Playground Asset Management Plan

December 2013

Knox City Council

Knox City Council

Playground
Asset Management Plan

December 2013

Executive Summary

Knox City Council is responsible for the management of 208 playgrounds in open space reserves. In addition to these, there are a further 71 playgrounds as part of Council early years facilities. Formal constructed playgrounds have historically been provided and managed by Council as a means of encouraging outdoor play and recreation for children. These assets support the Council services of Open Space Management and Early Years Education and Care. The overarching objectives for play space provision are outlined in Council's Play Space Plan and there is integration between that document and this Asset Management Plan. Like other infrastructure for which Council has responsibility, it is critical that these playground assets are managed appropriately and responsibly. This Asset Management Plan is intended to assist Council as it works towards more proactive and sustainable management of its playgrounds.

The draft Plan was open for public comment in October 2013.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

- This Plan forms part of a suite of asset management plans previously adopted by Council.
- It has been developed to provide a strategic and practical framework for the management, protection and care of Council's playgrounds.
- A list of assets considered in this Plan is provided in **Attachment 1**.
- Development and adoption of this Plan meets a number of Council objectives as well as the requirements of State and Federal Governments.
- Implementation of this Plan is expected to contribute to delivery of the following City Plan Strategies:
    1. Maintain and further enhance the range and quality of services available to Knox residents that support positive development for early childhood and young people.
    2. Public infrastructure and open space is maintained and improved to support a vibrant community life in Knox.
    3. Promote accessible opportunities to participate in leisure and recreation activities, through provision of public infrastructure and support to sporting and leisure groups in Knox.

Chapter 2 – Asset Knowledge

- Council is responsible for the management of playground assets worth approximately $5.6M (current replacement cost June 2012).
- Data regarding Council owned and managed playgrounds is stored within Council's asset management information system (Lifecycle) and the Geographic Information System (GIS).
- In early years facilities, Council has delegated many responsibilities (including playground management) to the relevant committee.
- Most playground equipment has a notional economic life of 20 years, although it is Council's practice to intervene at an earlier age based on condition.
- A proposed hierarchy has been developed by expanding on the one in the Play Space Plan. It provides the opportunity to better facilitate prioritisation of Council's renewal, upgrade, inspection and maintenance programs.

- Playground maintenance funding largely focuses on the inspection and maintenance of constructed infrastructure. Maintenance of the surrounding landscape is captured under a number of different parks maintenance accounts.

Chapter 3 – Current Asset Performance

- In 2012-13, a playground safety and condition audit was undertaken. It included:
    1. Collection of inventory data
        - Play equipment type, number and material
        - Miscellaneous equipment type, number and material
    2. Collection of condition, age and remaining life data
    3. Assessment of accessibility
    4. Hazard identification
- Data had not been collected in this format before, so it was not possible to assess condition over time.
- The majority of open space playgrounds (51%) were reported to be in a Fair condition. Only 8% were in a Poor condition.
- 25% of early years playgrounds were reported to be in a Poor or Failed condition.
- Council's resources enable all open space playgrounds to currently be inspected on a maximum five week cycle.
- Safety audits are undertaken on an annual basis by external contractors, in addition to proactive inspections undertaken by Council staff.
- The vast majority of reactive maintenance issues (from customers) are rectified promptly in accordance with Council's timeframes.
- No public liability claims, attributable to a Council playground issue, have been made against Council in the last ten years.
- Risk taking is considered an inherent part of play and of child development. Opportunities to learn to take graduated risks in safe settings means playground risks must be treated in a different way from other risk management issues.

Chapter 4 – Understanding Community Expectations & Demand

- The Council services of Open Space Management and Early Years Education & Care rely on playground assets to support those services.
- Council's Play Space Plan outlines overarching policy statements and objectives for the provision of play spaces.
- External stakeholders include: local residents, early years facility users and operators, early years facility committees, visitors to the municipality and Council's insurers.
- Customer levels of service are largely documented in the Play Space Plan, while technical levels of service are documented in Chapter 5 of this Plan.
- Council currently investigates community expectations and demand in a number of ways:
    - Informal interactions between Council officers and the community as part of normal daily activities
    - Review of community requests

- Community consultation undertaken during the development of strategic documents or major projects
- Participation in the Department of Planning & Community Services Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey

Chapter 5 – Integrated Service & Asset Lifecycle Management

- A coordinated approach to the management of all phases of the service and asset lifecycles is considered necessary to sustainably meet community needs.
- This Plan focuses on analysing Council's approach to asset lifecycle management recognising that important strategic service planning work is already being undertaken within the organisation.
- Council's current and desired technical service levels relating to all phases of the asset lifecycle are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 – Financial Sustainability

- Financial sustainability requires a balance between the delivery of new assets and the maintenance, renewal and disposal of existing assets.
- Funding allocations at each stage of the asset lifecycle impact the standard to which the assets perform.
- It is recommended that Council adopt the funding levels summarised in the table below. This level of funding will enable:
    1. Addressing of the renewal backlog of playground equipment, edging and park equipment within public playgrounds to ensure assets are maintained at a minimum Condition 3 (Fair) after 12 years.
    2. Existing maintenance levels to be maintained.
    3. Minor level of funding to facilitate implementation of all recommended improvement projects over the next 3 years.

Recommended Funding ($ '000) – Medium Scenario					
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Capital Works – New/Upgrade					
Upgrades	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Capital Works – Renewal					
Renewal (incl. Disposal)	$788	$1,051	$987	$922	$866
Operating Budget – Maintenance					
Maintenance	$421	$434	$447	$460	$474
Operating Budget – Operational Improvements					
Improvement Projects	$0	$2	$2	$3	$0

Chapter 7 – Recommended Improvement Projects

- Four (4) broad improvement projects have been identified, with several sub projects. These are described in Chapter 7 and summarised in **Attachment 7.** They are the result of research and feedback as part of this Plan's development.
    1. Work Order System Improvements
    2. Review Approach to Playground Management (Early Years & Other Council Facilities)
    3. Standards Committee Review of Playground Design Guidelines
    4. Playground Maintenance and Renewal Review
- A Project Leader has been assigned to each proposed project. Successful implementation will require each nominated Project Leader to incorporate the project into their annual business plan or prepare a business case to seek funding if required.
- Implementation of recommended projects is expected to result in the following desirable outcomes:
    - Improved Asset Knowledge and Data Management
    - Improved Integration of Decision Makers
    - Better Meet Community Expectations
    - Improved Financial Sustainability
    - Improved Risk Management
    - Strategic Investment in Asset Management

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Plan

Formal constructed playgrounds have historically been provided and managed by Council as a means of encouraging outdoor play and recreation for children. Philosophies on children's play have since evolved to recognise open space, vegetation and a variety of natural features as also integral to the play experience. Objectives and an overarching direction for play spaces are documented in Council's Play Space Plan.

While acknowledging the importance of play spaces in their entirety and as a system, this plan focuses primarily on the built playgrounds (as a subset of the assets contributing to this service). Asset management strategies for the other contributing assets are recognised in separate asset management plans. It is important to realise that despite the distinction between the assets from an engineering and accounting perspective, multiple assets do come together to contribute to the overall play space, and the blurring of boundaries is a key premise of the Play Space Plan.

In terms of built playgrounds, Knox City Council provides residents and visitors with a network of publicly accessible playgrounds. In addition to these, most of Council's early years facilities have permanent playgrounds for the use of children at those facilities. All of these playgrounds support Council's broader theme of Healthy Connected Communities and its objective of nurturing children to optimal health, wellbeing and development. There are a total of 279 playgrounds (208 in open space reserves and 71 in early years facilities). Like other infrastructure asset classes for which Council has responsibility, it is critical that these assets are managed appropriately and responsibly.

The purpose of this Plan is to:

- Demonstrate responsible management of Council's playground assets
- Meet expectations outlined in Council's Vision, policies and strategies
- Meet the National Asset Management Assessment Framework expectations, as monitored by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)
- Ensure that the community is provided an appropriate and consistent level of service
- Communicate and justify sustainable funding requirements

It is anticipated that implementation of this asset management plan (including the recommended improvement projects outlined in Chapter 7) will lead to improved management of Council's network of playgrounds and contribute to delivery of the following strategic asset management objectives:

- Improved Asset Knowledge and Data Management
- Strategic Investment in Asset Management
- Improved Risk Management
- Improved Integration of Decision Makers
- Better Meet Community Expectations
- Improved Financial Sustainability

This asset management plan demonstrates Council's improving maturity with respect to core asset management knowledge and documentation.

1.2 Drivers of Strategic Asset Management

Development and adoption of this Plan meets a number of Council policy and strategy objectives, as well as general requirements of the Federal and State Governments.

1.2.1 Council Drivers

Preparation of this Plan aligns with the principles of Council's overall asset management planning framework.

City Plan and Council Plan

The City Plan 2013-17 is a description of strategic objectives and strategies for the City as a whole to support attainment of the City Vision. These are shared with and implemented by multiple agencies and stakeholders. The City Plan also incorporates the Council Plan, which outlines Council's contribution to the delivery of the City Plan and identifies priorities for Council's activities for the next four years.

The City Plan has been developed in partnership with the Knox community and outlines how the Vision will be achieved in the future, with a number of objectives developed for each of the key themes.

The implementation and delivery of the following themes and objectives from the City Plan are supported by this Asset Management Plan.

Theme	City Plan Objective	City Plan Strategy
1. Healthy, Connected Communities	1.1 The Knox community benefits from good health and wellbeing at all life stages	1.1.3 Maintain and further enhance the range and quality of services available to Knox residents that support positive development for early childhood and young people
3. Vibrant and Sustainable Built and Natural Environments	3.1 The changing needs of a diverse community are supported through planned growth and change in housing and infrastructure that respects both built form and natural systems, as well as resource availability	3.1.3 Public infrastructure and open space is maintained and improved to support a vibrant community life in Knox
4. Culturally Rich and Active Communities	4.2 Increase use of public spaces and infrastructure for the purposes of cultural expression and physical activity	4.2.3 Promote accessible opportunities to participate in leisure and recreation activities, through provision of public infrastructure and support to sporting and leisure groups in Knox

Table 1 – Relevant City Plan themes, objectives and strategies

Asset Management Policy

Council's Asset Management Policy 2013 articulates Council's overarching commitment to asset management. A key policy statement is that "Council will continue to invest in improving its asset management knowledge and planning, and commit to further research and development of asset management plans for individual asset classes."

Strategic Asset Management Plan

Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan 2003-13 identifies several improvements required for the responsible management of all Council assets. One of the key recommendations (recommendation 18) outlines that individual Asset Management Plans for each asset category should be developed.

Other Asset Management Plans

This Playground Asset Management Plan forms part of Council's suite of Asset Management Plans. Plans already adopted by Council are as follows:

- Footpath & Shared Path Asset Management Plan (2005)

- Road Asset Management Plan (2007)
- Building Asset Management Plan (2009)
- Drainage Asset Management Plan (2010)
- Open Space Asset Management Plan (2011)
- Carpark Asset Management Plan (2013)
- Bridge Asset Management Plan (2013)

1.2.2 External Drivers

In 2009, in order to foster a nationally consistent approach to asset management, the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council developed a National Asset Management Framework to focus on long term assets managed by local governments. For some time, most Victorian Councils have been part of the Municipal Association of Victoria's (MAV) asset management capacity building approach, the STEP program. The development of a National Asset Management and Financial Planning Assessment Framework for Local Government provides the assessment framework of the STEP program, and enables benchmarking and reporting to be undertaken at both State and National levels. One of the eleven elements of this assessment framework is the requirement for Councils to work towards preparing documented asset management plans for all material asset categories. The framework also outlines key inclusions and components of a typical asset management plan, which are consistent with the recommendations of the International Infrastructure Management Manual (IIMM).

The IIMM notes that there are benefits in accepting limited objectives for the first asset management plan and recommends that an organisation wishing to implement asset management effectively should produce a plan now, recognise its deficiencies and undertake the necessary improvement activities to enhance the plan. The IIMM recommends ***core*** asset management plans address and include best available current information, and include the following:

- Random condition/performance sampling
- A simple risk assessment to identify critical assets
- Documentation of existing levels of service
- A contrast of existing management strategies with opportunities for improvement
- Prioritisation of capital works using simple ranking criteria
- Basic financial forecasting
- An identification of priorities for future asset management plan development
- Performance measures

The development of this Playground Asset Management Plan meets and exceeds the requirements of a core asset management plan, while at the same time acknowledging improvements required to begin progressing towards a more advanced level.

1.3 Plan Scope

Council's current asset knowledge and approach to playground asset management is evaluated in this Plan. Recent performance, as measured by asset condition, risk exposure, maintenance performance and financial sustainability, is considered with a view to identifying gaps in current asset knowledge and service delivery. Strategic and operational techniques are proposed to address gaps and improve decision making across the asset lifecycle. Financial forecasting has been undertaken to highlight the long term implications of alternative playground asset funding decisions and assist future budget preparations.

The Plan aims to ensure Council's operational practices are consistent with the objectives of the Play Space Plan.

1.3.1 Included Assets

The following playgrounds (and components) are included in this Plan:

- Fixed playgrounds (play equipment, softfall and edging) in Council reserves
- Fixed playgrounds (play equipment, softfall and edging) in Council early years facilities
- Park furniture within the confines of playgrounds specifically related to those playgrounds (e.g. seats, drink fountains)

A list of Council's playgrounds is provided in Attachment 1.

Figure 1 – Typical playground

1.3.2 Excluded Assets

There are a number of playgrounds within the municipality that are the responsibility of other authorities or private entities, and therefore not included in this Plan. There are other infrastructure assets adjacent to Council playgrounds which are also not included.

The following assets are excluded from this Plan:

- Playgrounds within the municipality that are constructed on land not owned by Council (e.g. schools, private child care facilities, commercial outlets).
- Non-fixed play equipment. This equipment is found in some early years facilities and is managed by committees of those facilities.
- Playgrounds associated with sporting pavilions and only accessible to users of those facilities. These playgrounds are small in number (usually associated with tennis clubs) and are the responsibility of the club to manage and maintain. It is expected that updated tenancy agreements in the future will address these playgrounds in greater detail.
- Footpaths and shared paths in and adjacent to playgrounds. Management strategies for these assets are detailed in Council's Footpath & Shared Path Asset Management Plan (FSAMP) and the Road Management Plan (RMP).
- Drainage assets. Management strategies for these assets are detailed in the Drainage Asset Management Plan (DAMP). Regardless of where Council drainage assets are located (road reserve, Council land, other land), it is important that they continue to be managed on a network basis.
- Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) assets. Management strategies for these assets are detailed in the Drainage Asset Management Plan (DAMP) and the WSUD & Stormwater Management Strategy.

- General park and open space equipment outside the confines of the playground (e.g. barbecues, fencing, picnic tables). Management strategies for these assets are detailed in the Open Space Asset Management Plan (OSAMP).

1.4 Related Studies & Strategies

As noted previously, this plan supports the delivery of Council's strategic objectives as set out in the City Plan, Council Plan and Asset Management Policy. Other documents that influence the strategic direction of Council playground management include:

- Play Space Plan (2013)
- Open Space Plan (2012)
- Municipal Early Years Plan (2011)
- Access & Inclusion Plan (2011)
- Open Space Asset Management Plan (2011)
- Building Asset Management Plan (2009)
- Strategic Asset Management Plan (2003)

The results of financial modelling, presented later in this document, will inform Council's Long Term Financial Strategy and Annual Budget.

1.5 Internal Stakeholders

The management of Council's playgrounds is typically limited to the Engineering & Infrastructure directorate, but there is also involvement from the Family & Children's Services department with respect to early years facilities.

As indicated in the table below, internal stakeholders include those Council departments responsible for:

- Services that the playground assets support
- Physical asset management
- Supporting integrated decision-making

Internal Stakeholders		
Responsible for Services that Playgrounds Support	**Responsible for Physical Asset Management**	**Responsible for Supporting the Integration of Internal Decision Makers**
Community Infrastructure – Open Space & Landscape Design	Community Infrastructure – Open Space & Landscape Design	Sustainable Infrastructure – Asset Strategy
Family & Children's Services	Operations – Park Services	Information Management

Table 2 – Internal Stakeholders

The key services that Council playgrounds support are detailed in Chapter 4. Responsibilities of all departments involved in playground asset management are discussed in Chapter 5 of this Plan.

A Reference Group made up of representatives from all relevant Council departments was established during the development of this Plan. The Reference Group was consulted (individually and as a group) throughout the process to:

- Ensure the plan accurately represents current practice
- Assist in the identification of gaps
- Ensure the plan includes reasonable improvement recommendations
- Ensure the plan doesn't duplicate key aspects of the Play Space Plan.

Chapter 2 Asset Knowledge

2.1 Introduction

Council is currently responsible for the management of playground assets with an estimated current replacement cost of $5.6M. Currently playground assets are accounted for under Parks Equipment and Furnishing in Council's Annual Financial Report (2011/12). Playgrounds are not accounted for as a separate asset class by the Finance Department.

The playground asset class represents less than 1% of Council's total building and infrastructure base. Although these assets are minor in a financial sense, their important role in service provision means that they need to be managed in a strategic and proactive manner.

This Chapter outlines Council's existing playground asset portfolio. The following aspects are described:

- Information Management Systems
- Inventory
- Ownership and demarcation of responsibilities
- Age and remaining life profile
- Valuations
- Hierarchy/criticality
- Recent expenditure – maintenance, renewal and upgrade

Figure 2 overleaf, illustrates the distribution of playground assets within the municipality.

