



CITY OF **PORT PHILLIP**

**ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS –  
SUMMARY DISCUSSION PAPER**

2018

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## INTRODUCTION

This summary report provides a brief outline of:

- demographic profile and forecasted population growth of children and young people in the municipality and how this needs to inform the way we plan and deliver services at the adventure playgrounds
- current services and programs provided at the adventure playgrounds
- previous research, service reviews and consultations undertaken in relation to future service delivery and infrastructure, service gaps and identified opportunities for a future service plan; and
- key findings and recommendations for future master planning and service developments at both sites.

## BACKGROUND

The City of Port Phillip (CoPP) has managed adventure playgrounds in St Kilda and South Melbourne ("Skinners") since 1978 and 1981 respectively. The playgrounds, based on the concept of 'junk' playgrounds originating in Denmark, serve as a 'backyard' for local children, many of whom live in social housing. The adventure playgrounds function under the premise that play needs to present opportunities for controlled challenges and risks to children and young people to aid personal growth. In today's increasingly risk-averse environment such opportunities are rapidly disappearing. These playgrounds are places where children can use their imagination, play, create and socialise with other children in positive ways to enhance their growth and development.

The adventure playgrounds are highly valued community assets in Port Phillip and an opportunity exists to plan and secure their future role in the contemporary context and ensure they adapt to the evolving needs and expectations of the community and the Council.

Skinners and St Kilda Adventure Playgrounds value the role of free, unstructured activity to help children and young people grow and develop. They function under the premise that play needs to present opportunities for controlled challenges and risks to children and young people to aid personal growth. In today's increasingly risk-averse environment such opportunities are rapidly disappearing. These playgrounds are places where children can use their imagination, run, climb, jump, create and socialise with other children in positive ways to enhance their growth and development.

The Adventure Playgrounds offer a unique opportunity not only as an 'urban backyard' play space, but as sites where service-averse families can be linked with support and services in a gentle way. Often more traditional service delivery hubs create a culture whereby families feel they are required to 'admit to needing help' to access services. This creates a sense of division, exclusion or 'othering' (treating others differently) that prevents vulnerable groups from accessing services. The Adventure Playgrounds negate this by fostering connection, learning and acceptance of diversity through play-based activities. Within the non-structured play space, staff can build relationships with children, young people and their families to identify support needs and refer to services gradually as trust and rapport develops and needs are understood.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PORT PHILLIP

### 1.1 Defining Children, Middle Years and Adolescence

The Family, Youth and Children (FYC) Strategic Plan 2014-2019 guides Council's work with children, middle years, adolescents and young people.

The Family Youth & Children's Strategic Plan defines these age cohorts as:



#### **Early Years**

Early years is defined as aged 0-7 years. The foundations for a child's long-term development are laid in early childhood. In these years, children develop crucial cognitive and emotional skills such as reasoning, problem solving, and how to get along with others.

#### **Middle Years**

The middle years describes a period in a child's life between early childhood and adolescence and is generally considered to occur between the ages of 8-11 years. Children in this age group are predominantly at primary school. The middle years are a time of transition, and information about this group is pertinent to middle year's engagement programs, libraries and school planning, and sport and recreation facilities.

#### **Young People**

The age group 12 to 17 years is considered the 'adolescent' phase of life, whereby young people are at a critical phase of gaining a sense of their emerging identity, and exploring their sense of self and developing values. Young people aged 12-17 are predominantly at secondary school, though in the latter part of the age group some have entered the workforce.

Young people aged 18 to 25 years are generally in a period of transition as they move from secondary school to tertiary education and/or the workforce. The young adult population is often transient, as it is a time when many leave home in large numbers and/or travel within Australia or overseas. This is also a time here there may be a need for supported transitions for families and young people to gradually introduce them to other forms of support as they/their young people move between these stages.

### 1.2 Current Demand for Services

#### 1.2.1 City of Port Phillip – Who We Are, What We do and How We Live

The recent ABS data indicates that in the City of Port Phillip:

- 100,863 people usually reside in the municipality, an increase of 10.4% since 2011
- the Indigenous population has increased by 110 residents over the last five years
- there are more eligible voters in the city, an increase of 4.5%
- the median age of Port Phillip residents is 36 years old
- top 5 overseas countries of birth are: United Kingdom (5.9%), New Zealand (3.0%), India (2.0%), China (1.8%) and Ireland (1.2%)
- top 5 languages spoken at home (other than English) are: Greek (2.6%), Mandarin (2.2%), Italian (1.4%), Russian (1.3%) and Spanish (1.2%).

The Socioeconomic Index of Areas (SEIFA) provides information on the relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage of an area. A date has not been released yet for when the 2016 City of Port Phillip SEIFA data will be made available to the public.

