2036 provision (including 7 new playgrounds)
Manly	1.0 playspaces: 1,300 people	1.0 playspaces: 1,300 people
Frenchs Forest	1.8 playspaces: 1,300 people	1.3 playspaces: 1,300 people
Brookvale - Dee Why	0.7 playspaces: 1,300 people	0.7 playspaces: 1,300 people
Mona Vale	1.1 playspaces: 1,300 people	1.1 playspaces: 1,300 people
Terrey Hills	2.0 playspaces: 1,300 people	1.8 playspaces: 1,300 people
LGA	1.0 playspaces: 1,300 people	1.0 playspaces: 1,300 people

Playspace classification diversity



Playspace quality (technical condition)



Playspace analysis - emerging findings

Diversity

Most catchments contain a good mix of local, neighbourhood and district playgrounds which generally align with their population size and distribution. However, there is a high provision of local playgrounds in the Mona Vale catchment, which may represent limited opportunities for play diversity and a slight duplication of provision.

While most playgrounds support structured play activities only, the current mix of playground types provides some good diversity in play activity offerings. Some standout playgrounds include:

- **Bert Payne Reserve** (Mona Vale catchment)
an inclusive play area for younger children with accessible access, sensory and manipulative play, and space for carers to assist.
- **Collaroy Beach Playground** (Brookvale- Dee Why catchment)
an inclusive, all abilities play area with more challenging equipment for older children.
- **Walter Gors Park** (Brookvale-Dee Why catchment)
a water play playspace with outdoor cooking facilities and areas for free play.
- **Allambie Heights Oval** (Manly catchment)
an active playspace within a bush setting with a multisport half court for teenagers and natural climbing frame.
- **Lionel Watts Reserve** (Frenchs Forest catchment)
an inclusive playspace with accessible family toilets, nature play and imaginative and passive activities using water play and public art.

Walkability

Most residents are within walking distance (400 - 800 m) to a local or neighbourhood playspace. There are some gaps around Collaroy and Brookvale (within the Brookvale-Dee Why catchment) and although this gap is met by the provision district playspaces, the larger playspaces can be busy during peak times (e.g. after school and weekends) which can act as a deterrent for use and therefore do not replace the need to also provide local and neighbourhood playspaces.

While walkability needs are largely met across the LGA, there are some areas in the Frenchs Forest catchment, particularly around Forestville and Frenchs Forest which currently have multiple playgrounds within a 400 m - 800 m radius which is reflective of the high provision rate.