Figure 2 – Map – Playgrounds

2.2 Asset Management Information Systems

Council has a complete formal dataset regarding all playgrounds applicable to this Plan. Council's asset knowledge exists predominantly in the asset register of its corporate asset management information system (Lifecycle) and spatially on its Geographic Information System (GIS) Latitude.

Ongoing data management work is undertaken primarily by the Asset Strategy, Parks Services and Family & Children's Services teams. Data management involves collation and verification of data discrepancies to ensure all asset data is recorded appropriately.

2.2.1 Geographic Information System (GIS) Latitude

The following layer on Council's GIS is dedicated to playgrounds that are the responsibility of Knox City Council and Committees at early years facilities:

- Layer 86 – Playgrounds

All playground locations have been assigned a unique GIS identifier (PGxxx).

2.2.2 Lifecycle – Asset Register

Playground data is currently stored in the asset register of Council's asset management system (Lifecycle) in line with the following structure (which was revised in 2013):

- Category: Playgrounds
- Subcategory 1: Playground Parent/Play Equipment/Miscellaneous Equipment
- Subcategory 2: Equipment/Unit Type

There is a parent/child relationship to enable all the various pieces of equipment to be recorded under the one playground parent.

For each playground item, the asset register includes the following populated fields:

- GIS Link (these are unique IDs)
- Asset Name
- Owner (Council or early year facility)
- Address
- Suburb
- Directory Page & Ref
- Unit Type (e.g. combination unit, slide, swing, border)
- Overall Useful Life
- Remaining Life
- Year of Construction
- Condition
- Maintenance (history record)

A review of the asset register structure was undertaken during 2012, and new data has been uploaded following the 2013 condition audit.

2.2.3 Lifecycle – Work Order System

Council's Work Order System is used to facilitate delivery and record maintenance activities undertaken by the Operations department. In general, Work Orders are created whenever a customer, or Council officer, identifies a maintenance issue that exceeds intervention levels. The Work Orders created using this system are linked to the asset register by way of unique identifiers.

Historically, in terms of playgrounds, park parent numbers (or site IDs) have provided the unique IDs where playgrounds are located on Council maintained land. These unique IDs have enabled Work Orders to be tagged to a specific park location when reactive maintenance requests are received through Council's Customer Response System. Work

Orders can also be grouped by the fact that maintenance requests for playgrounds are recorded against the following maintenance activities:

- PG-REA-001 Playground Equipment Maintenance
- PG-REA-002 Graffiti Removal
- PG-REA-003 Playground Undersurfacing Maintenance
- PG-REA-004 Litter Clearing – Dumped/Dangerous

During the development of this Plan, the Work Order system has been updated to enable playground related Work Orders to be tagged directly to the specific playground ID (similar to what has been achieved with bridges and shared paths).

As noted in section 5.3(d), routine hazard inspections are undertaken by Parks Services staff. These inspections, and any subsequent Work Orders raised as a result, have always been tagged directly to the playground ID number (PGxxx).

2.2.4 Capturing New Assets & Asset Modifications

In order for Council to be confident that it has a reliable understanding of the assets that it is responsible for, it is considered important to have in place robust procedures for capturing new assets and asset modifications.

New assets are created as a result of Council's capital works program or developer contributions. It must be noted, however, that Council's playground inventory changes infrequently. The construction of new playgrounds is uncommon, particularly as a result of Council's capital works program. Most modifications occur due to playground renewals and upgrades. When new playgrounds are created, or an existing playground is significantly upgraded, the data in the GIS and Council's asset register is updated. This occurs either via the existing subdivision handover process or through the capital works handover process (processes EI-100/1 and EI-100/2).

Playground renewals are managed by the Open Space & Landscape Design team. No formal process exists to ensure the condition data stored in the Asset Register is updated to reflect the impact of the works undertaken, although ongoing improvements are underway. Asset condition audits (such as that conducted in early 2013) are used to verify and update Council's Asset Register.

2.3 Asset Inventory

The table below summarises Council's playground assets. Council has a network of publicly accessible playgrounds as well as a number of permanent playgrounds in early years facilities.

Location	Total number of playgrounds	Total number of play equipment[2]
Council reserves/open space	208[1]	820
Early years facilities	71	279
Total	279	1,099

Table 3 – Playground Inventory

1. While there are currently 208 public playgrounds, 3 of them have been removed in preparation for renewal/upgrade works, meaning it was only possible to audit 205 in 2013.
2. Play equipment includes combination units, swings, slides, seesaws, rockers, spinners, etc.

Early years facilities tend to also have a wide range of non-fixed outdoor play equipment. While this equipment allows for greater flexibility in play space configuration, it is not treated as a capital asset, recorded in Council's asset register or managed by Council.

The number of playgrounds within Knox is relatively high. Apart from the City of Casey (with 274 playgrounds and a population of 252,000), the number of playgrounds within Knox is

significantly higher than those in neighbouring and similar municipalities. Manningham and Knox have the lowest ratio of people per playground suggesting a higher level of availability than other municipalities.

Municipality	Number of playgrounds [1]	Population (2011) [2]	Ratio people/playground [3]
Casey	274	252,000	920
Knox	**208**	**154,000**	**740**
Whitehorse	170	151,000	888
Manningham	Over 150	111,000	740
Monash	132	169,000	1,280
Dandenong	Over 100	136,000	1,360
Frankston	100	126,000	1,260
Boroondara	95	159,000	1,674
Maroondah	34	104,000	3,058
Melbourne	34	99,000	2,912

Table 4 – Number of playgrounds (in open space) by municipality

1. Quantities have been sourced from Council websites and other public documents
2. Population figures are from Australian Bureau of Statistics – 2011 Quickstats
3. Where 'over' is used in quantities, the minimum number is used for ratio calculations

2.4 Asset Ownership / Demarcation of Responsibilities

All open space playgrounds depicted in GIS and listed in Council's asset register (refer Attachment 1) are owned and/or managed by Council. As indicated in the Attachment, the majority of these playgrounds are located on Council owned land.

There are however a number of instances where the Council managed playgrounds are not located on Council land (e.g Lewis Park (Melbourne Water), Rowville Recreation Reserve (Melbourne Water), Wantirna Reserve (DSE)). A recommendation to document open space land that is managed (but not owned) by Council is listed in Council's Open Space Asset Management Plan, and is currently being developed.

In terms of early years facilities, Council has responsibility as licensee of these facilities but has delegated many responsibilities to the relevant committee. These responsibilities are outlined later in this Plan, as well as documented within the Preschools and Playgroups Building Maintenance Protocol (refer Attachment 2). The outcome is that the committee is technically responsible for the majority of playground management (aside from regular inspections). Ensuring that committees meet Council standards, and seek appropriate approval, is an ongoing challenge. A number of committees have difficulty funding the ongoing maintenance and renewal of playgrounds.

A small number of playgrounds are associated with tennis clubs and not accessible to the general public. They are assumed to be the responsibility of the club to manage and maintain, however this is not documented in the current reserve and pavilion maintenance agreements. They are not included on Council's Asset Register. Council's Leisure Services team has already identified the need to update future seasonal tenancy agreements with these clubs to document playground (and other minor asset) responsibilities in greater detail.

2.5 Asset Age Profile

The figure below represents the average age of all Council's public playgrounds. The data is calculated from the average age of all equipment in each playground. The estimated useful life for playgrounds is 20 years; with the intervention age usually occurring around 16 years (correlating to condition 4 on the condition spectrum).

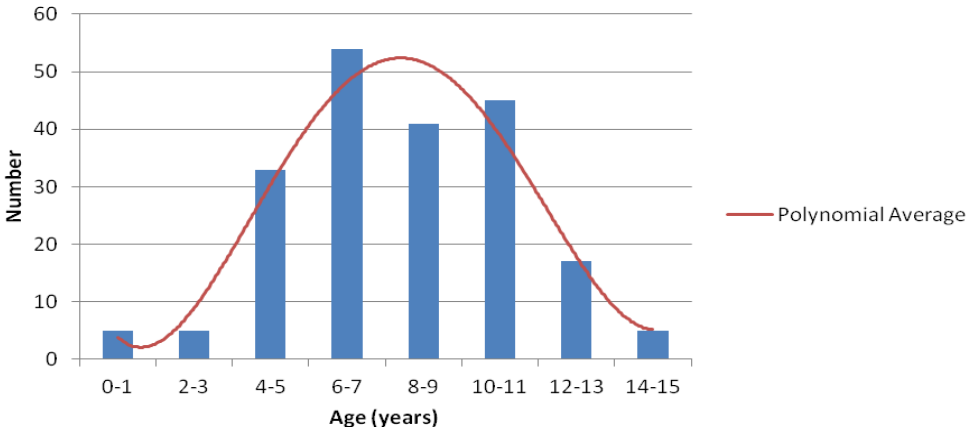

Figure 3 – Age Distribution of Council Public Playgrounds

The figure below illustrates the age of all Council's public playgrounds, separated by equipment type.

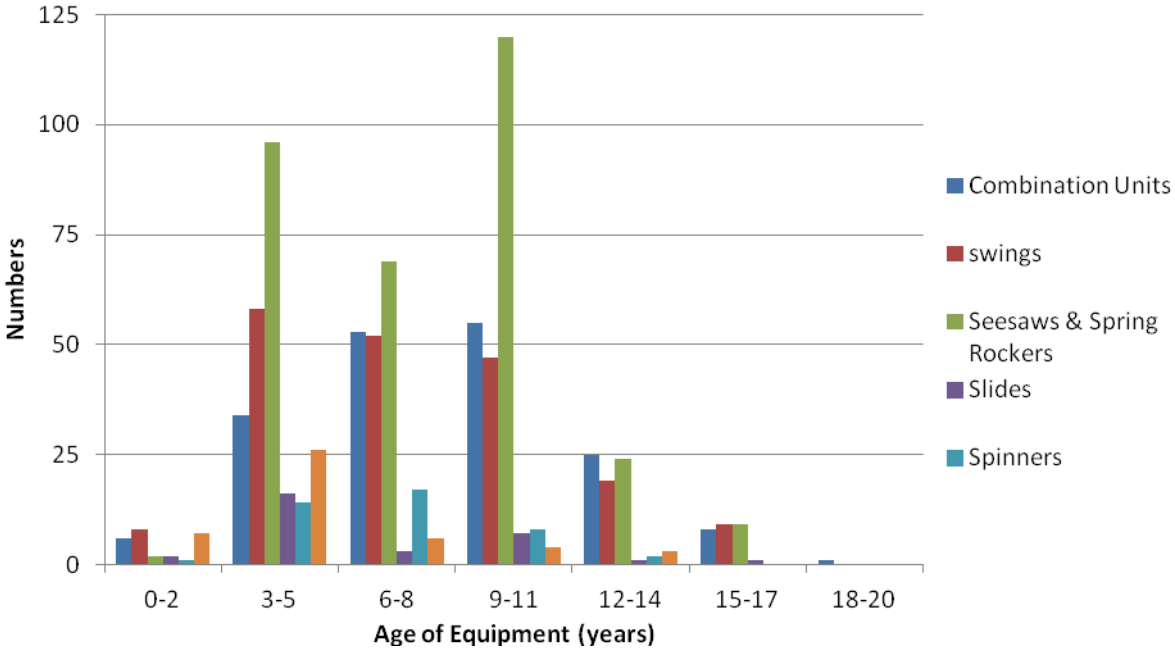

Figure 4 – Age Distribution by Public Play Equipment Type

Spring rockers and seesaws account for nearly 40% of all playground equipment. As of March 2013, no playground equipment has reached the end of its useful life. Only 27 units have reached or exceeded the renewal age of 16 years, which represents only 3.6% of all play equipment.

The figure below illustrates the age of all play equipment in Council's early years facilities:

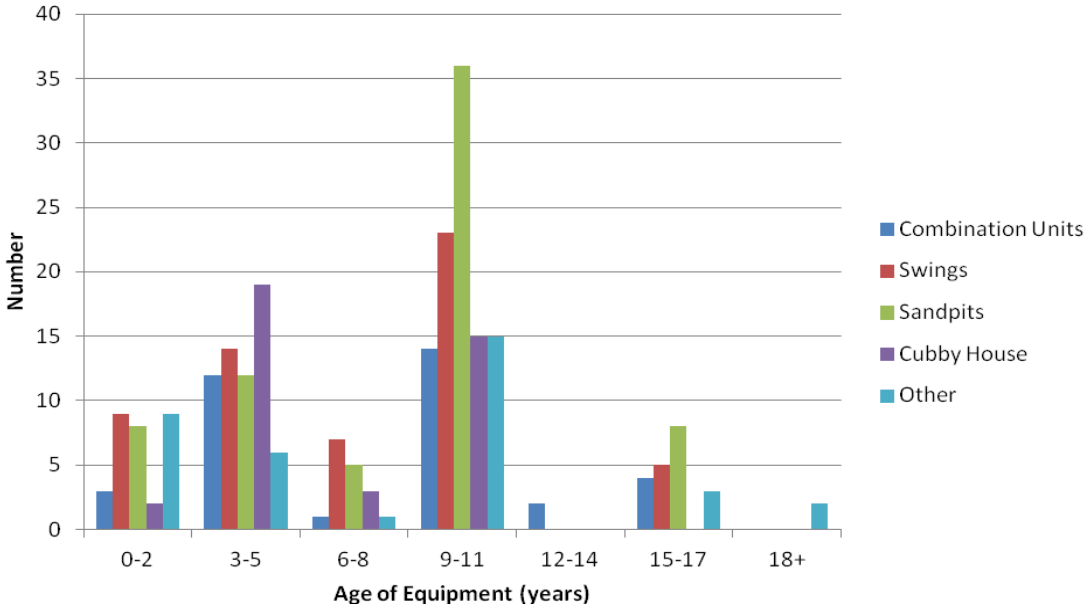

Figure 5 – Age Distribution of Early Years Facilities Play Equipment Type

The most common form of play equipment in early years facilities are sandpits. Approximately 11% of sandpits were still in use after 16 years of service, Council's intervention level. Swings tended to fare better, but the best performing equipment type was cubby houses, with no pieces of equipment older than 11 years. This is mostly attributed to the material type typically used, being constructed with soft timbers. Compared to play equipment owned and maintained by Council, equipment found at early years facilities is generally older in age (on average).

The figure below illustrates the age of all Council's miscellaneous equipment within the confines of public playgrounds. The age distribution for each unit type is presented below. The estimated useful life for miscellaneous equipment found within a playground is 20 years; with the intervention age at 16 years (correlating to condition 4 on the condition spectrum).

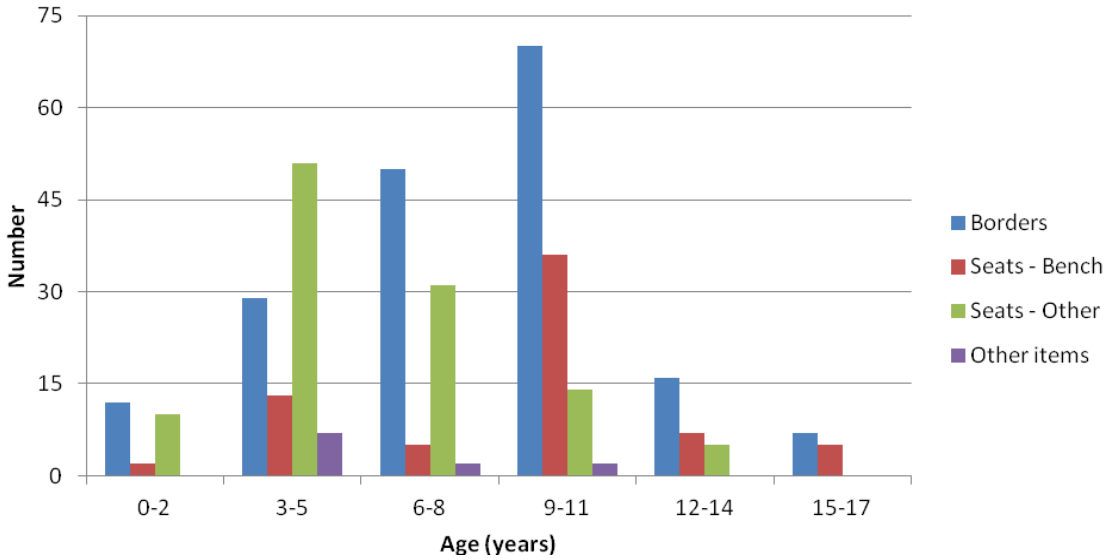

Figure 6 – Age Distribution by Miscellaneous Equipment Type (in public playgrounds)

For miscellaneous equipment in Council public playgrounds, bench seats were the worst performing unit type with 70% of all bench seats being older than nine years. This was followed by borders which proved to be the best indicator of the average age of playgrounds.

2.6 Annual Asset Valuations

Playground valuations are currently not recorded as a separate line item in Council's financial reports – they are recorded under Parks, Equipment and Furnishings (as part of the overall Infrastructure Asset category). Council's annual financial reports are prepared in accordance with relevant accounting standards, including AASB 116, as well as Council's Fixed Asset Accounting Policy. In line with these standards, assets purchased or constructed which have a value above the prescribed threshold level ($10,000 for Parks, Equipment and Furnishings), are recorded as non-current assets. Assets with a value below the threshold level are treated as expenditure in the year of purchase.