The socio-economics of an area are broadly reflected through attributes such as income, home ownership and family and household composition. At the advantaged end of the scale, incomes are high, a high percentage of people own their homes and fewer children are being raised in one parent households. In 2016, people living in the City of Port Phillip had less low-income families, fewer one parent families and higher average income than the greater Melbourne population, but had less home ownership.

2016 ABS data indicates that:

- the median weekly household income is \$1,836
- the median weekly individual income is \$1,087
- 23% of the population earned a low income (less than \$500 per week)
- 49% of households are renting, an increase in both in the private market and in social housing, up by 8.0%
- just over one third of residents live on their own (35.2%)

### 1.2.2 Children and Young People in the City of Port Phillip

2016 ABS data indicates that 7% of the resident population in City of Port Phillip are aged 0-7 years or 7,240 children. Elwood – Ripponlea, Port Melbourne and East Kilda neighbourhood have the highest population of children in the municipality.

Table 1: Age Profile 0-7 year old's		
Area	Census	
	2016	
	Number	Percentage (%)
City of Port Phillip	7240	7.2
East St Kilda neighbourhood	1184	7.6
Elwood - Ripponlea neighbourhood	1318	9.2
Middle Park - Albert Park neighbourhood	1068	9.5
Port Melbourne neighbourhood	1251	7.9
South Melbourne neighbourhood	676	8.1
St Kilda neighbourhood	1018	4.6
St Kilda Road neighbourhood	430	3.9

- Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing 2016. Population and household forecasts, 2011 to 2041, prepared by .id, January 2017.*

Young people between the age of 18-25 are the largest youth population in the municipality, at over 10,000, while middle years (8-11 years) and adolescents (12-17 years) totalled just over 6000, a 26.56% increase from the 2011 census data.

These figures allow us to reflect on the level of demand for age based services and facilities as well as potential growth areas going forward. Table 5 shows the 2016 statistics for City of Port Phillip's middle years and youth population across neighbourhoods.

Table 2: City of Port Phillip's Youth Population by Age Group and Neighbourhood 2016								
Youth Age Groups (years)	Neighbourhood							
	Albert Park - Middle Park	East St Kilda - Balaclava	Elwood - Ripponlea	South Melbourne	St Kilda - West St Kilda	St Kilda Road	Port Melbourne	City of Port Phillip
Middle Years (8 to 11 years old)	509	402	554	290	427	113	484	2,779
Adolescents (12 to 17 years old)	601	481	606	385	500	150	630	3,353
Young People (18 to 25 years old)	694	1,957	1,310	666	2,776	1,664	1,036	10,103
Total	1,799	2,832	2,478	1,336	3,705	1,919	2,158	16,227

- Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016.

In 2016 there were 2,028 one parent families in the City of Port Phillip. Table 3 shows a breakdown of single parent households by age group and neighbourhood. Compared to two parent families, single parent families are at a higher risk of disadvantage. They are more likely to be classified as low income, be unemployed, have lower educational qualifications, fewer resources, tighter time constraints and increased stress. Children from one parent families are more likely to face ongoing, entrenched disadvantage.

Table 3: Single Parent Households by Age Group And Neighbourhood										
Households by type - One Parent Families	Neighbourhood									
	Albert Park - Middle Park	East St Kilda - Balaclava	Elwood - Ripponlea	South Melbourne	St Kilda - West St Kilda	St Kilda Road	Port Melbourne	City of Port Phillip	Greater Melbourne	
Middle Years (8 to 11 years old)	59	68	87	62	76	19	97	468	23.1%	19.9%
Adolescents (12 to 17 years old)	105	105	136	104	120	43	154	767	37.8%	35.8%
Young People (18 to 25 years old)	82	117	116	124	149	72	133	793	39.1%	44.3%
Total	246	290	339	290	345	134	384	2,028	100%	100%

- Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016.

Cultural diversity is an important part of any city. Census data provides a number of data sets from which to examine the cultural make up of a population. Table 4 outlines City of Port Phillip's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) youth population and languages spoken at home.

Table 4: City of Port Phillip's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) youth population & languages spoken at home			
	Middle Years (Age 8-11)	Adolescents (Age 12-17)	Young People (Age 18-25)
Number of young people that identified as ATSI in COPP	12	22	64
Languages spoken at home	The main languages other than English spoken were Greek (2.7%), Mandarin (1.6%) & French (1.3%).	The main languages other than English spoken were Greek (2.5%), Mandarin (2.0%) and French (1.1%).	The main languages other than English spoken were Mandarin (5.5%), Spanish (1.2%) & Italian (1.1%)

- Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016.

Tables 5.1 - 5.3 show the most common overseas birthplaces for middle years, adolescents and young people in the City of Port Phillip. 2016 Census data shows the variety of birthplace countries was significantly higher for young people aged 18-25 (78 countries of birth) than for adolescents aged 12-17 (31 countries of birth) or middle years aged 8-11 (20 countries of birth).

The diversity and cultural needs of this population group should be considered in the future development of middle year's specific services.

Table 5.1: Top 5 Overseas Birthplaces for Middle Years (Age 8-11) by Location			
Birthplace	Suburb and Surrounding Areas		
	Greater South Melbourne* Residents	Greater St Kilda** Residents	City of Port Phillip Residents
England	28	29	57
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	9	24	33
United States of America	7	23	30
India	4	23	27
New Zealand	17	9	26

Table 5.2: Top 5 Overseas Birthplaces for Adolescents (Age 12-17) by Location			
Birthplace	Suburb and Surrounding Areas		
	Greater South Melbourne* Residents	Greater St Kilda** Residents	City of Port Phillip Residents
England	53	34	86
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	15	65	73
United States of America	26	30	52
New Zealand	22	21	49

**Table 5.3: Top 5 Overseas Birthplaces for Young Adults (Age 18-25) by Location**

Birthplace	Suburb and Surrounding Areas		
	Greater South Melbourne*	Greater St Kilda**	City of Port Phillip
	Residents	Residents	Residents
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	60	420	485
England	65	316	380
New Zealand	67	297	365
India	17	190	195
Ireland	0	118	125

- Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2016.

\* Greater South Melbourne Area refers to Albert Park, Middle Park, South Melbourne & Port Melbourne

\*\*Greater St Kilda Area refers to East St Kilda, West St Kilda, St Kilda Road, St Kilda, Balacava, Elwood & Ripponlea

Disclaimer: Table totals may not equate with other similar tables due to randomisation of small numbers and percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding of decimal places and rounding of the SA1 level geographic splits. All discrepancies are minimal and are statistically insignificant.

## 2. Future Growth and Demand for Services

Port Phillip's population is expected to grow to more than 167,8703 people by 2041, a significant 51% increase from the 2017 estimate of 110,967 people. Over the life of the Council Plan (2017 - 20127), the population is expected to grow by 23% to 136,3003. Population growth will drive an increase in urban density and there will be new density neighbourhoods such as Fishermans Bend and increased density in established neighbourhoods such as the St Kilda / St Kilda West and St Kilda Road, which is predicted to account for more than half of the projected housing growth outside Fishermans Bend over the next 20 years<sup>1</sup>.

This will have an impact not only on the number of services that will need to be provided but on the type of services that are provided for children, young people and their families.

*"With increasing density and vertical living, more people will use our parks, villages, roads and footpaths, beaches and public transport. Improving travel choices and access to high frequency public transport will ensure liveability for residents, workers and visitors. Our public spaces and waterfront will need to be welcoming to all and cater for different and increased use as they become residents' 'backyards'"<sup>2</sup>.*

Table 6 outlines the projected growth of the early years over the twenty-five years in established neighbourhoods. As the table indicates the areas with the highest project population for the early years are East St Kilda, South Melbourne and St Kilda neighbourhoods.

Note: Forecast data for Fishermans Bend have not been included in Table 6 and 7 as projected population data for this new area has not been broken down by age groups for 2031 and 2041.

<sup>1</sup> City of Port Phillip, Council Plan 2017 - 2027.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg 24.



**Table 6: Forecast Population Data for 0-7 years by Established Neighbourhoods**

Area	Current	Forecast	
	2016	2031	2041
	Number	Number	Number
City of Port Phillip (Total number)	6945	8,172	8,417
East St Kilda neighbourhood	1,184	1,406	1,443
Elwood - Ripponlea neighbourhood	1318	1418	1398
Middle Park - Albert Park neighbourhood	1068	937	941
Port Melbourne neighbourhood	1251	1359	1397
South Melbourne neighbourhood	676	1064	1201
St Kilda neighbourhood	1018	1276	1315
St Kilda Road neighbourhood	430	712	722

- Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing 2016. Population and household forecasts, 2011 to 2041*, prepared by .id, January 2017.

Table 7 highlights the projected population expected across established neighbourhoods for the period of 2031 to 2041 for middle years children (8-12 years). The greatest area of growth is predicted to be South Melbourne (13.7%). This is the most significant area of growth across all three age groups and highlights the importance of resource allocation and service development for this expanding cohort.