Currently no asset revaluations are undertaken on playgrounds. The value of playgrounds is carried at cost and not subject to the fair value review and revaluation process of most other Council infrastructure assets. A formal valuation was undertaken by the former Assets department over 10 years ago. However, this data is now supplemented on an annual basis with at cost valuations of works arising from new, upgrade, renewal and disposal projects undertaken during the year in question. These records are maintained by Council's Finance department. The value of playgrounds is calculated by separating the cost of play equipment from landscaping works undertaken in the parks (which often happen simultaneously). Old equipment and furniture is simultaneously disposed. The standard of straight line depreciation is then applied to determine the written down value, based on an assessment of consumed useful life.

Figure 7 – Playground works conducted at the same time as an upgrade of Arthur Kleinert Reserve

In the financial year ending June 2012, the total value to Council of playgrounds was $5.6M, with a written down value of $3.2M. The high accumulated depreciation is due to the short useful life of 15 years given to playground equipment from an accounting perspective.

2.7 Asset Hierarchy/Criticality

The International Infrastructure Management Manual (IIMM) recommends that core asset management plans identify critical assets and events. Critical assets are defined as those which have a significant consequence if they become unable to deliver the expected service level. To this end, the establishment of an asset hierarchy is an important part of the process of identifying critical assets.

A hierarchy has already been documented in the Play Space Plan. It is used to assist Council with the planning and development of playgrounds and play spaces in public open space. The hierarchy relates to the park primarily, rather than purely the playground. It

serves as a means of managing community expectations regarding playgrounds, to guide investment where it has the most benefit, to set benchmarks for provision and to recognise different patterns of usage. Despite its existence, the hierarchy is not currently used to inform the scope of upgrade works, to prioritise renewal works, nor is it used to inform the frequency and service levels of any maintenance activities undertaken on Council playgrounds. There are opportunities to better link technical levels of service with the asset hierarchy.

Playgrounds located in early years facilities are not included in the Play Space Plan hierarchy.

The following table presents a hierarchy for all of Council's playgrounds. It builds on the hierarchy documented for playgrounds in open space.

Proposed Hierarchy Classification	Criticality	Description	Distribution and Catchment	Quantity
Municipal*	High	Destination spaces based on unique features. Occasional visits; longer duration. Attract visitors from further afield. **Desired playground requirements:** *Park large enough to accommodate wide range of activities and amenities.* *(Site suitability, prominence, surveillance, accessibility, basic amenities and trail connections documented in Play Space Plan.)*	Across whole municipality or further.	4
Neighbourhood*	Moderate	Serve whole residential precinct. Visits often connected to another attraction. Longer duration visits than local parks. **Desired playground requirements:** *Park between 1.5 ha and 5 ha.* *(Site suitability, prominence, surveillance, accessibility, basic amenities and trail connections documented in Play Space Plan.)*	Up to 3km max. Located near a node within residential precincts (eg. school, shopping centre, community centre)	25
Early Years Facilities	Moderate	Serve users of facility only. Used only when facility open and typically under supervision. Consistent regular use **Desired playground requirements:** *Combination of fixed and non-fixed equipment.*	N/A	71
Local*	Minor	Serve everyday local play needs of families. Serves homes generally within walking distance. Local family play; short duration frequent visits. **Desired playground requirements:** *Park has a minimum dimension (in either direction) of 75m.* *(Site suitability, prominence, surveillance, accessibility, basic amenities and trail connections documented in Play Space Plan.)*	Up to 500m from home or 10 min walk (whichever is lesser).	179

Table 5 – Proposed playground hierarchy

*Sourced from the Play Space Plan (2013)

Adoption of this expanded hierarchy via endorsement of this Plan is expected to result in a more efficient approach to playground asset management. It can provide rationale for

variation of standards across each classification. It is possible that Council can use the hierarchy to prioritise and vary the delivery standard of:

- Renewals
- Upgrades
- Routine inspections
- Maintenance/intervention levels
- Design standards

2.8 Recent Expenditure

Funding allocations at each stage of the asset lifecycle impact on the standard to which the asset class is able to perform. Lifecycle cost components are illustrated in Figure 8 and described below. Financial sustainability requires a balance between the maintenance, renewal and disposal of existing assets and the delivery of new and upgraded assets.

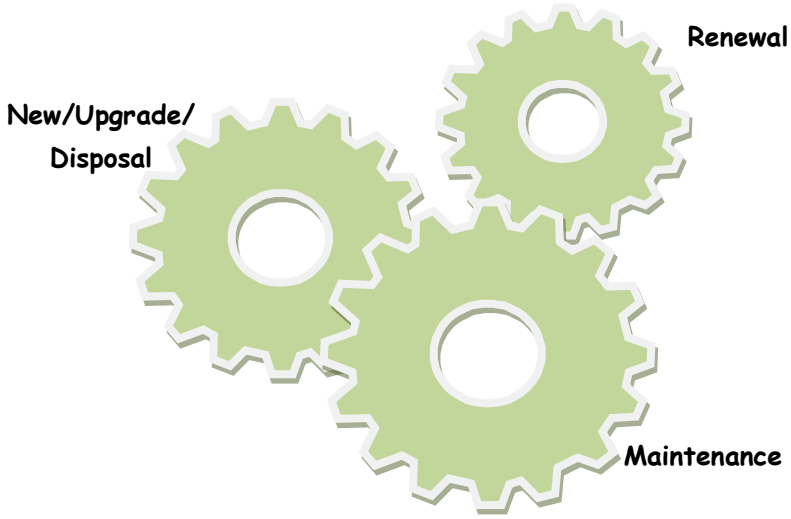

Figure 8 – Lifecycle Cost Components

- *Maintenance expenditure* is required to ensure Council's asset network is safe and functional. It is recurrent operational expenditure to ensure that the asset achieves its useful life and provides the required level of service.
- *Renewal expenditure* is required to reinstate or rehabilitate existing assets that have deteriorated to such an extent that they have become unserviceable. It is capital expenditure used to return the service potential or the life of the asset up to that which it had originally.
- *New/Upgrade expenditure* results from ongoing strategic assessment of the functionality of the network. Upgrades enable an increase in the level of service that can be provided, an increase in the size of the network or an increase in the life or function of the asset beyond that which it had originally.
- *Disposal costs* are generally absorbed into the expenditure for asset renewal or upgrades.

Infrastructure owning organisations are increasingly focusing on the adequate provision of renewal funding to address backlogs in asset investment and to indicate a sustainable level of asset capital funding. Financial sustainability also relies on having an appropriate network size (high utilisation).

The figures presented in this section of the report summarise recent trends in Council expenditure for maintenance, renewal and new/upgrade of Council playgrounds.

2.8.1 Maintenance

Historically, specifically targeted funding has been provided for the maintenance of Council's public playgrounds. The operational account, managed by the Parks Services team, that is used for the maintenance of playgrounds, is:

- 35126 – Reactive Playground Maintenance

This account covers all playground maintenance including routine hazard inspectors, maintenance staff and all materials. Aside from 3 monthly inspections, none of this funding is used for playgrounds in early years facilities.

Expenditure in this account has grown substantially in the previous five years, as summarised in the table below.

Year	Maintenance Expenditure (actual) Reactive Playground Maintenance – Parks Services $'000
2006/07	$155
2007/08	$141
2008/09	$162
2009/10	$270
2010/11	$363
2011/12	$410

Table 6 – Maintenance Funding 2006/07 – 2011/12

Source: All expenditure data has been obtained from Council Annual Reports and verified by Finance.

The maintenance budget is targeted only to the playground equipment and softfall material. The creation of newer play spaces has resulted in the introduction of items such as dry creek beds and garden beds that weave through the play spaces. These types of space are maintained under separate accounts. For example:

- 34544 – Park Tree Pruning
- 35107 – Passive Open Space Maintenance
- 35133 – Passive Reserve Spraying
- 35208 – Passive WSUD Maintenance
- 35222 – Mowing – Uncontracted Sites

This issue is discussed further in section 5.3(d).

2.8.2 Renewal

Renewal works for public playgrounds are typically undertaken under the capital works program *1014 – Playgrounds* and administered by Council's Open Space & Landscape Design team. Renewal funding levels, summarised in the table below, have fluctuated in the last six years.

Year	Quantity Renewed (No. playgrounds)	Renewal Expenditure (actual) ($'000)
2006/07	12	$556[1]
2007/08	1[2]	$492
2008/09	7	$345
2009/10	3[2]	$202
2010/11	1[3]	$519
2011/12	9	$445

Table 7 – Playground Renewal Funding 2006/07 – 2011/12

[1]Expenditure includes seats and footpath paid for with other funds
[2]One project was carried forward into the following year's expenditure
[3]All funding was directed to the major renewal of the Arboretum playground

Source: Open Space & Landscape Design team.

It should be noted that in recent years, there has been a move to retain minor pieces of play equipment in service when a playground is renewed. The equipment at times is still in a reasonable condition, though it may have reached the end of its theoretical useful life. This, and the lack of playground condition data, has made it difficult to assess whether current levels of renewal funding are adequate. Detailed asset condition modelling undertaken during the development of this plan (refer Chapter 6) estimates the renewal funding necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of this asset class.

2.8.3 Upgrade

Historically, upgrades of playgrounds are rare. The short lifespan of play equipment means that it is renewed fairly regularly compared to other Council assets. While the new equipment, and associated works, may appear to be an upgrade, the replacement play equipment is generally in line with the existing level of service and current day standard.

Where true upgrades have occurred, it has generally been the result of implementation of a broader master plan. Separating the playground specific component has been difficult to achieve.

As Knox is no longer considered a growth council, new playgrounds through developer contributions are uncommon and it is anticipated that contributions will be negligible in the medium to long term.

Chapter 3 Current Asset Performance

3.1 Introduction

It is important for Council to understand the condition of its assets in order to properly manage, value and maintain them for the benefit of current and future generations.

This Chapter summarises the findings of an audit conducted during 2012/13, to complement and update data collected in previous audits. The audit considered playground inventory, condition and accessibility.

The information presented in this Chapter provides an indication of the current performance of this asset class. Recent history of maintenance and renewal is also discussed, together with Council's history of insurance claims. Risks identified on Council's corporate risk register were also reviewed. This information provides an indication of the current performance of this asset class.

3.2 Audit Scope

The audit, undertaken across the 2012/13 summer period, gathered condition data and verified existing information relating to Council's public playgrounds (205 in total at the time of the audit).

The Asset Strategy team collaborated with Parks Services to undertake a condition audit of Council's public playgrounds and early years facilities. The audit was completed simultaneously with the Playground Safety Audit, conducted annually by Parks Services. The audit presented Council with the opportunity to gain a complete inventory of both its public and early years facilities playgrounds.

The auditors collected the following standard information for each playground and piece of equipment:

- Location information (name, address, suburb)
- Number of play equipment
- Play equipment type (combination unit, slide, spring rocker, etc)
- Play equipment material (cypress pine, powder coated steel, steel and chain, etc)
- Number of miscellaneous equipment
- Miscellaneous equipment type (border, seat – bench, seat – other, etc)
- Miscellaneous equipment material (stone, timber & metal, treated pine sleepers, etc)
- Accessibility (whether there is a footpath, does the footpath merge with the softfall area)
- Date of installation (if known)
- Approximate age
- Estimated remaining life
- Condition.

Data from individual items was aggregated to arrive at average figures for each playground.

The results of the 2013 condition audit present a baseline for the monitoring of Council's playground assets. With frequent audits in the future, a trend in the condition of Council's playgrounds will be established which will help guide future renewal forecasts. Similar audits should be undertaken at four year intervals.

3.3 Audit Results

A total of 205 public playgrounds were audited (the remaining three were not audited due to the fact they had been removed, awaiting renewal) as well as 71 early years facilities playgrounds.

The results are summarised here under the following headings:

- Condition
  - Play equipment
  - Miscellaneous equipment
- Accessibility

3.3.1 Condition – Playgrounds

The condition rating system used is described in the table below.

Condition Rating	Description	% Remaining Life (approx)
1 – Excellent	New or like new, with little or no wear and no maintenance required	95%
2 – Good	Good condition, with only minor wear and only minor maintenance required	75%
3 – Fair	Fair condition, showing signs of wear and tear and requiring maintenance and/or minor component replacement	50%
4 – Poor	Poor condition, significant wear and tear requiring ongoing maintenance intervention and/or major component replacement	25%
5 – Failed	Failed condition, badly worn or not functioning correctly posing a serious safety risk and requires removal or replacement	5%

Table 8 – Knox Condition Rating Descriptions

a) Play Equipment

Currently there are a total of 820 pieces of play equipment across Council's 205 public playgrounds. Of the 820 units, the analysis was conducted on 813 units.

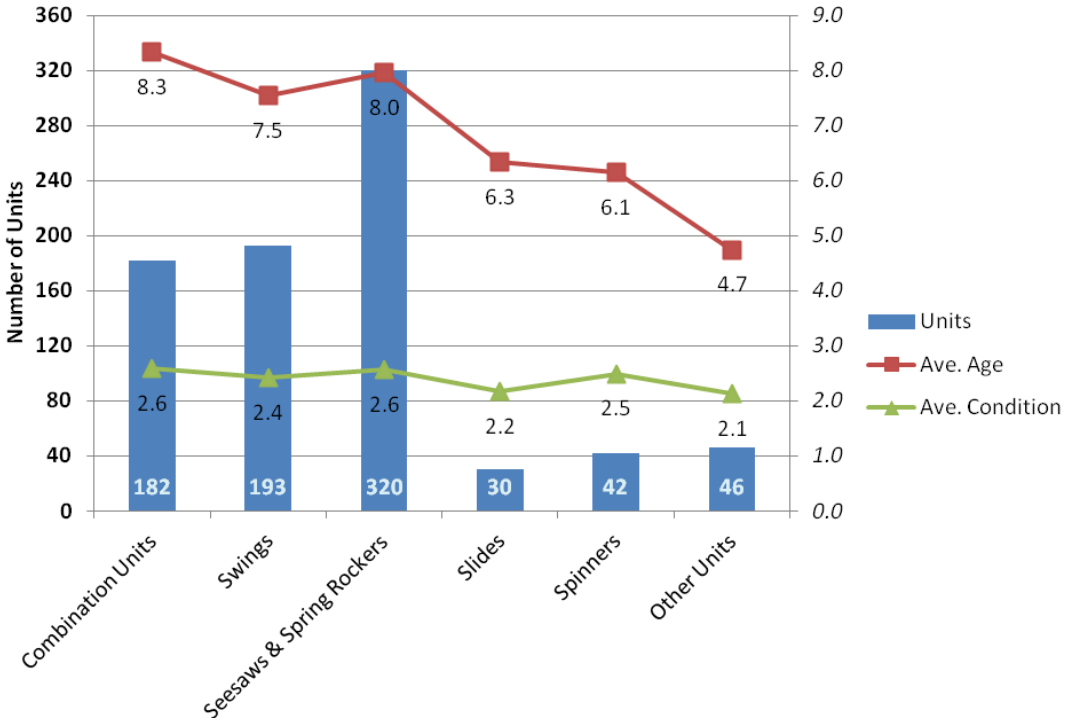

Figure 9 – Overall Condition and Age Distribution – Public Playground Equipment

The average condition of public play equipment was 2.5. The figure above shows the breakdown of the main public play equipment categories and their respective average ages and conditions. The better performing equipment types were slides and other units which had an average condition of 2.1 – 2.2. The remaining equipment types were marginally worse in condition, averaging 2.4 – 2.6.

While no equipment was rated Condition 5 (Failed), 9.3% of public play equipment was rated as Condition 4 (Poor). This was driven by combination units as well as seesaws and spring rockers, as 3% of the equipment in each category was deemed to be in a poor condition.

Fifteen percent of public play equipment was found to be in Condition 1 (Excellent), 20% found to be in Condition 2 (Good) with the remainder of play equipment found to be Condition 3 (Fair).

The 71 playgrounds found in early years facilities contain 279 pieces of play equipment of which 241 were analysed to ascertain the playground condition. The average condition of early years facilities equipment was marginally worse than Council's public play equipment with an average equipment condition of 2.8. Figure 10, below, shows the breakdown of the average age and condition of the five unit categories found in early years facilities playgrounds.

The worst performing, and most common unit type was sandpits with an average condition rating of 3.1. Over 7% of all sandpits were Condition 4 (Poor) while over 2% were rated Condition 5 (Failed). On the contrary, the best performing equipment categories were swings and cubby houses.