**Table 7: Forecast Population Data for 8-11 years by Established Neighbourhoods**

Area	Current	Forecast	
	2016	2031	2041
	Number	Number	Number
City of Port Phillip (Total number)	2,583	2,750	2,799
East St Kilda neighbourhood	386	407	416
Elwood - Ripponlea neighbourhood	533	545	524
Middle Park - Albert Park neighbourhood	491	388	385
Port Melbourne neighbourhood	481	452	456
South Melbourne neighbourhood	255	336	382
St Kilda neighbourhood	86	229	235
St Kilda Road neighbourhood	86	229	235
South Melbourne neighbourhood	332	468	522
St Kilda neighbourhood	421	687	713
St Kilda Road neighbourhood	108	504	514

### 3. Current Issues and Emerging Themes for Children and Young People

#### 3.1 Early Years

The vast majority of children (0-7 years) in Port Phillip are developing very well. However, some challenges have been identified<sup>3</sup> which include:

<sup>3</sup> City of Port Phillip, *Children's Services Review – Discussion Paper*, 2017

- in 2015, 2.2 per cent of our children were not proficient in English by the time they started school and kindergarten participation rate was reported as 87.9%, well below the state target of 95%
- the percentage of children with special needs has risen slightly since 2009, from 2.1% to 3 % in 2015. Another 7.9 per cent of children were reported as requiring assessment
- an assessment of our children shows that most of them are developing at a higher rate than the state average. However, this is not true for children in South Melbourne and St Kilda where rates of development were lower than the state across all five developmental domains – physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognition, and communication and knowledge. Port Melbourne showed slightly lower developmental rates than the Port Phillip average across three domains – physical health and wellbeing, emotional maturity, and communication and knowledge
- compared to other municipalities in the region, we have much higher percentages of people using services for a mental illness and alcohol and drug issues. Service usage for family violence is also at the upper end of the spectrum. In addition, as transitional public housing is increasing in Port Phillip, more vulnerable children in this municipality will be without stable accommodation (See Table 14 Below)

Research indicates that vulnerable families are typically low users of services, including universal services such as childcare, kindergarten, playgroups and toy libraries. Yet, research also indicates that they receive the most benefit from children's services, e.g. quality childcare tends to provide similar outcomes to informal care for advantaged children, but provides better outcomes for vulnerable children.

**Table 8: Challenges for Children and Families in City of Port Phillip**

Council	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Mental Illness clients per 1,000 population	Alcohol and Drug clients per 1,000 population	Family violence incidents per 1,000 population	Family violence incidents with children present
Bayside	10	7.0	3.3	5.5	1.3
Glen Eira	10	8.2	3.9	5.3	1.4
Kingston	9	8.9	3.8	8.6	2.5
Port Phillip	10	12.5	6.5	8.0	1.8
Stonnington	10	7.4	4.0	1.3	1.3

### 3.2 Middle Years Children and Young People

In 2017 City of Port Phillip partnered with City of Stonnington and Glen Eira City Council to survey middle years children and young people about their resilience through School Focus Youth Service (SFYS). The survey was conducted by Resilient Youth Australia. It is the third year City of Port Phillip have conducted the survey. The survey includes 3 resilience pathways: safe, healthy and fulfilling which provide a picture of resilience in our middle years children and young people. In Port Phillip 1,783 students were surveyed from 11 schools.

Findings identified that children and young people in Port Phillip have high levels of resilience when compared to national data. 54% of Port Phillip young people have 'good/excellent' levels of resilience compared to 47% at the national level.

The research highlights that:

- children in the City of Port Phillip have strong levels of resilience throughout primary school including strong connections with family and school
- key challenge for the primary years is bullying with over 50% of grade 3-6 students indicating they had been bullied in the last six months
- just under a quarter (24%) of grade 3-6 students indicated that they felt unhappy and depressed

Table 9 below outlines the key strengths and challenges that were identified for Grade 3-6 students that were surveyed in 2017 (n=1077 students).

Table 9: Strengths and Challenges Identified for Students Grade 3-6		
	Key strengths	Key challenges
Grade 3 – 6 1077 students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel safe and secure at home 90%</li> <li>• Eager to achieve 91%</li> <li>• Parents try and help them achieve 90%</li> <li>• Family have clear rules 87%</li> <li>• Motivated to learn 91%</li> <li>• Engaged in learning process 95%</li> <li>• Feeling connected to school 91%</li> <li>• Empathy, sensitivity and friendship skills 87%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not given useful roles and responsibilities 35%</li> <li>• Bullied in last 6 mths 58%</li> <li>• Unhappy and depressed 24%</li> </ul>

This data will inform future planning and delivery of services and programs for middle years children and young people to ensure that identified issues are addressed. Resilient Data is also available for Grades 7-12 students, but has not been included in this report.

## 4. CURRENT SERVICE PROVISION

### 4.1 Funding

Skinners and St Kilda Adventure Playground, along with three other adventure playgrounds in Melbourne (Cubbies – City of Yarra; Stonnington Adventure Playground – City of Stonnington; and The Venny – City of Melbourne) were funded by Commonwealth Department of Social Services. In City of Port Phillip this funding was also supplemented with Council contributions. In 2014, Commonwealth funding to all of the playgrounds ceased. Skinners and St Kilda Playground continued to operate through Council funding, with some reduction in services.