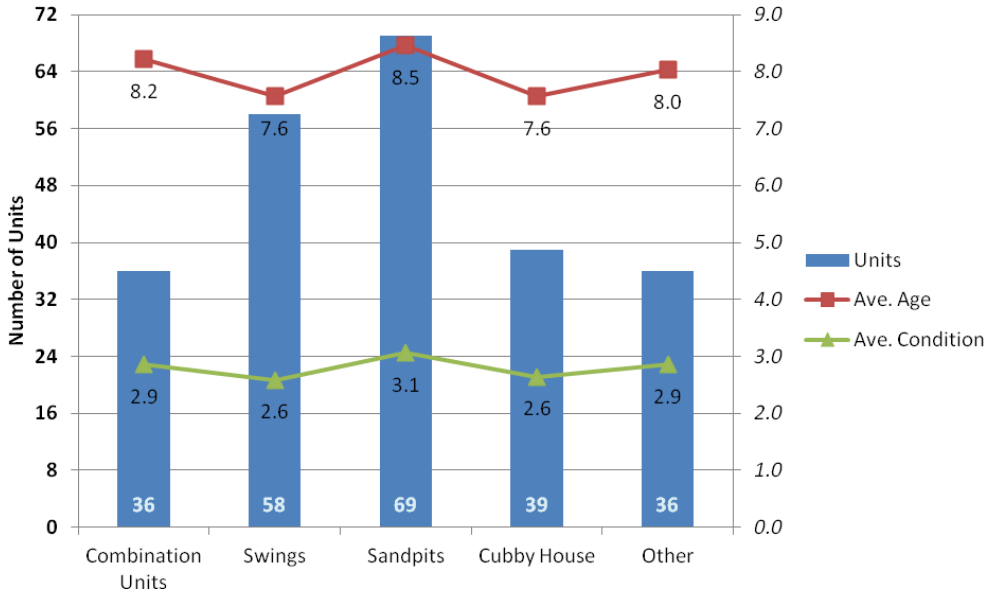

Figure 10 – Overall Condition and Age Distribution – Early Years Facilities Playground Equipment

Overall nearly 23% of playground equipment at early years facilities were in Condition 4 (Poor), which was driven by sandpits (7.6%) and swings and other units (both 4.6%). When combined with the 4.6% of equipment that was in Condition 5 (Failed), more than one in four pieces of equipment effectively exceed Council's renewal intervention level. Nearly two in five pieces of early years play equipment were in Condition 3 (Fair).

b) Miscellaneous Equipment

For the audit, miscellaneous equipment was recorded for public playgrounds only. Whilst not considered play equipment, items such as borders, seating and other items within the play space area need to be considered when calculating the value of Council's playgrounds.

Currently, there are 391 pieces of miscellaneous equipment across Council's public playgrounds. Of the 391 pieces, analysis was conducted on 374 items. Figure 11 shows the breakdown of the four category types.

Playground borders and bench seats had an average age and condition rating greater than the overall averages. The driving factor behind this is the material types for these categories, mostly being constructed with treated timber. The timber is more susceptible to deterioration due to climatic conditions.

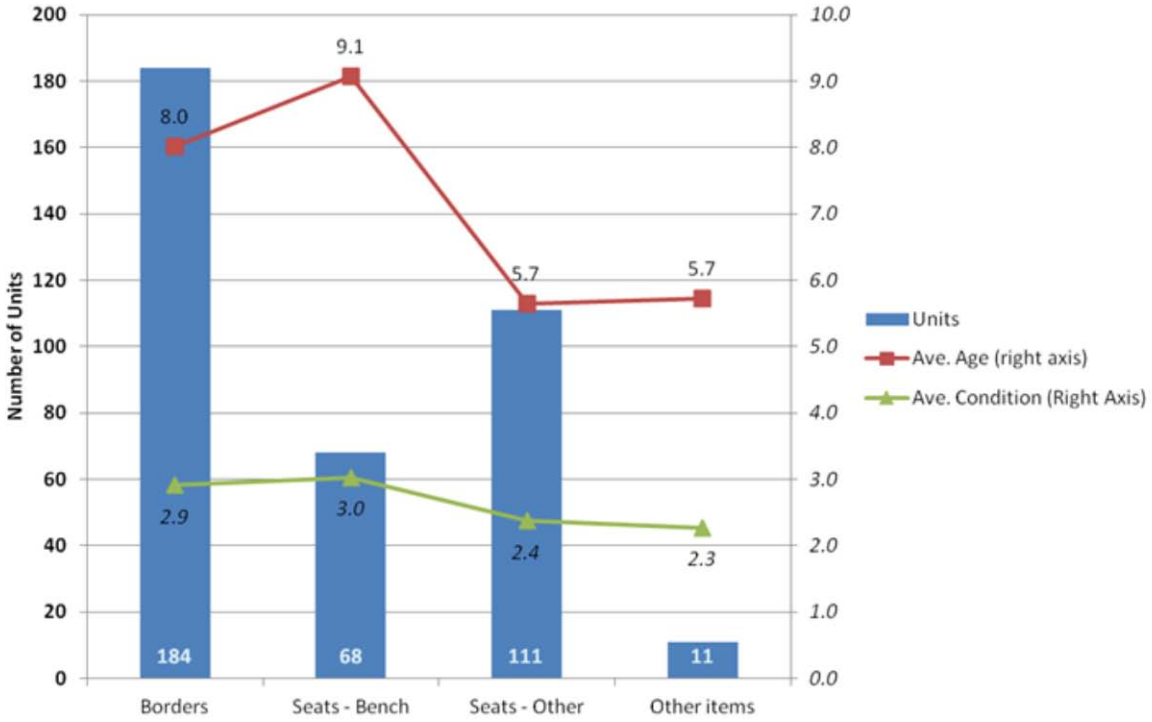

Figure 11 – Overall Condition and Age Distribution – Miscellaneous Equipment

c) Overall Playground Condition

Overall, Council's public playgrounds are in a Good to Fair condition as shown below:

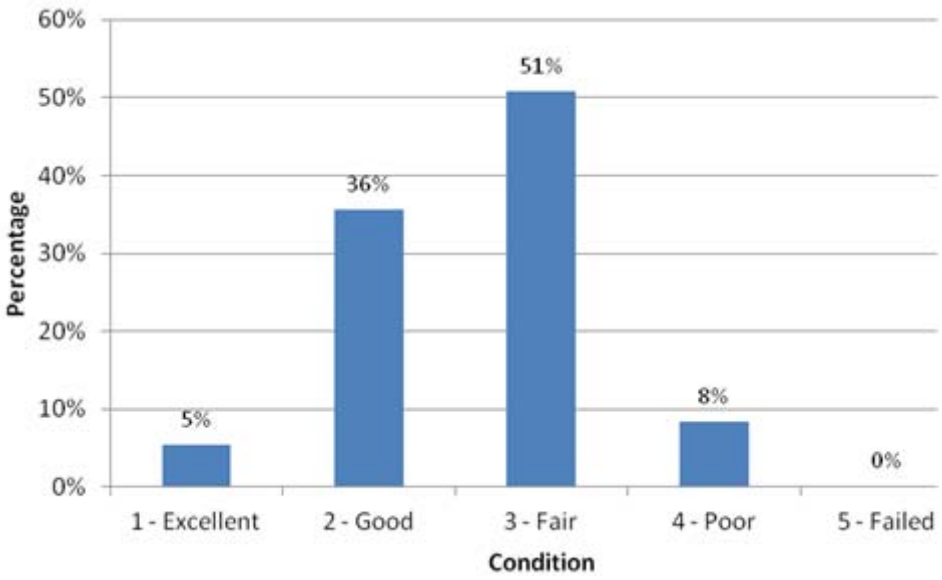

Figure 12 – Overall Condition Distribution – Council Public Playgrounds

These results suggest that the renewal and maintenance program undertaken by Council, prior to the development of this Plan, was reasonably sound. It appears that only minor adjustments are required to address the backlog of playgrounds currently in Condition 4. This is discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6.

Compared to Council's public playgrounds, playgrounds located in early years facilities were generally in a poorer condition as demonstrated in the following figure.

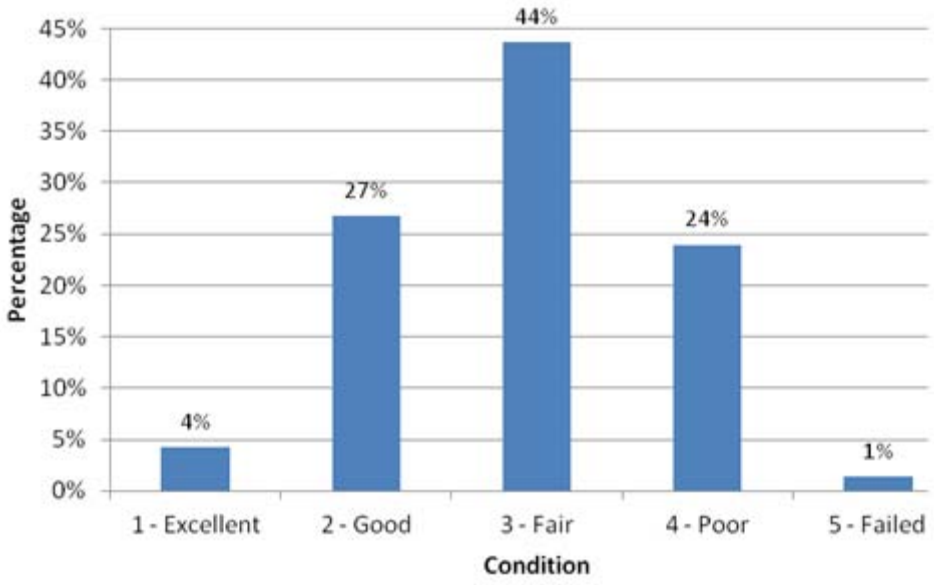

Figure 13 – Overall Condition Distribution – Early Years Facilities Playgrounds

One in four playgrounds at early years facilities are in Condition 4 or worse. This is driven by the high number of pieces of equipment that were in Condition 4 or 5. Overall the early years playgrounds were in a Fair condition.

Although not a widespread observation from the audit, there have been some instances of timber structures rotting prematurely at the base as a result of softfall mulch build up. It is

possible that compaction and moisture retention over time have contributed to the issue. Although Council does top up softfall in playgrounds on a regular basis from a fall safety perspective, at times it may be more preferable to replace (rather than top up) softfall in some locations instead. In order to preserve the longevity of these structures, Parks Services should consider replacing softfall mulch in localised areas around timber structure bases/posts as part of its maintenance program.

3.3.2 Playground Accessibility

As a part of the 2012/13 condition audit, an accessibility audit was conducted on behalf of the Open Space & Landscape Design team. The auditor was asked to record whether the Council playground was connected to Council's footpath network and whether the path was connected at grade to the softfall area or whether users were required to step over the border.

Of the 205 playgrounds, 124 were connected to the footpath network and 88 playgrounds had the footpath meet at grade to the playground softfall. The Open Space & Landscape Design team intend to use this information to inform future playground upgrades.

3.4 Maintenance History

Due to data recorded and stored within Council's Asset Management Information System (Lifecycle), in particular the Work Order module, it is possible to analyse Council's performance with respect to playground maintenance.

3.4.1 Routine Inspections

Internal

All Council playgrounds are inspected on a regular basis. Hazard inspections are recorded in Council's Work Order System (Lifecycle). This functionality has only been in place since April 2012 – before then, inspections were carried out in a paper based format and not recorded electronically. Identified hazards that exceed Council's intervention levels (that cannot be rectified at the time of the inspection) generate Work Orders to enable the hazard to be rectified within defined timeframes.

In the absence of a defined service standard relating to inspections, Council's initial objective was to inspect municipal playgrounds weekly, with the remainder of open space playgrounds inspected every four weeks. At the time, this objective was purely aspirational, not based on any detailed analysis nor monitored for achievability (particularly difficult with paper records). Analysis of the electronic data since April 2012 shows that the average number of days between inspections is 34.9 days. This equates roughly to a five week frequency.

Discussions with field staff have indicated that occasional requirements to support other Parks Services projects (typically storm related or high risk) and a lack of backfilling of positions during leave, means that a five week frequency more reflects current resource capabilities.

The Parks Services team has also indicated that a 5-6 week frequency allows more time in between inspections to conduct rectification works, particularly those that arise from the annual safety audit. In addition to this, there are reportedly relatively few issues being identified in successive inspections.

Benchmarking with a number of eastern and south eastern metropolitan Councils has indicated a vast range of non-standardised inspection frequencies across the sector, ranging from daily to three times per year. Parks Services' preference is for a common standardised inspection frequency for both neighbourhood and local playgrounds. While every five weeks is Council's current delivery capacity, ongoing monitoring should occur to ensure this frequency remains reasonable and adequate.

Currently, the system allows recording of the inspections for the neighbourhood and local playgrounds, but does not enable the separate recording of the weekly inspections for municipal playgrounds. These four municipal playgrounds have been excluded from the results presented here, although it is acknowledged that a system enhancement needs to occur to enable these inspections to be properly recorded.

External

Council engages a contractor to safety audit all Council playgrounds on an annual basis. The information is stored by the Parks Services team, and any hazard issues identified are raised as ad hoc Work Orders and actioned over a period of months. An external audit undertaken on an annual basis is the most common frequency in the sector based on benchmarking with a number of other Councils.

3.4.2 Routine Maintenance

As outlined in section 5.3(d), routine maintenance is carried out as part of the regular inspection program. History and performance is as per section 3.4.1 above.

3.4.3 Reactive Maintenance

The Knox Work Order System (Lifecycle) monitors the delivery of Council's reactive maintenance service levels. Table 9 below summarises Council's playground maintenance performance during the five year period January 2008 to December 2012.

Maintenance activity	No. of issues (cust request)	No. of issues (ad hoc & routine)	Total no. of issues	% initial assessed on time	% temp works completed on time	% rect works completed on time
PG-REA-001 Playground Equipment Maintenance	241	883	1124	90.8%	97.0%	97.3%
PG-REA-002 Graffiti Removal	6	0	6	83.3%	No extreme or high	100.0%
PG-REA-003 Playground Undersurfacing Maintenance	33	210	243	97.0%	100.0%	87.9%
PG-REA-004 Litter Clearing – Dumped/ Dangerous	44	21	65	93.2%	96.6%	87.0%

Table 9 – Playground Reactive Maintenance performance (Jan 2008 to Dec 2012)

Data source: Work Order System (LifeCycle) January 2008 to December 2012

In general, Council is performing reasonably well in meeting its service standards, although there are several observations to be made from this data.

The large number of days for rectification of playground equipment essentially reflects the difficulty in sourcing some component parts. Provided that issues of a safety nature are being addressed through temporary works, there is no need to adjust this timeframe.

The low number of graffiti requests is most probably an issue of data management. Graffiti removal jobs for playgrounds are either being categorised under general equipment maintenance (meaning that timeframes for rectification are significantly longer than intended) or under other parks/open space graffiti maintenance categories (meaning that it is difficult to separate playground graffiti from other graffiti instances). Whatever the case, better staff training is required in order for the correct activity to be used to report the issue to make the data meaningful.

Less than 90% of undersurfacing (i.e. softfall) jobs are being completed on time – 120 days is rather generous particularly given the importance of softfall in mitigating risks to children in playgrounds. Considering that most of these issues are identified by Council staff, better management of contractors is required to ensure timeframes are achieved.

The rectification performance for litter clearing also warrants further investigation. Given the short timeframe to respond, it is possible that communication to field staff is not happening in a timely fashion or that rubbish collection is only being programmed on certain days of the week.

3.4.4 Insurance Claims History

Insurance claims are managed by Council's Safety, Risk and Wellbeing team. Claims are separated into two categories:

- Public Liability – where a person has been injured or property has been damaged and the claimant is seeking damages from Council.
- Property – claims made for loss or damage to Council's infrastructure including building and contents.

Overall, playgrounds have not posed a significant insurance or personal injury risk to Council.

3.4.5 Public Liability

An analysis was undertaken of all over-excess (greater than $10,000) and under-excess public liability claims received in the 17 year period (from 1994 and 2011). Over-excess public liability claims are managed by Council's insurer MAV Insurance (formerly Civic Mutual Plus – CMP).

Claims received by Council relate to all aspects of Council activities and include claims arising from Council assets or from professional advice. To date there have been four claims for playgrounds made against Council, of which three exceeded excess. None have occurred in the past ten years. Playgrounds therefore account for just over 1% of all claims – compared to footpaths which account for over 25% of all claims.

The table below summarises the four claims made against Council relating to playgrounds. The location of each incident is categorised, as well as the cause and resultant damage/injury. One of the claims was under excess, while the other three claims were over excess.

Year	Cause	Excess	Comment
1995	Swung on swivel swing and bolt came undone	Over	Occurred at Templeton Pre-School.
1997	Fell off flying fox	Under	Melanie Close Playground
1997	Slipped and fell from slide	Over	Rowville Community Centre
2002	Fell from steam engine	Over	Bayswater Park

Table 10 – Breakdown of public liability claims - Playgrounds

Data source: MAV Insurance (formerly Civic Mutual Plus)

The lack of claims since 2002 suggests Council is managing these assets well. It is worth noting that there have been changes made to relevant State Government legislation between late 2002 and early 2004 (Limitation of Actions (Amendment) Act 2002, Wrongs and Other Acts (Public Liability Insurance Reform) Act 2002, Wrongs and Limitation of Actions Acts (Insurance Reform) Act 2003, Wrongs and Other Acts (Law of Negligence) Act 2003). The legislative changes were intended to codify the law of negligence to shift the burden of truth to the plaintiff and broaden the base of defence against claims of negligence.

Despite the impact of legislative changes, it is important that Council continues to maintain, renew and upgrade its playgrounds to minimise public safety and property risks. Proactive asset management measures that reduce risk will enable Council to generate savings by reducing insurance premiums and claims.

3.4.6 Property

Council is part of JLT Discretionary Trusts where a number of Councils have pooled together a fund to use before claiming against their respective insurance companies. Once the funds held with JLT are consumed for the year, Council forwards property claims onto Vero, its insurer.

Over the previous six years, Council has claimed approximately $200,000 in property losses for playgrounds and related equipment, averaging 0.6% of the asset class annually. Significant vandalism would be an example of such claims. Interpretation is required as playgrounds are diversely categorised in insurance reports, often under open space or buildings.

Successful claims are held by Council's Insurance and Risk unit in a separate account. Funds are not automatically returned to Open Space & Landscape Design for the replacement of playgrounds, or Park Services to repair damage. It is the responsibility of individual departments to submit internal applications to claim these funds to offset any necessary capital or operational expenditure. Funds received by the Insurance and Risk unit that are not claimed by the relevant departments by the end of the financial year are transferred to general revenue.

3.5 Corporate Risk Register

Council's Corporate Risk Register includes risks relating to Council's public playgrounds. These risks are identified from sources such as audits (internal and external), external reports, plans and strategies and annual business planning. The identification, assessment, evaluation, treatment and monitoring of risks are undertaken in accordance with Council's Integrated Risk Management procedure. The frequency of required reporting depends on the rating level assigned to each risk. Risks currently reported in Council's risk register relating to playground assets and management are summarised in Table 11 below.

Item	Risk Category	Risk Description
Ra4.14	Asset Management (Playground Risks)	Unsuitable playgrounds
Ra4.12	Asset Management (Open Space Risks)	Open Space hazards – Hazards arising from passive Open Space including furniture.

Table 11 – Extract of Corporate Risk Register

Risk is an inherent part of life and is a productive tool at enabling children to recognise and deal with dangers as they arise. Council's Play Space Plan indicates that it is preferable for children to have opportunities to learn to take graduated risks in settings where the price of failure is not life threatening or likely to cause serious injury.

According to the Play Space Plan, play spaces need to:

- Offer children the chance to acquire skills at their own pace
- Allow children to opt in or out by choice, and
- Aim to also provide some climbing opportunities that are not purpose designed (such as trees) and therefore allow children to test their skills judgement, within the relative safety of a park.

The risks identified in Table 11 are managed by the relevant responsible senior officers, with residual risks generally reduced in the process. Progress is reported in accordance with the risk level and Council's Integrated Risk Management procedure.

Chapter 4 Understanding Community Expectations & Demand

4.1 Introduction

Council's playground assets have been constructed to support Council's objectives regarding play provision for children. As a result, community expectations and demand for playgrounds typically arise from demand for improvements in the functionality and location of play spaces. Given this relationship, this Chapter summarises the service that these playground assets support and the current approach to understanding community expectations. It also outlines key factors that may impact future demand.

Council's Open Space & Landscape Design team has primary strategic responsibility for ensuring that Council's playgrounds and play spaces meet community expectations within legislative and other practical constraints. This team therefore has responsibility to remain abreast of changes in all factors likely to affect community expectations and demand. The information presented in this Chapter is intended to complement the ongoing strategic demand management and planning work undertaken by the Open Space & Landscape Design team, as well as the information contained within the Play Space Plan.

The Play Space Plan recommends the following policy statement on play to drive decision making on play provision:

- Knox City Council recognises the significance of play in all children's development
- Knox City Council recognises the significance of the physical environment in providing opportunities for outdoor play
- Knox City Council recognises that risk-taking is an inherent part of play and of child development and therefore must be treated in a different way from other risk management issues.

4.2 Relevant Services

The following services make use of Council's playgrounds. The services, objectives and service owners listed here, have been documented by Council's Corporate Planning and Performance Department, which is currently developing a Knox Service Planning Framework that will be used for the preparation of Service Plans for all services provided by Council to the community.

Service	Service Objective	Service Owner
Open Space Management	This service provides planning, design, consultation and implementation of passive open space. The service also includes the development of policy and provision of design expertise for other areas of Council.	Community Infrastructure
Early Years Education & Care	This service provides individualised opportunities for fun, enjoyment, and playing to meet all children's learning needs in recognition of the rights of the child and that these are the most important vehicles for learning during childhood. The service responds to the Australian and Victorian Government's Early Childhood Reform Agenda in relation to service planning and provision for all children and families across the tiered service system.	Family & Children's Services

Table 12 – Council Services that Use Council Playgrounds

Based on the Knox Service Planning Framework, each service owner has responsibility for preparing a Service Plan that defines the strategic direction and objectives of each service. Each Service Plan is expected to outline how Council aims to ensure that all Council programs and Council assets (including playgrounds) support delivery of desired service objectives. Development of the Service Plans is therefore expected to include detailed consideration of current and future community expectations. In some respects, the Play Space Plan effectively meets some objectives of a Service Plan.

4.3 Relevant Service Planning Documents

It is clear from the previous section that two departments have a direct service involvement with playground provision and management. Strategic documents that guide playground planning are listed below.

- Municipal Early Years Plan (2011)
- Open Space Plan (2012)
- Play Space Plan (2013)

The Municipal Early Years Plan is the key strategy for Council which articulates the vision Council has for children and families in the Knox community. Although it is a fairly broad strategy, it has a number of strategic priority action areas which have relevance to playgrounds. These action areas relate to the need for access to quality services, facilities and places, which covers both the need for playgrounds in open space as well as those incorporated as part of early years facilities.

The Play Space Plan provides a "theoretical and practical framework for planning, for design, for management, and for the future direction of individual parks and public play spaces across Knox." It is a more detailed document which aims to support the general service objectives of increasing the variety of play experiences for children in Knox and incorporating natural play opportunities with broader park improvements. The document recognises the importance of outdoor play and recreation and advocates for a diverse, inclusive and geographically accessible range of quality play experiences for children and families. This Play Space Plan considers current and future demands, proposes a hierarchy of play spaces, outlines ten characteristics that deliver best value for play in parks and documents design guidelines and basic principles. The scope of this strategy is limited to play spaces within open space, although it considers more than just play equipment, meaning that there is not necessarily a one-for-one relationship with the Play Space Plan and the Playground Asset Management Plan.

4.4 Levels of Service

Levels of service essentially act as management targets that facilitate decision making. They define the standard at which Council aims to provide assets for community use. The setting of service levels enables Council to balance conflicting priorities and assess the performance of Council's asset management strategies.

In recent years, the Local Government and Planning Ministers' Council has developed a nationally consistent framework for asset planning and management. Framework 2 (Asset Planning and Management) highlights the Federal Government's intention for State and Territory governments to develop mechanisms to ensure that local Councils:

- Define levels of service in consultation with the community
- Establish cost and quality standards for services delivered from Council assets
- Regularly review services in consultation with the community to determine the financial impact of a change in service levels

To support delivery of the National Framework objectives, the IPWEA International Infrastructure Management Manual (IIMM) (2011) describes levels of service as a mechanism that sits between higher level corporate objectives and feeds down into more operational objectives. It defines levels of service and recommends describing both *customer* and *technical* performance measures to monitor delivery.

Levels of Service – Describe what the organisation intends to deliver. The IIMM suggests that effective level of service statements:

- Describe the outputs the organisation intends to deliver to customers
- Commonly relate to service attributes such as quality, reliability, responsiveness, sustainability, timelines, accessibility and cost

- Should be written in terms the end user can understand and relate to
- Should drive the selection of performance measures.

Customer performance measures – Describe how the customer receives or experiences the service. These measures are generally those that would be used in public documents and should be aimed at the lay person.

The Play Space Plan introduces some basic principles regarding play space provision, as well as documenting the types and standards of amenities/assets needed to be provided for play areas in open space – in general and by hierarchy level.

Such information includes:

Description	Play Space Plan reference
General Rules for Play Provision in New Parks	Section 4, Table 6
Site Selection for New Parks and Play Spaces, by Classification	Section 2, Table 2
Provision for Access for people with a Disability, to Parks and Play Spaces, by Classification	Section 2, Table 3
Amenities for Parks and Play Spaces, by Classification	Section 2, Table 4

Table 13 – Levels of Service for play spaces (from Play Space Plan)

This information effectively constitutes *customer* levels of service that can be translated into *technical* levels of service. Customer levels of service have not been fully documented for playgrounds in early years facilities.

Technical performance measures – Describes what the organisation does to deliver the service. These measures support customer measures and tend to be used internally to measure performance against service levels.

Current *technical* service levels for playgrounds have been documented and are discussed in Chapter 5. They largely relate to inspections, maintenance and renewal.

A number of improvements have been recommended in this Plan to ensure they better align with the customer levels of service.

4.5 External Stakeholders

Key community stakeholders include:

- Local residents
- Early years facility users and operators
- Early years facility committees
- Visitors to the municipality
- Council's insurers
- Councillors (as representatives of the community)

Each stakeholder group has different needs and expectations and is likely to use different parameters when judging Council's performance.

Stakeholder needs affect the provision, management and use of Council's playgrounds. The Service Owners, listed previously in this Chapter, are responsible for understanding and predicting stakeholder expectations and demands in order to guide Council's response, within practical constraints.

4.6 Current Approach to Understanding Community Expectations

Council investigates community expectations in a number of ways:

- Informal interactions between Council officers and the community as part of normal daily activities.
- Review of community requests

- Community consultation undertaken during the development of strategic documents or major projects
- Participation in the Department of Planning and Community Development Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey (LGCSS)

4.6.1 Investigation of Community Needs

Apart from development undertaken to date on the Play Space Plan, a comprehensive assessment of all community playground needs, within the municipality has not been undertaken. The majority of Council's knowledge stems from informal interactions with the community. Key drivers of community satisfaction with regard to playgrounds are assumed to include:

- Asset condition
- Accessibility
- Safety
- Capacity
- Functionality
- Council's responsiveness to asset repair issues raised

Recommendations and complaints regarding public playground inventory or design are generally received by the Open Space & Landscape Design team which has the expertise necessary to investigate the request. Community requests received vary and may include requests for more playgrounds, provision of shade structures and improved accessibility.

When undertaking designs (or re-designs) for major projects, there is typically considerable engagement undertaken with the community to seek feedback and input into Council's proposals. This engagement is based on specific locations and projects, rather than a broader assessment of municipality needs. .

4.6.2 Review of Community Satisfaction Survey Results

Council participates in the annual Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey (LGCSS) which is coordinated by the Department of Planning and Community Development. The LGCSS provides Council with feedback on community satisfaction each year. Council performance is benchmarked against the performance of 77 other Victorian Councils. Although the survey is pitched at a relatively high level, it does provide Local Government with information about how their performance is rated over time by the communities they represent.

Council performance is given a score out of 100 for a number of key result areas. The category that can be best used to measure satisfaction regarding playground management is Recreational Facilities. Although this category does not relate exclusively to playgrounds (i.e. it also includes sportsgrounds, indoor recreation facilities, etc), it does provide some information on community expectations regarding playgrounds.

Output indicators set out in the former Knox Council Plan (2009-2013) indicate that Council aims to achieve a score of 72 for the Recreational Facilities category. Figure 14 below, summarises Council's performance over the past twelve years. The performance is currently well above the target of 72.

Figure 14 – Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey Results 2000-2011

The LGCSS includes an open ended question for respondents to summarise the reasons why improvement in a particular category is needed. In 2011, the only relevant response relating directly to playgrounds was:

- More/better/safer playgrounds and/or equipment/with sun shade (13% of respondents).

The Department of Planning and Community Development changed the format of the survey in 2012, meaning the categories and level of detail provided cannot be correlated with earlier surveys. It is not possible to extract anything from the current survey that relates to playgrounds.

4.6.3 Analysis of Customer Request Trends

The table below summarises the history of customer requests for maintenance on public playgrounds.

Issue Identified by	No. Issues Identified				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Playground Equipment Maintenance (PG-REA-001)					
Customer Request (including After Hours Call-outs)	45	53	39	56	48
Graffiti Removal (PG-REA-002)					
Customer Request (including After Hours Call-outs)	–	–	–	2	4
Playground Undersurfacing Maintenance (PG-REA-003)					
Customer Request (including After Hours Call-outs)	5	5	6	11	6

Issue Identified by	No. Issues Identified				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Litter Clearing – Dumped/Dangerous (PG-REA-004)					
Customer Request (including After Hours Call-outs)	6	17	12	2	7
TOTAL:	**56**	**75**	**57**	**71**	**65**

Table 14 – Customer Requests for Maintenance

Data source: Work Order System (LifeCycle) January 2008 to December 2012

The number of community requests has remained relatively constant over the last five years, equating to just over one request per week. This suggests satisfaction levels have remained relatively stable. It should also be noted that 173 of the total 324 requests were ultimately deemed to be no hazard. This essentially meant that the defect didn't exceed intervention levels, that routine maintenance was deemed adequate to resolve the issue, that the issue was a duplicate request or that Council was not the responsible authority.

The review of customer requests suggests a generally a high level of satisfaction with Council's playground network, although some of the comments suggest that the community is expecting more than Council presently provides. In some instances, requests from the community for improvements and upgrades have been confused with maintenance and forwarded to Council's Operations Department. These requests should ultimately be managed by the Open Space & Landscape Design team. Genuine maintenance issues that do arise are typically readily resolved (refer analysis in section 3.4).

4.7 Current Approach to Predicting Future Demand

Council delivers services and manages its asset portfolio within a complex operating environment which influences its approach to the provision and management of playgrounds within the municipality.

Council's Play Space Plan (and to a lesser degree its Municipal Early Years Plan) demonstrates Council's current approach to considering the factors that influence the services of Open Space Management and Early Years Education and Care. In particular, the Play Space Plan considers how demographic data (social disadvantage, age, housing density) affect demand for parks and open space.

4.7.1 Review of Asset Utilisation Data

Council does not formally measure the extent of usage of Council playgrounds, although field staff are able to give a good indication of usage and popularity due to their regular presence in these locations. Formal utilisation measurement occurs only when investigations are undertaken in response to site-specific concerns raised by the public or facility user groups.

4.7.2 Factors Influencing Demand

Council recognises that community expectations and demand are affected by changes in the operating environment. The table below highlights how some factors may affect demand for playgrounds. The Play Space Plan considers these factors and their implications in more detail, particularly in Volume 2.

Factor	Description	Expected Impact
Built Environment		
Increasing Dwelling Density	Increasing density of dwellings resulting from subdivision of residential lots and Government policy (Melbourne 2030 & Melbourne @ 5 million plans). (ABS Forecast provided by ID Consulting predicts a 22% increase in the number of dwellings in the City of Knox between 2011 and 2031. The number of dwellings is predicted to increase from 56,355 to 68,739.)	Increasing number of people and children using open space within the municipality for recreation.
Ageing Assets	Deteriorating condition of assets. Asset obsolescence as new designs are developed.	Increased demand for timely asset renewal and upgrade as assets begin to show increasing signs of wear and tear.
Natural Environment		
Climate Change	More intense and frequent storms and more severe drought periods.	More challenging conditions for the maintenance of Council assets. Potential for trees to fall and damage equipment during significant storms. Increased demand for shaded play spaces.
Social & Cultural Environment		
Population Growth	Uneven growth, with increases focused in the suburbs of Scoresby and Knoxfield.	Increasing numbers of people will be using the facilities within the growth areas of Knox. Increased requirements for accessible playgrounds.
Ageing Population	An increase in the number of residents over 65 years old is expected to continue in future years. Most of the Knox population will continue to be under 50 and consist of young families.	In conjunction with population growth and increased housing density, demand for open space for recreation (including playgrounds) is expected to continue.
Environmental Health & Wellbeing Awareness	Increasing awareness of the health, fitness & environmental benefits associated with	Increasing number of people and children using open space within the

Factor	Description	Expected Impact
	outdoor recreational pursuits.	municipality for recreation.
Social Disadvantage	Disadvantaged groups may have fewer opportunities and choices to travel to playgrounds – play is considered an important part of early childhood development.	Increased demand for play opportunities in certain areas of Knox.
Legal & Political Environment		
National Asset Management Assessment Framework	Introduction of National Reporting Frameworks: • Criteria for Assessing Financial Sustainability • Asset Planning and Management • Financial Planning and Reporting	Increased asset reporting requirements. Council will need to demonstrate improved asset knowledge and data management. There is an expectation that Council can demonstrate clear links between service levels and current and future community expectations.
Industry Standards	Requirements in the Education and Care Services National Regulation and the Australian Standards (AS4486) regarding provision, inspection and maintenance of play equipment.	The community expects Council to comply with current standards.

Table 15 – Summary of Factors Influencing Demand

4.8 Demand Management Strategies

Demand management is the notion that asset solutions (ie. building new infrastructure) are not necessarily the only way to satisfy community demand. Modifying customers' demands, and hence funding requirements, can be achieved by optimising the utilisation of existing assets or through the consideration of operations, regulations, incentives, education or substitution.

Council has a range of tools at its disposal to ensure effective and efficient management of playground assets. These tools include the following non-asset related solutions:

- Community awareness – inform the community of the location of existing playground infrastructure through communication campaigns or improved signage.
- Community awareness – educate the community through the Play Space Plan on the multi use nature of open space, the variety of play experiences on offer and the ability of landscaped open space (not just play equipment) to contribute to play experiences.
- Community awareness – make the community aware of non Council play spaces (e.g. National Parks, schools).

Chapter 5 Integrated Service & Asset Lifecycle Management

5.1 Introduction

Council's involvement in the provision and management of playgrounds has evolved over a long period of time. The Service Delivery Lifecycle Model, illustrated in Figure 15 below, forms part of Council's Asset Management Policy. The model aims to demonstrate the integrated relationship between service and asset management. It highlights the fact that Council assets are only required to support services that exist to address community needs. A coordinated approach to managing all phases of the service and asset lifecycles is considered necessary to enable delivery of outcomes that feasibly meet community expectations.