In 2016/17, Council decided to continue to fund the operational delivery of the adventure playgrounds and \$2.7m was allocated in Council's new financial plan (2017-2027) for the continued delivery of the playgrounds, minor upgrades and maintenance work, and to develop a Masterplan for the future development of the playgrounds.

### 4.2 Overview of the Adventure Playgrounds

The adventure playgrounds are designed for and best suited to five to 11 year olds, although there are 12 year olds who engage at the playgrounds who are transitioning to Youth Services. The adventure playgrounds are staffed during opening times and both offer programs to local children and young people. All children need to be supervised by a parent or guardian. Children under five years must be actively supervised by a parent or guardian at all times. The playgrounds have

climbing structures, trampolines, cubby houses, art spaces and natural spaces that provide opportunities for self-directed play.

The current service delivery at both Adventure Playgrounds focuses on three key areas:

- *Recreation Opportunities*: providing opportunities for young people to engage in play based activities, controlled challenges and risks, and creative exploration through fun activities and play spaces
- *Support System Linkages*: creating soft entry pathways and making referrals for vulnerable and difficult to engage community members who struggle to connect with mainstream services
- *Leadership & Participation Activities*: Providing strong adult role models and opportunities for young people to show leadership / be praised for showing leadership or taking initiative.

The opening hours of both playgrounds for the general public are:

- School Holidays: 12.00 noon to 4.30 pm
- School Term Monday to Friday: 3.30 pm to 5.30 pm
- Saturday and Sunday: 12 noon to 4.30 pm
- Public holidays: 12 noon to 4 pm

During the school holidays, activities are provided for children which include activities such as arts based activities, trivia, baking, and sports activities. In addition, St Kilda Adventure Playground is also available for party bookings during the weekends. In addition after-hours activities are run at both playgrounds two days per week and opening hours are extended from 6pm-8pm on these days.

#### 4.2.1 St Kilda Adventure Playground

St Kilda Adventure Playground is located off Newton Reserve in St Kilda and has visitors to the site that come from across Melbourne. It provides opportunities for birthday parties during the weekend, and regularly has children and families who have come into the municipality specially to come to the adventure playground.

The cohort of children and young people that come to St Kilda Adventure Playground tend to be aged 8 to 11 years, with a large majority aged around 5-7 years and 9-11 years of age. In 2016/17, a girls and boys group consisting of young people enrolled at the playground were merged and relaunched as 3182 CREW. The name was chosen by the program's participants. The 3182 Club runs on Thursday evenings and dinner is shared by all each week. Long term participants often assist with the set-up of the dinner and have input on what meal should be prepared. Recently, participants developed their own 'St Kilda Playground Charter'. The 'Charter' outlined the young people's collective beliefs and rules/expectations for behaviour at the playground. Young people's participation encouraged collective thinking, collaborative work and positive values.

Usage data for the St Kilda Adventure Playground for a twelve-month period (between July 2016 and June 2017) indicates that approximately:

- there were 8,050 recorded contacts made
- 530 children and young people visited the St Kilda Adventure Playground in total – an average of 130 children per quarter
- on average 20 families attend with children per day
- on average, visitors returned 20 times over the course of the twelve months

- children and young people who are enrolled at St Kilda Adventure playground generally stayed for entire operating hours on the days they attend, while the general public tend to stay between 1.5-2 hours per visit
- the clear majority of young people attending St Kilda Playground were from St Kilda South and West (3182); Balaclava and St Kilda East (3183); Elwood (3184) and Port Melbourne (3207)
- St Kilda Playground take birthday bookings for weekends (two sessions per day) which are approximately 50% City of Port Phillip locals and 50% from Bayside or other municipalities
- word of mouth recommendations and school welfare referrals are the main way visitors find out about the facility.

Currently, two partnership support programs are running at the St Kilda Adventure Playground during school term or school holidays, while the playground is not open. Workers from Connections attend the adventure playground with children and families to ensure they feel supported while either engaging in specific programs or in general play activities. This enables vulnerable children and families to engage with and get to know the adventure playground as a group, enhancing their sense of safety and providing them with opportunities to learn about and build relationships with the playground, so that eventually they may attend independently.

The 'Long Table Program' was developed in partnership with Launch Housing to provide support for young people and their families living in crisis accommodation that may feel displaced, disconnected and stressed. Families often lack the means to purchase and cook nutritional foods whilst they are in vulnerable situations and this program provides an opportunity to come together and St Kilda Adventure Playground over lunch to socialise, connect and build relationships in a soft entry manner.