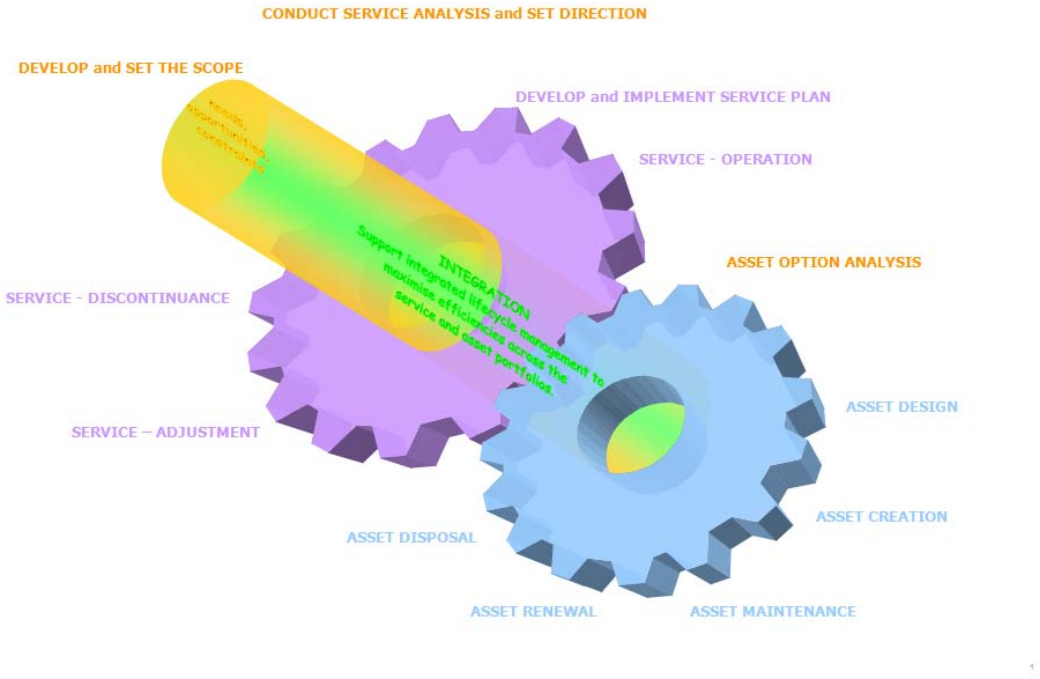

Figure 15 – Service Delivery Lifecycle Model

In this Chapter, the lifecycle model is used as a framework for the assessment of Council's current approach to the management of playgrounds. Opportunities to improve current work practices are identified with a view to improving the outcomes experienced by the community.

5.2 Lifecycle Management

In this section of the Plan, the management objectives for each phase of the service and asset lifecycle are presented. Council's current approach is described and improvement opportunities are highlighted.

5.2.1 Setting the Scope

Gain an understanding of Council's internal and external operating environment. Use this knowledge to define current service demand, community needs and expectations and predict future changes.

The purpose of setting the scope, as indicated above, is to ensure that Council proactively investigates community needs and expectations and uses this information to predict future changes in service demand. This enables Council to participate in the provision and management of services and assets that meet the needs of current and future communities.

As noted in the previous chapter, Council's Play Space Plan (and to a lesser degree its Municipal Early Years Plan) demonstrate Council's approach to considering the factors that influence play space provision.

The evolution of service planning at Council has placed the responsibility for setting the scope on to department/service managers.

5.2.2 Service Lifecycle

Organisation wide service planning work is currently underway under the guidance of the Corporate Planning & Performance Department. It is therefore not the intention of this Plan to act as a service planning document. It is expected that future service planning work will include consideration of the future of each service and document Council's current and desired approach to the management of each phase of the service lifecycle.

⇒ To avoid duplication, this Plan therefore focuses on assessing Council's approach to playground ***asset lifecycle*** management, which will ultimately complement the service plans when completed.

5.3 Asset Lifecycle Management

Figure 16 below, illustrates the asset lifecycle. This section of the Plan describes Council's current approach to playground asset management with a view to identifying improvement opportunities. Current technical service levels are also indicated.

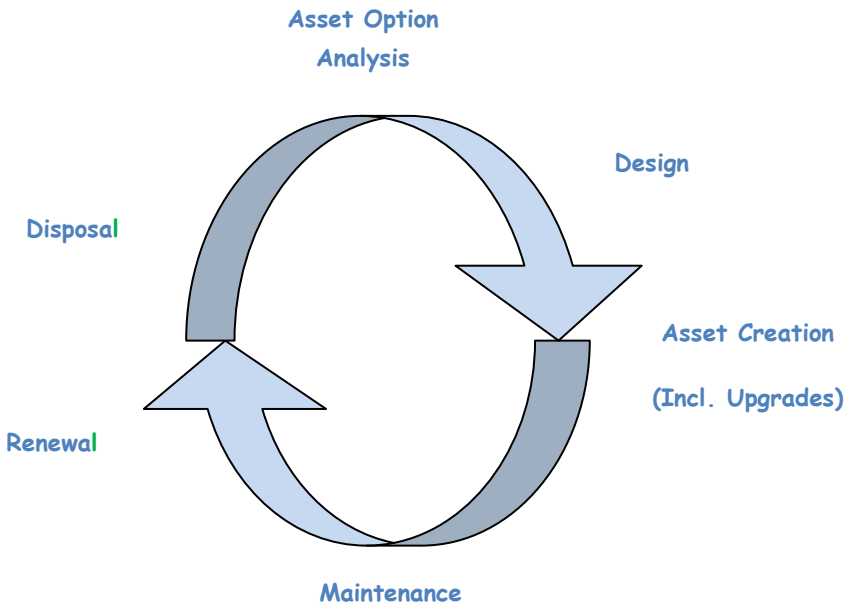

Figure 16 – Asset Lifecycle Phases

5.3.1 Asset Management Roles and Responsibilities

Table 16 below, summarises the Sustainable Infrastructure Department's understanding of current asset lifecycle responsibilities as they relate to the management of Council's playgrounds.

Asset Class	Asset Type	Current - Responsible Team/Unit					
		Asset Lifecycle Phase					
		Asset Option Analysis	Design	Creation (incl. upgrades)	Maintenance	Renewal	Disposal
Playgrounds – Open Space	Fixed Play equipment Softfall Edging Fencing	**Open Space & Landscape Design**	**Open Space & Landscape Design** (*with advice from Parks Services*)	**Open Space & Landscape Design**	**Parks Services**	**Open Space & Landscape Design** (*with advice from Parks Services*)	**Open Space & Landscape Design**
Playgrounds – Early Years Facilities	Fixed Play equipment Softfall Edging	**Committees** (*with advice from Open Space & Landscape Design, and advice and approval from Family & Children's Services*)	**Committees** (*with advice from Open Space & Landscape Design, and advice and approval from Family & Children's Services*)	**Committees** (*with advice from Open Space & Landscape Design, and advice and approval from Family & Children's Services*)	**Committees & Parks Services** (*refer building maintenance protocol and Family & Children's Services procedures*)	**Committees** (*with advice from Open Space & Landscape Design, and advice and approval from Family & Children's Services*)	**Committees & Parks Services**

Table 16 – Asset Lifecycle – Current Playground Asset Management Responsibilities

a) Asset Option Analysis

Management Objective – Consider the asset requirements necessary to support objectives of all relevant services. Undertake analysis to ensure the best asset solutions are provided to meet service needs within physical, financial, legislative and other constraints.

Technical Service Levels – A Play Space Planning Framework is documented within the Play Space Plan.

There are relatively few new playgrounds created. However, the Play Space Plan documents a Play Space Planning Framework to guide play provision in parks, including some guidelines about investigating asset and non-asset options to deliver a variety of play experiences.

Early years committees are recognising that non-fixed play equipment potentially provides more flexibility in play space provision, as well as proving to be less expensive to maintain.

Family & Children's Services has expressed an aim of developing master plans for each early years facility, which represents an opportunity for Council and the committees to think more strategically about future asset requirements (including playgrounds).

b) Design

Management Objective – Prepare requisite documentation to ensure delivered assets meet service needs, match expected service life and are able to be created, maintained and renewed in a sustainable manner.

Technical Service Levels – There are currently no technical design standards. Each playground asset is considered unique and designed accordingly to Australian Standards. A number of design standards exist for landscape/park assets that are related to playgrounds, and guidelines exist in the Play Space Plan.

Contributed Assets

Contribution of playgrounds (through subdivisional developments) is now rare. When they occur, they are designed by the land developer and the design is approved by Council through the planning referral process. Before a permit is issued, relevant Council departments have the opportunity to review the design drawings and specifications.

Capital Works Projects

Council creation of new playgrounds is also rare, however a number are designed as part of renewal. The design phase involves two distinct phases:

- Strategic / Preliminary Concept Design
- Advanced / Detailed Design

Both phases tend to be managed by the Program Coordinator responsible for the Unstructured Recreation (4014) capital works program (Open Space & Landscape Design).

Concept Design

The concept design phase at large, high profile sites tends to involve extensive master planning and consultation with the community and affected stakeholders. Limited concept design work is undertaken for smaller, lower profile playgrounds.

Detailed Design

Detailed design is largely outsourced to consultants. It is rare for the playground designs to include detailed consideration of lifecycle costs. However, liaison does occur with Council's Parks Services team to ensure future maintenance needs are considered at an early stage.

Council's standard design drawings are now administered by the Sustainable Infrastructure department. The Sustainable Infrastructure department convenes the Standards Committee, which is made up of representatives from Sustainable Infrastructure, Community Infrastructure, Operations, Planning and City Futures. There are no specific design standards relating to playground equipment or softfall – design is often driven by the relevant Australian Standards. There is however, a limited Landscape Series of Council standards for parks related assets (e.g. seat detail).

The Play Space Plan has documented design guidelines to be used as a future reference for playground design. Consideration should be given to the Standards Committee endorsing any relevant standard drawings arising from this document. As outlined in section 5.3(d), consideration should also be given to design guidelines for high vandalism areas – designs that are appropriate to the location.

In terms of early years facilities, designs for playgrounds are typically managed by the relevant committee. Consent is required from the Family & Children's Service Department (which typically refers designs to the Open Space & Landscape Design and Facilities teams for input). This approval process is documented in the Preschools and Playgroups Building Maintenance Protocol. Family & Children's Services has recognised that a more transparent approval process is required, and is currently working on a new process.

c) Creation (incl. Upgrades)

Management Objective – Deliver via construction or acquisition, physical assets that meet service needs within physical, financial and other practical constraints.

As noted previously, new assets are created as a result of developer contributions or Council's capital works program.

Contributed Assets

Given the extent of existing development, playgrounds are rarely contributed by private developers. In the instances of contributed assets, this occurs via the existing subdivision handover process. Asset data is updated in Council's GIS and Lifecycle system in accordance with this process. This ensures that the new assets are included in subsequent asset valuations, the Asset Register and maintenance/inspection programs.

Capital Works Program

The creation or upgrade of playgrounds is typically delivered under the following capital works program:

- 4014 – Unstructured Recreation

This program largely covers passive open space (not playgrounds specifically), and only a small number of new playgrounds (or upgrades) have been funded under this program. An analysis of gaps in Council's playground network (as part of the development of the Play Space Plan) will likely lead to an increased number of new playgrounds in areas of need being funded under this capital works program.

Since 2009, implementation of Council's Asset Management and Untied Funding Allocation Policies has meant that Council's capital works process includes project ranking and ensures lifecycle funds are allocated to enable sustainable future maintenance and renewal of created and upgraded assets.

When capital works projects are completed, the Asset Strategy team records new assets in Council's asset register (Lifecycle) and GIS. The current process relies on asset handover information being provided to the Asset Strategy team by the capital works program manager in accordance with Council's capital works handover process.

Creation of playgrounds in early years facilities is typically managed by the relevant committee (once the design has been approved by Council). Council hasn't got a mechanism to support committees that want to perform construction themselves.

d) Maintenance

Management Objective – Preserve assets to ensure they continuously meet service expectations. Routinely inspect the asset for defects and act to repair assets to mitigate potential risks and ensure the asset is able to achieve its expected useful life

Technical Service Levels – Inspection and Maintenance service levels for playgrounds are reproduced below.

Council's Parks Services team undertakes maintenance and inspection of playgrounds in open space, as well as inspections and some maintenance of playgrounds in early years centres.

Routine hazard inspections and routine maintenance

Routine hazard inspections are combined with routine maintenance to ensure most issues are rectified at the time they are observed. This represents a substantial difference between these inspections and other asset inspections undertaken by the Parks Services team. Parks Services currently undertakes inspections/routine maintenance on the frequencies in the following table. A checklist of key aspects of the playground inspection is reproduced in Attachment 3. This checklist is a broad guide for the inspectors. While all items are visually inspected as a minimum, routine maintenance on any of the items is undertaken as required or as time permits. Data from the inspections is recorded electronically to enable inspection and maintenance history to be maintained in Lifecycle. Major issues or issues that cannot be rectified at the time of inspection are raised as a Work Order to enable reactive maintenance to be undertaken at a later time. Comments written by maintenance officers when undertaking inspections or routine maintenance do not trigger any further requirements unless a specific Work Order is raised. For example, if softfall requires

topping up, this comment sits in the system for viewing only. There is an opportunity to prepare a report which extracts a list of playgrounds having been identified as requiring extra softfall – such a report would improve the efficiency of creating a schedule for a contractor.

Playground Hierarchy	Current inspection and routine maintenance frequency
Municipal	Weekly
Neighbourhood	5 Weekly
Local	
Early Years	4 Monthly*

Table 17 – Current inspection and routine maintenance frequencies

*Inspection only, maintenance is typically referred to Family & Children's Services department

As outlined in Chapter 3, the frequencies in the table above reflect current resources. Parks Services continues to monitor the adequacy of these frequencies.

At this stage, inspections and maintenance for early years facilities are recorded separately and in hardcopy format (and later forwarded to Family & Children's Services). Minor works are typically referred to the relevant committee for action. Works for these locations are only recorded in Lifecycle if an ad hoc Work Order is raised for an issue which cannot be rectified by the committee.

Discussions with Parks Services staff, and confirmed through maintenance data, has revealed vandalism as a major cause of playground maintenance issues. Of Knox's suburbs, Rowville's playgrounds appear to have a disproportionately higher incidence of vandalism. This suggests a possible need for improved surveillance and reporting, and application design guidelines and equipment selection that consider the playground location.

As noted earlier, annual safety and hazard audits are undertaken by external contractors. Given the level of audits and inspections already undertaken on playgrounds, the continued alignment of inspection frequencies to hierarchy ensures that high priority sites are regularly inspected whilst at the same time ensuring that lower priority sites are not over-serviced.

There are potential opportunities to further review both the scope and frequencies of Council inspections.

Reactive maintenance

Reactive maintenance is generated either through routine hazard inspections or from customer requests, and managed in Council's Work Order System (Lifecycle). Current playground maintenance activities and service levels are recorded in the table below.

Maintenance Code	Maintenance Activity	Description	Current Service Level	Target Time for Initial Response	Target Time for Rectification Works
PG-REA-001	Playground Equipment Maintenance	Structural & non-structural repair and/or replacement of playground infrastructure in all Council Reserves including Arboretum.	Repair and/or replace structural & non-structural defects relating to playground infrastructure. This activity may include painting playground equipment.	2 days	120 days
PG-REA-002	Graffiti Removal	Removal of graffiti from playground equipment.	Remove offensive graffiti in line with Graffiti and Vandalism Management Plan and other graffiti within rectification timeframes.	1 day	5 days
PG-REA-003	Playground Undersurfacing Maintenance	Maintain playground undersurfacing in all Council Reserves including Arboretum.	Fill depressions/ rake/ replace or add additional mulch undersurfacing in accordance with Australian Standards.	5 days	120 days
PG-REA-004	Litter Clearing – Dumped/ Dangerous	Removal of litter dumped in playground areas of all Council Reserves.	Remove glass & other dangerous/ protruding objects from playground area.	1 day	5 days

Table 18 – Current reactive maintenance service levels

Even though park equipment (e.g. seats) within the borders of playgrounds is maintained by those responsible for playground equipment, it does not have a separate maintenance activity – it is usually rectified as part of routine maintenance or raised as a playground *equipment* issue.

Despite the fact that the Play Space Plan is based on the concept of play not being limited to the borders of a formal playground, the reality is that general open space maintenance is currently undertaken by crews separate from the playground maintenance officers. The service levels for this type of maintenance are typically aligned to open space, rather than being informed by the Play Space Plan. It is recommended that the next review of the Open Space Asset Management Plan ensures that consideration is given to general open space maintenance standards aligning to principles of the Play Space Plan, or is simply expanded to include playgrounds.

It is acknowledged that there is an increased resource requirement to maintain landscaped areas in expanded play spaces advocated in the Play Space Plan (compared to simply mowing the surrounds). Horticultural experience is often required which is the expertise of other units in the Parks Services team, rather than the playground staff themselves. It is difficult to quantify the increased resource requirement due to the fact that this work is often absorbed in other open space maintenance activities and funded under different programs. In the first instance, creation of a new reactive playground maintenance activity 'Playground Landscape and Vegetation Maintenance' will enable Work Orders to be raised and reported against the playground category. In turn, the data collected via the creation of this new maintenance activity will enable analysis to be undertaken to determine whether

increased playground funding or resources are required, or a transfer (either funding or resources) is possible from other areas of open space maintenance.

Playground maintenance responsibilities in early years facilities are outlined in the Preschools and Playgroups Building Maintenance Protocol – in short, committees are responsible for the "installation and maintenance of playgrounds and playground equipment." Despite this position, in reality Council's Parks Services team does assist with minor works on fixed equipment. The Family & Children's Services department is in the process of drafting new procedures on this matter.

e) Renewal

Management Objective – Monitor asset condition. Replace assets in a timely manner to ensure expected asset condition and functionality is continuously provided throughout the life of the service.