Other partnerships that have been developed and/or maintained over the last twelve months include:

- Oz Harvest – food deliveries
- School welfare at St Kilda Primary School – referrals
- Jacana school for autism – provide space for programs
- Sunshine special development school – provide space for programs

#### 4.2.2 Skinners Adventure Playground

Unlike St Kilda Adventure Playground, Skinners is located at the foot of the Emerald Hill housing estates and children and families that engage with the playground tend to be from the local area. A high percentage of children and families are regulars and are from low socio-economic backgrounds, and many are experiencing a range of vulnerabilities which include family violence, mental health concerns, unemployment, drug and/or alcohol misuse; and risk of homelessness.

The cohort of children and young people that come to Skinners Adventure Playground tend to be younger aged 5 to 12 years, with a large majority aged around 7-9 years old. Skinners has a number of young people who have attended the adventure playground for a long period of time and now that they are 12 years are being transitioned to Youth Services. For many of these young people, Skinners is a place where they feel safe and connection so it is important that the transition to Youth Services enables young people to build relationships first to ensure active engage with young programs.

Both Boys and Girls Groups run every Wednesday and Thursday evenings at Skinners during school term. Using the Middle Years Commitments as the driver, the programs provides young people with opportunities to develop strong, positive identities whilst learning leadership skills. The program aims to empower the participants to take ownership of the program delivery, resulting in sessions completely designed for young people by young people. Programs culminate in end of term excursions for both groups, with excursions organised by a nominated leader in the group, with assistance from the staff. Approximately 15 young people attend each group.

In addition, Skinners also runs a Breakfast Club before school for disadvantaged young people in the local area. On average 18 young people have attended the Breakfast Club over the past twelve months.

Usage data for Skinners Adventure Playground for a twelve month period (between July 2016 and June 2017) indicates that:

- the majority of the children who accessed Skinners Playground were aged 8-11 years
- there were 8,411 recorded contacts
- there were on average 140 children and young people who accessed the playground per quarter
- on average, non-enrolled children visit the playground 10+ times, while enrolled children (who are locals) visit approximately 100+ times over twelve months
- non-enrolled children tend to have less repeat visits than St Kilda Playground, this could be due to Skinners having a large number of local children who attend the playground
- the vast majority of young people attending Skinners were from South Melbourne (3205); Port Melbourne (3207) and Albert Park and Middle Park (3206)
- visitors reported hearing about Skinners Playground through a vast range of channels including referrals from school welfare officers, Emerald Hill tenants association, health services and the website.

Over 30 partnerships are currently in place at the Skinners Adventure Playgrounds with key service providers and organisations to provide support for vulnerable children and families. These partnerships include:

- Oz Harvest food deliveries
- Father Bob Maguire Foundation
- School Welfare staff at Port Melbourne Primary School, Middle Park Primary School, Albert Park Primary School, Galilee Catholic Primary School
- CoPP Open Space and Recreation for young people to enrol in swimming lessons for the year, free of charge
- Port Philip Specialist School and Jacana School of Autism to enable access to young people with disabilities to the playground
- Emerald Hill Tenants Association

Both playgrounds will be identifying opportunities to develop partnerships both internally across council and externally with service providers in 2018, to enhance utilisation of the adventure playgrounds.

### 4.3 Middle Years Support Program

The Middle Years Support Program was established in November 2016 to respond to an identified gap in the municipality in relation to support for the middle years. The Middle Years Lead Worker provides generalist support to middle years young people aged 8 to 11 years and their families, and is based primarily at the St Kilda Adventure Playground and Skinners Adventure Playground.

The role provides a 'soft' entry point into the community and provides generalist support for children and families that attend the adventure playgrounds. Three main objectives of the role are to provide:

1. *Direct Service Delivery* – Working collaboratively with both internal and external service providers, middle years young people and their families through the provision of assessments, referrals, information and case management as necessary (short-to-medium term). This includes the proactive engagement of families to help build their capacity and access other services, programs and activities
2. *Service Development* - Developing procedures for the Middle Years Support Program. Building partnerships with the community and working in conjunction with the adventure playgrounds, local primary schools and key external stakeholders
3. *Service Education and Skill Building*- Providing secondary consult for staff to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the needs and issues for middle years children and their families.

The Middle Years Support Worker works in partnership with, and is a conduit between, Family Services, Middle Years and Youth Services and is an example of service integration that is already being delivered at the adventure playgrounds.