Technical Service Levels – There are currently no technical service levels relating to renewal. Proposed ranking criteria and levels of service are detailed in this section.

Playground renewals in public open space (and where required in early years facilities) are currently funded under the Capital Renewal Program 1014: Playgrounds which is managed by the Open Space & Landscape Design team. To ensure effective delivery of outcomes, the team undertakes the design in the first year of the program and construction in year 2.

Currently, this renewal program is driven by the results of the 2008 Playgrounds Assessment Report. This report prioritised upgrade and replacement works for all open space playgrounds, using safety, age, condition and position within the reserve as key criteria. Council has been using this list rather than documenting its own transparent set of ranking criteria.

Renewal ranking criteria for playgrounds have hence not been fully developed or utilised in the past. The table below proposes an updated set of renewal ranking criteria for playgrounds. The ranking system considers the remaining life, condition and degree of dependence, amongst other factors. Use of these ranking criteria will enable improved prioritisation of expenditure within budget constraints. The primary intention of these criteria is to prioritise renewal of the more highly utilised playgrounds in poorest condition, and in the process, optimise the life of these assets. Its implementation relies on collection of asset condition data via regular condition audits (every four years), as well as other information relating to dependence and integration with other capital works projects.

In essence, this summarises Council's technical service level relating to renewal – **to ensure playgrounds continue to be maintained in Condition 3 (Fair) or better.**

Playground (Open Space) Renewal Ranking Criteria	Score	Data source
1. Average Remaining Life 0 – 2 years 3 – 5 years 6 – 8 years 9+ years	20 16 10 0	Condition Audits
2. Average Condition 1 – Excellent 2 – Good 3 – Fair 4 – Poor 5 – Failed	0 4 10 16 20	Condition Audits
3. Number of Non Conformances 10+ 5 – 9 2 – 4 0 – 1	20 16 8 0	Condition Audits
4. Degree of Dependence High Medium Low	10 6 2	Play Space Plan
5. SEIFA Index High Medium Low	10 6 2	Play Space Plan
6. Relationship to Other Community Facilities High Medium Low	10 6 2	Play Space Plan
7. Complementary Capital Works project identified Yes No	10 2	Capital Works Program
8. Playground retention or relocation recommended Yes No (If playground is not recommended for retention or relocation, it shall not feature in the ranking)	N/A	Play Space Plan
TOTAL	100	

Table 19 – Draft ranking criteria for Implementation of the Playground Renewal Program

It is recommended that the ranking criteria be used to prioritise the timing of renewal works to be undertaken by the Open Space & Landscape Design team under the Capital Renewal Program 1014: Playgrounds. Minor amendments to this set of draft criteria should be made by the Open Space & Landscape Design team to ensure weightings result in appropriate prioritisation. Playgrounds which are assigned a high score should be given renewal priority ahead of low scoring sites. It is essential that the Open Space & Landscape Design team continues to liaise with the Parks Services team regarding proposed programs of work to ensure that renewal funding is directed to the most appropriate playgrounds (and that designs take into account maintenance considerations).

Renewal of early years playgrounds is currently undertaken at an individual facility level, and is managed and funded by the relevant committee. There is no holistic,

municipality wide approach to playground renewal at these locations, and a number of committees have difficulty in funding timely renewals.

f) Disposal

Management Objective – Ensure assets that have no current (or foreseeable future use) are removed from Council's asset portfolio.

Financial sustainability requires a balance between the maintenance, renewal and disposal of existing assets and the delivery of new and upgraded assets. The purpose of asset disposal is therefore to ensure Council resources are not spent on maintaining and renewing assets that are no longer required. Effective asset disposal enables Council to use its limited resources for maximum community benefit. Principles relating to disposal are outlined in Council's Asset Management Policy.

In practice, disposal of playgrounds rarely occurs, however some initial recommendations have been in the Play Space Plan.

Chapter 6 Financial Sustainability

6.1 Introduction

In pursuit of good governance, Council must ensure all playgrounds are managed in a way that is financially sustainable and caters for community demand. Funding allocations at each stage of the lifecycle impact the standard to which Council assets perform.

6.2 Lifecycle Cost Components

Councils are expected to have the capacity to manage their existing infrastructure now and into the future.

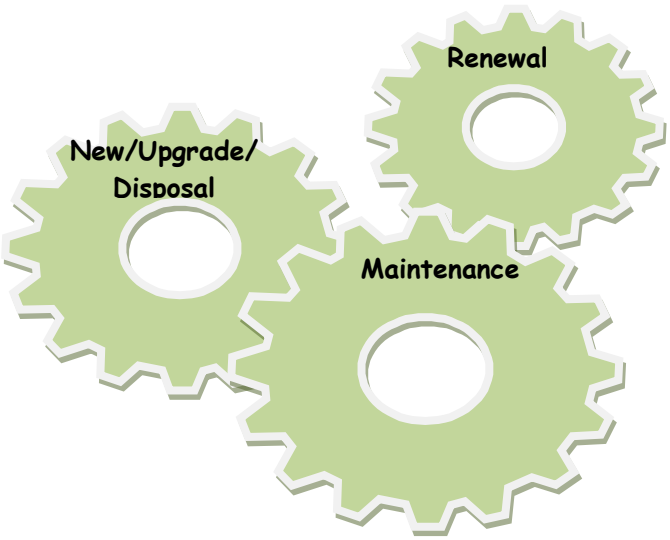

Figure 17 – Lifecycle Cost Components

Financial sustainability requires a balance between the delivery of new assets and the maintenance, renewal or disposal of existing assets. Increasingly, Councils are required to demonstrate that their asset portfolio is commensurate with community demand for the services that the assets support. Identified surplus assets should therefore be disposed, to reduce exposure to liabilities associated with asset ownership. Retained assets must be maintained and renewed in order to continue to provide the desired level of service.

6.3 Funding Sources

Council has access to a number of funding sources to support delivery of this Playground Asset Management Plan. Funding sources include:

- Rates
- Open Space Reserve
- Federal and State Government Grants
- Private and Public Partnerships
- Borrowings
- Earnings from Asset Disposals

Council's Asset Management Policy recommends that Council proactively seek grants and partnership opportunities, as well as consider the disposal of surplus or obsolete assets, to supplement investment in asset provision and management.

6.4 Financial Model

The International Infrastructure Management Manual (IIMM) recommends core asset management plans include basic financial forecasting.

The financial model in this Plan compares existing funding arrangements with two alternative scenarios. The purpose of the model is to simply analyse the appropriate level of funding required to deliver these assets to the community safely and to the level of service expected. The model is most critical from the perspective of renewals. Using the present condition distribution of the asset as a starting point, the model calculates the renewal expenditure required to retain a desired minimum asset condition. The following assumptions have been made:

- Time Period – the model analyses asset performance over a 20 year period
- Asset Growth Rate – 0% (any potential increase in Council's playground network as a result of the gap analysis and recommendations in the Play Space Plan is likely to be offset by the rationalisation of playgrounds in areas of over-servicing)
- Only public open space playgrounds are included in the renewal forecasting.
- Maintenance Costs – the starting point for prediction of annual maintenance funding requirements is the current maintenance expenditure level of $409,104 (based on 2012/13 financial figures for playground maintenance)

The table below summarises the scenarios modelled.

Service Delivery Standard			
	Scenario 1 – Status Quo	**Scenario 2 – Medium**	**Scenario 3 – High**
New/ Upgrade	Assumes capital funding for new/upgraded playgrounds is $0. Capital works program 4014 (Unstructured Recreation) largely deals with passive open space but may at times address playgrounds as part of larger master plans for reserves. This Plan does not intend to duplicate funding forecasts for program 4014 which was addressed as part of the Open Space Asset Management Plan. Any additional new/upgrade funding identified and quantified for playgrounds as part of the Play Space Plan will be incorporated within the 4014 program as part of annual capital works planning. At the time of writing this Plan, these figures were unknown.		
Renewal	Fund in accordance with Long Term Financial Strategy and Capital Works Program (adjusted for inflation).	Fund the following: • Address backlog of playground equipment, edging and park equipment within playgrounds in condition 4 or 5 over **12** year period (aim for minimum condition 3) • Maintain all equipment, edging and park equipment within the playground to a minimum condition of 3 – Fair. • Allowance of $20k annually to address high risk early years playgrounds	Fund the following: • Address backlog of playground equipment, edging and park equipment within playgrounds in condition 4 or 5 over **5** year period (aim for minimum condition 3) • Maintain all equipment, edging and park equipment within the playground to a minimum condition of 3 – Fair. • Allowance of $30k annually to address high risk early years playgrounds
Maintenance	Fund in accordance with Long Term Financial Strategy (adjusted for	Fund in accordance with Long Term Financial Strategy (adjusted for inflation).	Fund in accordance with Long Term Financial Strategy (adjusted for inflation) plus

Service Delivery Standard			
	Scenario 1 – Status Quo	**Scenario 2 – Medium**	**Scenario 3 – High**
	inflation). Assumes no change to current maintenance funding levels.	Assumes no change to current maintenance funding levels. (It is important to note that this assumes any changes to maintenance processes/resources are managed within existing budget constraints.)	provision for the following: • This scenario assumes the introduction of an additional 1.0 EFT to address playground landscape and vegetation maintenance.
Operation	No change	Fund to allow introduction of all Improvement projects over a 3 year period. Projects to be absorbed internally except where external resources are specifically required.	Fund to allow introduction of all Improvement projects over a 3 year period, with extra external (or additional) resources assumed for ALL projects.

Table 20 – Summary of Model Funding Scenarios

Scenario 1 – Status Quo

This scenario involves Council continuing to fund all phases of asset management in accordance with its current Long Term Financial Strategy, Capital Works Program and existing expenditure profiles.

Scenario 2 – Medium

The medium scenario reflects the same *new and upgrade* funding as represented in the status quo scenario. There has been no additional allowance for new or upgraded playgrounds. Future variations to the new and upgrade program for playgrounds (covered under 4014 – Unstructured Recreation) will be based on analysis undertaken as part of the Play Space Plan.

The rate of asset *renewal* under this scenario has been based on the following assumptions:

- Address backlog of playground equipment, edging and park equipment within public playgrounds in Condition 4 (Poor) or Condition 5 (Failed) over a **12** year period. Maintain all the remaining assets at a minimum Condition 3 (Fair) – i.e. this is the proposed medium renewal level of service. An estimated playground renewal rate has been derived from the average of all playground components (refer Attachment 4).
- The model assumes an overall economic life of 20 years for all playground equipment. Using the Moloney modelling deterioration curve, intervening at Condition 4 equates to a cycle of approximately 16 years.

As a means of verifying Council's modelling, the data has also been modelled in the Moloney renewal modelling software (as used by the MAV STEP program). Comparison of renewal projections can be seen in Figure 22.

In terms of *maintenance*, funding under this scenario has remained unchanged from the status quo. Changes to processes or practices recommended in this Plan are to be managed within existing budget constraints.

A modest increase to *operational* funding is recommended in this scenario to allow external support for the delivery of some improvement projects.

Scenario 3 – High

The high scenario reflects the same *new and upgrade* funding as represented in the status quo scenario. There has been no additional allowance for new or upgraded playgrounds. Future variations to the new and upgrade program for playgrounds (covered under 4014 – Unstructured Recreation) will be based on analysis undertaken as part of the Play Space Plan.

The rate of asset *renewal* under this scenario has been based on the following assumptions:

- Address backlog of playground equipment, edging and park equipment within public playgrounds in Condition 4 (Poor) or Condition 5 (Failed) over a **5** year period. Maintain all the remaining assets at a minimum Condition 3 (Fair) – i.e. this is the proposed medium renewal level of service. An estimated playground renewal rate has been derived from the average of all playground components (refer Attachment 4).
- The model assumes an overall economic life of 20 years for all playground equipment. Using the Moloney modelling deterioration curve, intervening at Condition 4 equates to a cycle of approximately 16 years.

As a means of verifying Council's modelling, the data has also been modelled in the Moloney renewal modelling software (as used by the MAV STEP program). Comparison of renewal projections can be seen in Figure 22.

In terms of *maintenance*, funding under this scenario assumes status quo funding plus the funding of an additional 1.0 EFT (horticultural experience) to address landscaping and vegetation in play spaces.

A more substantial increase to *operational* funding is recommended to allow external resources to be engaged for all improvement projects.

6.5 Financial Model Results

Financial information presented in the graphs and tables below represents the best available data to model future provision and maintenance of Council's playground assets. Future updates of the model will supersede existing data and be used to inform decision making. Due to the assumptions made in the development of the model, it is important that it is updated every four years on receipt of new audit data so that renewal projections can be recalculated and verified.

As can be demonstrated from the forecast calculations, the long term sustainable level of asset management funding is generally higher than what is currently budgeted by Council. This is predominantly due to an initial backlog of required renewal works. The following figures are nominal (adjusted for inflation). Full results are presented in Attachment 6.

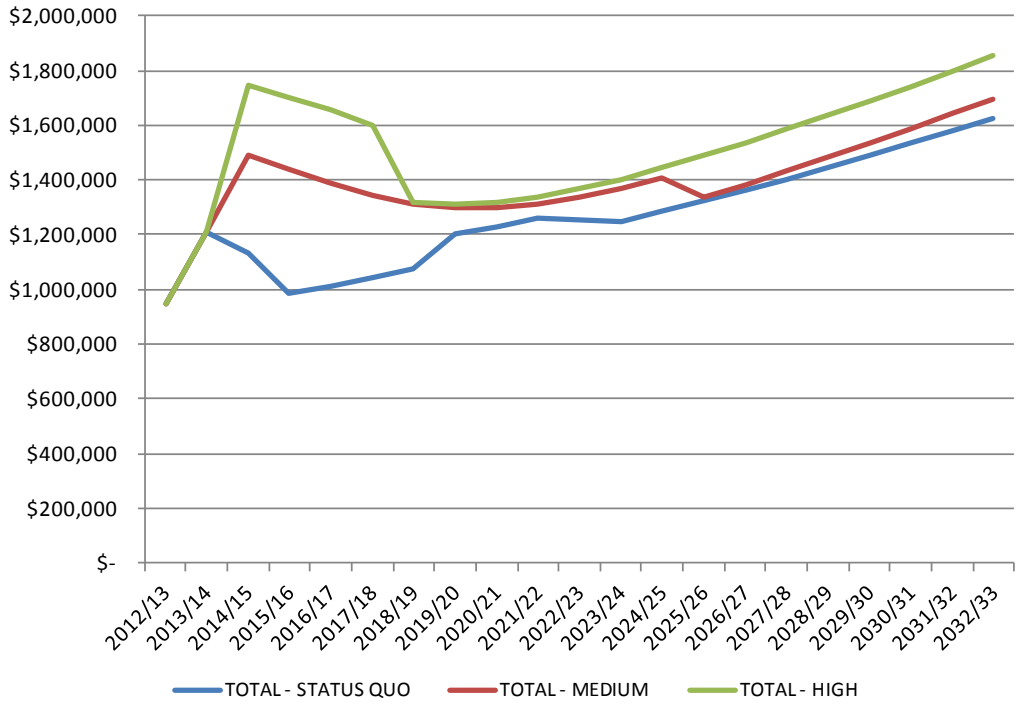

Figure 18 – Predicted Total Lifecycle Costs

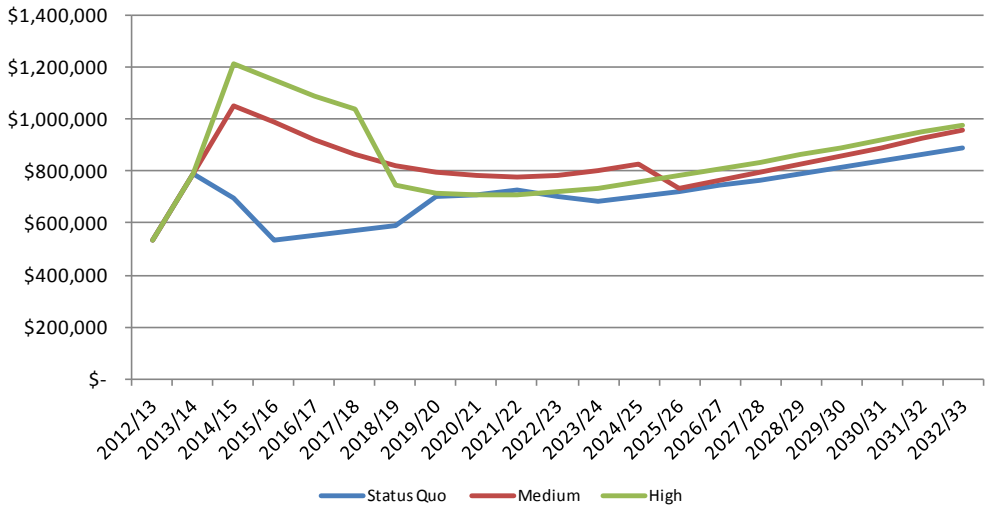

Figure 19 – Predicted Renewal Costs

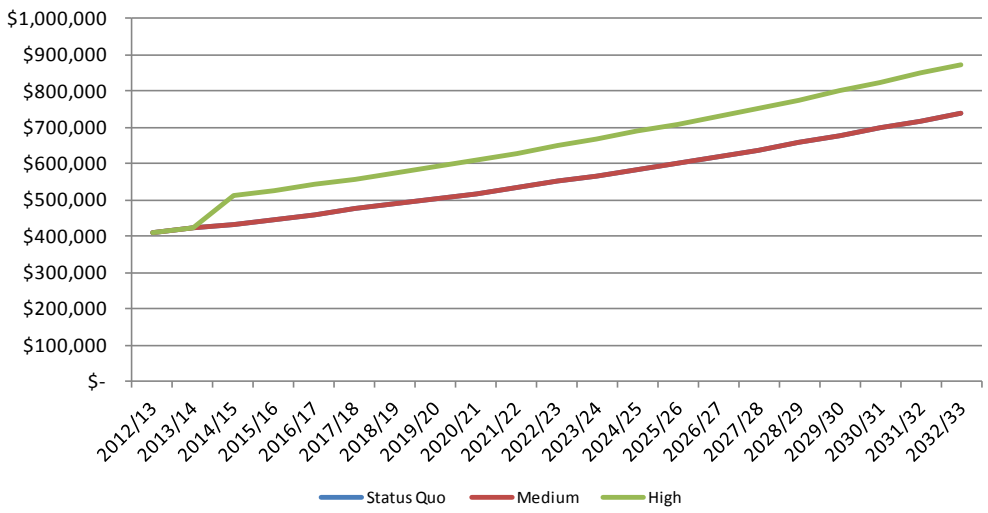

Figure 20 – Predicted Maintenance Costs

Note: Medium scenario costs are equal to Status Quo.