## 5. KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

A number of service reviews and consultations have been undertaken over the past five years. This report summarises outlines the key strengths, challenges and opportunities that have been identified for both adventure playgrounds. Both adventure playgrounds have a reputation in the local community for providing an 'urban backyard' experience where early and middle year's children and young people (5-12 years) get to engage in risky-play activities in a supervised environment. Internal research has highlighted the critical role that the adventure playgrounds play in meeting the recreational and social needs of children and young people, and the dual role both sites play in meeting after school and vocational care needs for a large number of children. In addition, the adventure playgrounds provide a place where highly vulnerable children and families feel safe, engaged and connected; and provide a soft entry point for services to provide information, support and referral. Both sites have built relationships with generations of families for over thirty-five years and have been identified as being integral to the fabric of the Port Phillip community.

Despite both playgrounds being well-loved by the community, little capital has been invested in the sites for many years and this means that both sites now require significant capital investment. Infrastructure has not been maintained and both sites have staff quarters, toilet facilities and activity spaces that are not OH&S compliant and require significant upgrades. In addition, both sites require upgrades to ensure greater accessibility for children, young people and families with disabilities.

Challenges have also been identified at both playgrounds which include soil contamination requiring short-term and long-term soil remediation and management; limited use during school hours; public

perception of the playgrounds being exclusively available for people from low socio-economic backgrounds; and potential resistance to change by the local community.

Table 10 below outlines a summary of the key themes, challenges and opportunities that have been identified from research and consultations to date.

Themes	Challenges	Opportunities
<b>Underutilised facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adventure Playgrounds are open and staffed from 3:30pm-5:30pm leaving the playgrounds unused between the hours of 9:00am-3:30pm. Longer opening hours could improve accessibility of the Adventure Playgrounds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both sites could be used by children's services, primary schools and service providers</li> <li>Multi functional and multi-aged spaces could be developed which would enable service provision to be expanded</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both Adventure Playgrounds have limited accessibility/usability for children with disabilities (i.e. there are no accessible paths or ramps, and there are no disability accessible toilets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facility and site upgrades are required to enable children, young people and families with disabilities to access the site</li> <li>Accessibility would enable expansion of target group</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusivity and perception</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located close to public housing, sites have a reputation of being targeted at vulnerable groups and families from low socioeconomic backgrounds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preserving the reputation of a "playground" rather than a "service hub" aids in reducing stigma associated with connecting with services and supports through the adventure playgrounds.</li> <li>Provision of a diversion range of programs will reduce perception that the playgrounds are for those with complex needs</li> </ul>
<b>Population growth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For middle years (8-11 years), the greatest area of growth for the period of 2031-2041 is predicted to be South Melbourne (13.7%). This is due to a significant growth in housing for this area over the next 20 years.</li> <li>Increase in housing density and vertical living arrangements</li> <li>South Melbourne and St Kilda Road communities are expected to see significant growth in middle years and youth populations over the next 15 years which needs to be considered in future community infrastructure planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of open space in the municipality will need to be reviewed to ensure it meets changing needs of residents – opportunity to revise service delivery models to ensure best value for council and community</li> <li>Develop integrated service response in partnership with CoPP Family Services and Youth Services using the FYC Integrated Service Model (ISM)</li> </ul>
<b>Resistance to change/service modification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many St Kilda and South Melbourne residents have become accustomed to the service delivery model of the Adventure Playgrounds since their openings in 1981 and 1978. As a result, there can be a sense of resistance to new service provision and change, even when it is responding to community needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active consultation with, and involvement of, community members in the master planning and service development process</li> <li>Children, young people and families to co-design elements of the facilities with council officers. This will ensure ongoing buy-in and commitments to the sites by the local community.</li> </ul>
<b>Maintaining soft entry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to engage cohorts tend to be repelled by the formality of mainstream service hubs and are more likely to be able to be referred to services if their access point remains informal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of keeping unstructured play at the centre of the Adventure Playgrounds and being conscious of not turning them into formal "service hubs".</li> </ul>



Themes	Challenges	Opportunities
<b>Keeping backyard feel and enhancing service delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional 'urban backyard aesthetic' has meant that many of the playground equipment is non-compliant to Playground Guidelines (DMC)</li> <li>Children and young people's ownership of the space is central to the "backyard" feel of the playgrounds.</li> <li>Both adventure playgrounds are integral to the fabric of the local community and have enabled relationships to be built with generations of families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At all stages of site development and design, there should be opportunities for children and young people's voices to be heard and input provided to ensure the preservation of inclusive, youth directed aesthetics of the playgrounds</li> <li>Masterplan should include opportunities for active community engagement and input.</li> <li>Partnership approaches would be crucial in developing an enhanced service model.</li> <li>Look at ways playground can retain its traditional look and feel – important to maintain the artwork that has been developed over the years</li> </ul>
<b>Soil Contamination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soil testing in 2017 has identified that the residual soil contamination does not present a risk to the beneficial uses of the sites, or offsite and removal or remediation of soil at the site is not required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soil Management Plan to be developed and implemented at both sites, and to inform future master planning and upgrades proposed.</li> </ul>
<b>Maintenance of facilities and sites</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant infrastructure upgrades are required</li> <li>Maintenance works required to the site in the short-term (i.e., next 12 months)</li> <li>Site needs to be OH&amp;S compliant</li> <li>Maintenance of play structures, grounds and trees has not been well organised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master plan developed to ensure playground designs are safe, accessible, offer multi-age activities and multifunctional spaces that can be utilised by external stakeholders</li> <li>Identify short-term maintenance works to be undertaken in 2018/19 which ensure site is OH&amp;S compliant</li> <li>Examine opportunity of including Adventure Playground in the Open Space Maintenance Contracts</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity and Expertise of Playground Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff have different levels of expertise and experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to ensure all staff are trained in relation to ethical practice, child safety standards, OH&amp;S, trauma-informed practice, and working with vulnerable children and families.</li> <li>Expand MY Support Program to provide secondary consultation to staff, and lead staff training</li> </ul>

Table 10: Themes, Opportunities and Challenges Identified from Research

## 6. KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Over the next ten years population growth, the changing needs of the community and Government policy reforms mean that council needs to revise the way it provides services to children, young people and families in the municipality. Continuing to run the adventure playgrounds under the current model limits council's utilisation of space and resources. Community engagement and service partnerships have begun to be developed at the adventure playgrounds and now is an ideal opportunity to harness and enhance this work by:

- upgrading the infrastructure to provide purpose-built, flexible, adaptable and accessible spaces that can be used to deliver multi-age programs
- expanding programs that can be delivered from the site across early years and middle years

- developing stronger partnerships internally across council and externally with schools, kindergartens, family services and other service providers to ensure integrated support can be provided to early years and middle years children across the municipality.

The opportunity to upgrade the two adventure playgrounds presents a best-value investment for the long-term benefit of the community. Service and master planning for the future use of the adventure playgrounds aligns to the newly adopted Council Plan 2017-2027 including the budget, the Family, Youth and Children's Strategy 2014-19 including the new Integrated Service Model (ISM), and the Middle Years Commitment 2014-2019.

## 7. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the following actions are considered:

### **Recommendation 1: Soil Management Plan**

As identified by the Environmental Auditor, GHD develop and implement a Soil Management Plan by 30 June 2018.

### **Recommendation 2: Minor Capital and Maintenance Works**

Undertake minor capital and maintenance works at both adventure playgrounds to ensure both sites comply with OH&S requirements and enable play activities to be well managed, safe and accessible. Works to include minor upgrades to toilet and staffing facilities, gate monitoring systems, and maintenance as per OH&S audit at both playgrounds.

### **Recommendation 3: Adventure Playground Service Plan**

Develop a new Service Plan for both adventure playgrounds that provides opportunities for:

- both sites to be made available for use by schools, kindergartens, childcare centres, playgroups, and service providers during school hours
- expansion of City of Port Phillip's generalist, universal service delivery from the sites delivering programs such as therapeutic arts programs, homework clubs, peer leadership programs, community gardens; volunteer programs for past users and/or parents; parent forums and workshops; and programs for special needs groups
- enhanced service integration across City of Port Phillip's children's services, family support service, middle years and youth services. This could include building upon the Middle Years Support Program and/or the Transition to Youth Program and developing virtual hub program with Clarendon Family Centre and Bubup Nairn
- enhanced collaboration and partnerships to be developed with external stakeholders including schools, community organisations, early years and middle years services to deliver programs that continue to meet the current and emerging needs of local children and young people.

### **Recommendation 4: Master Plan for Both Sites**

Develop a Master Plan that provides a future for the development of the infrastructure of both adventure playgrounds that complies to appropriate Australian standards, meets Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements and represents principles of Universal Design. This would ensure purpose built environments that would enable a new endorsed service delivery model to be delivered (as outlined in Recommendation 3). Considerations for the Master Plan would include:

- provide strategic advice on asset life, spatial design and infrastructure investment

- be informed by active consultation with internal Council Departments, children, young people and families, community members and services providers; and service planning
- be multi-layered incorporating buildings, outdoor space, play equipment, service scope and service potential
- provide a blueprint for the design of infrastructure at both sites that includes, but is not limited to, the following design elements:
  - facilities are fit for purpose, adaptable and flexible
  - cater for multiple ages and abilities
  - offer multi-purpose facilities that can be used for a range of activities
  - maintain the traditional 'urban backyard' aesthetic;
  - children and youth-friendly
  - offer a balance of outdoor/indoor space
  - safe and accessible
  - environmentally sustainable
  - meet current and future needs of the community; and
  - continue to offer well managed risky-play activities as their primary function.