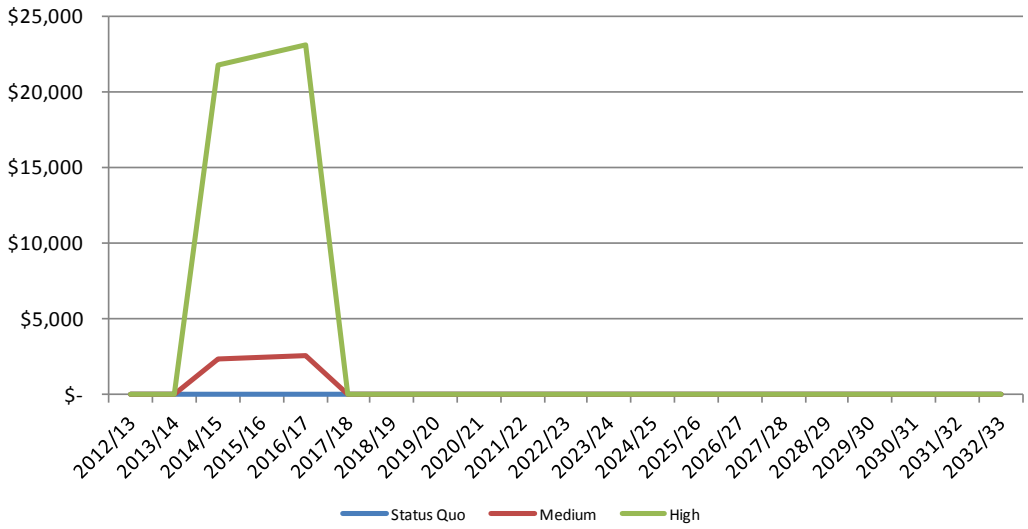

Figure 21 – Predicted (additional) Operational Costs

Renewal funding

The following graph demonstrates the level of renewal funding projected over the different scenarios. Moloney renewal modelling has also been undertaken to assist in the validation of the renewal modelling. Costs in this graph are represented in real terms (today's dollars). It is clear from the medium funding scenario that Council requires on average $510,000 (in today's dollars) annually to sustainably manage the playground renewal program in the long term, although an increase is required in the next 10 years to address the backlog of already deteriorated playgrounds.

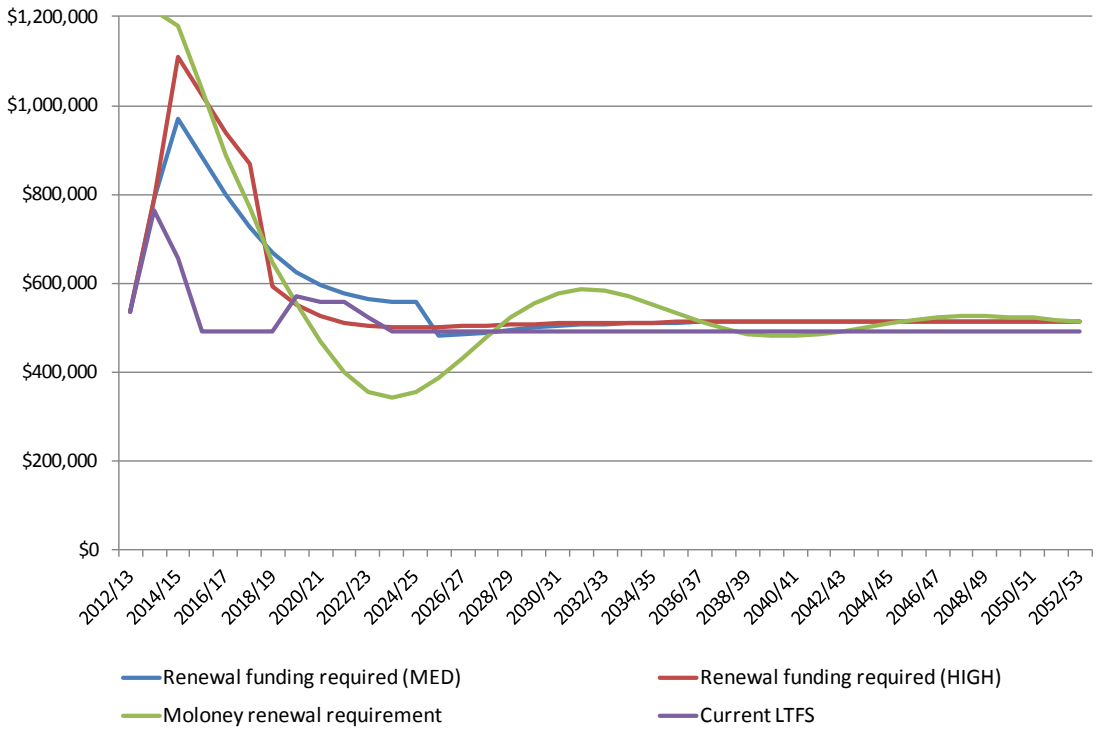

Figure 22 – Renewal Modelling Comparison

6.6 Recommended Funding Levels

To achieve improved asset management outcomes, a sustained commitment to the provision of adequate funding for asset renewal, maintenance and upgrade is required. The funding targets necessary to deliver sound asset management for the next five years based on delivery of the **medium** scenario, described above, is summarised in Table 21. This table also compares the current funding levels set out in the Long Term Financial Strategy (LTFS) to the recommended optimal levels and identifies the annual funding shortfall in both the capital and operating budgets.

Increases to renewal expenditure, in the first instance, are expected to be funded through savings in other asset renewal budgets, without impacting the total LTFS renewal figures.

Funding decisions should be based on information that justifies initial expenditure and demonstrates the longer term benefits and costs. It must be noted however that sound asset management and sustainability are not solely reliant on the provision of funds. Continual assessment and improvement of Council's asset management practices is required to ensure assets deliver the required level of service in the most cost effective manner.

PROPOSED (MEDIUM) FUNDING – PLAYGROUNDS ($'000)					
	2013/14	**2014/15**	**2015/16**	**2016/17**	**2017/18**
Capital Works – New/Upgrade					
Upgrades	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
LTFS / Status Quo	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Funding Shortfall	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Capital Works – Renewal					
Renewal (incl. Disposal)	$788	$1,051	$987	$922	$866
LTFS / Status Quo	$788	$696	$537	$553	$570
Funding Shortfall	$0	$355	$450	$369	$296
Operating Budget – Maintenance					
Maintenance	$421	$434	$447	$460	$474
LTFS / Status Quo	$421	$434	$447	$460	$474
Funding Shortfall	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Operating Budget – Operational Improvements					
Improvement Projects	$0	$2	$2	$3	$0
LTFS / Status Quo	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Funding Shortfall	$0	$2	$2	$3	$0

Table 21 – Recommended Funding

Financial modelling undertaken for the proposed medium funding scenario results in the following condition distribution.

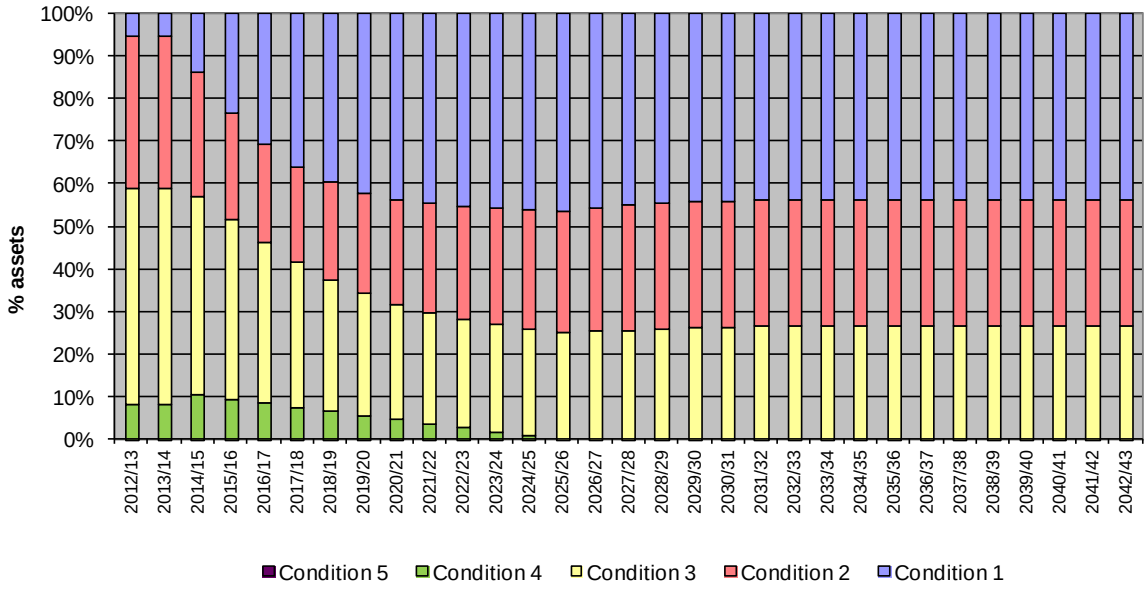

Figure 23 – Condition distribution under proposed funding scenario

Under the recommended funding scenario it is important that the objectives of Council's Asset Management Policy are applied. Upon approving a new or upgrade capital works project, appropriate lifecycle funding for maintenance and operation must be determined and committed within the operational budget. It is therefore important that Council staff have the necessary skills to estimate the lifecycle costs for all new and upgrade projects.

Chapter 7 Recommended Improvement Projects

7.1 Introduction

The improvement projects presented in this Chapter are the result of research and feedback as part of this Plan's development – they are intended to enable Council to move towards best practice asset management. Implementation of this Plan will ensure that Council playgrounds will be more proactively managed in future years.

It is recommended that the Medium funding scenario presented in the previous Chapter be adopted. The financial model includes an allowance for progressive implementation of all the improvement projects. It is expected that via changes in work practices and priorities, and minimal use of external resources, all recommended improvement projects can be progressively delivered over the next three years.

7.2 Improvement Recommendations

Project 1: Work Order System Improvements

- 1A – Create a new reactive maintenance activity "Playground Landscape and Vegetation Maintenance"

  Creation of a new maintenance activity will enable Council to raise Work Orders under the Playgrounds asset category and to collect data to determine the maintenance implications associated with the introduction of natural play spaces. Service levels and response times need to be developed. In turn, the data collected via the creation of this new maintenance activity will enable analysis to be undertaken to determine whether increased playground funding or resources are required, or a transfer (either funding or resources) is possible from other programs of open space maintenance.

  (Refer Chapter 5)

- 1B – Capture all playground routine hazard inspections

  It is currently not possible to record the weekly municipal playground inspections. As a result, the inspection module needs to be modified to enable the frequency of the inspection to vary according to the playground hierarchy and include all playgrounds.

  (Refer Chapter 3)

- 1C – Introduce functionality to allow maintenance schedules to be created from inspections

  It is recommended that functionality be introduced to enable playground maintenance officers to flag playgrounds that require further works (e.g. softfall top up) in a manner that enables a schedule of sites to be issued to a contractor to undertake the works in a systematic manner.

  (Refer Chapter 5)

- 1D – Ensure capital works issues are referred to Open Space & Landscape Design

  Considering that some customer requests for playground improvements or upgrades are actually confused with maintenance, it is recommended that an alternative methodology be considered to refer/inform the Open Space &

Landscape Design team of Work Orders initiated from customer requests that ultimately relate to upgrade or disposal of a playground.

(Refer Chapter 4)

Project 2: Review Approach to Playground Management (Early Years & Other Council Facilities)

The condition audit undertaken for this Asset Management Plan has found that the condition of play equipment and miscellaneous furniture located in early years facilities is not as good as the condition of playgrounds in public open space. In addition, the Parks Services team continues to absorb more work on minor maintenance items despite procedures not yet reflecting this.

It is recommended that the proposed review include:

- Legal advice – regarding Council's current approach to the management of playgrounds associated with early years facilities (and other Council facilities). Particular consideration should be given to potential risks associated with delays in asset renewal that may occur due to funding difficulties experienced by various committees. Consideration should be given to determining Council's obligations for facilities that do not have an active committee.
- Cost benefit analysis of alternative models. An assessment of lifecycle costs should be included for all options considered.

Alternative policy positions to be compared to the current approach *may* include:

- Council to take on all maintenance, renewal and upgrade responsibility.
- Introduction of a grant funding/co-funding policy for playground renewals and upgrades.

The objective should be to review the current policy position, and to take a range of alternative options to the Executive and Council for decision. There may be resource implications involved. It is recommended that this work be undertaken before commencing any master planning for early years facilities.

Any risks associated with the current approach to managing playgrounds associated with facilities should be considered for inclusion in Council's Corporate Risk Register.

(Refer Chapters 3, 5)

Project 3: Standards Committee Review of Playground Design Guidelines

It is recommended that the Standards Committee review the playground guidelines that are used by the Open Space & Landscape Design team (from the Play Space Plan) with the aim to endorse these guidelines and make them available for use.

The review will enable the Parks Services team to provide input regarding maintenance implications associated with new designs.

The Standards Committee should give consideration to the creation/modification of the designs/guidelines for play equipment and associated furniture in areas where there is high levels of vandalism.

(Refer Chapter 5)

Project 4: Playground Maintenance and Renewal Review

- 4A – Continue to monitor playground inspection frequencies

  Review adequacy and reasonableness of current inspection frequencies and scope, based on an analysis of issues identified through inspections, benchmarking within the sector and monitoring of levels of reactive requests. Inspections should continue to be aligned to the playground hierarchy.

  (Refer Chapter 3 and 5)

- 4B – Adopt revised renewal ranking criteria

  It is recommended that the Open Space & Landscape Design team adopted the revised renewal ranking criteria presented in Chapter 5. Ongoing liaison should occur with Parks Services to ensure the renewal program is based not only on best data available, but also validation from field staff.

  (Refer Chapter 5)

7.3 Implementation of Improvement Recommendations

Attachment 7 summarises the improvement recommendations. It highlights the following:

- Related Projects
- Expected Project Benefits
- Risk Assessment
- Expected Extent of Impact on Efficiency
- Organisation Dimension (Structure, Strategy, Processes, Skills)
- Responsible Directorate
- Recommended Project Leader (Department Manager)
- Council teams to be consulted during project implementation
- Preliminary cost and resource estimates

Each Project Leader has responsibility for incorporating delivery of the project into their annual business plan. Further work is therefore required by each Project Leader to define the scope of nominated projects and review the project delivery costs and resource requirements, which are all estimates at this stage.

To prioritise implementation, the consequence of not undertaking each project was assessed by the Asset Strategy team. Council's Integrated Risk Management Framework was used for this assessment. It is envisaged that the relevant Project Leader will use the risk rating to prioritise the inclusion of the improvement projects into their annual business plan.

Given that a number of the recommended improvement projects are interdependent, it is expected that nominated Project Leaders will seek to combine the delivery of related projects. In the event that multiple stakeholders are expected to be required to contribute to the successful delivery of an improvement project, it will be incumbent on the Project Leader to define the scope, estimate the hours required to complete the works and communicate this information to all stakeholders to ensure they too allocate appropriate time and resources to work collaboratively on the improvement project.

For some projects, it may be necessary for the nominated Project Leader to prepare a business case submission to seek additional funding for the delivery of the improvement project. Consideration for funding of new initiatives occurs on a biannual basis either during the development of the budget or at the mid year review.

7.4 PAMP Implementation & Review

All internal stakeholders have a significant role to play in the delivery of sustainable asset management and the implementation of improvement recommendations.

The Asset Strategy team is responsible for the review and update of this Plan.

Implementation of the improvement projects, set out in Attachment 7, should be monitored on an annual basis and used to inform business planning activities and budget priorities in subsequent years.

Review of this Plan should occur at 5 year intervals and focus on updating asset performance, the model and the applicability of outstanding improvement projects. The model presented in Chapter 6 should be updated to reflect impacts of new works and improvements in Council's asset knowledge. Updates of the financial model should incorporate:

- Future condition audit results
- Changes to the improvement project priorities and expected costs
- Asset changes resulting from renewal works
- Asset changes resulting from capital upgrades
- New developments

Consideration should also be given to incorporating asset management of public playgrounds within the Open Space Asset Management Plan, and early years playgrounds within the Building Asset Management Plan.

Appendices