**SUBMISSION TO THE Better Suburbs Play Spaces Forum**

**AN INITIATIVE OF Transport Canberra and City Services Better Suburbs program**

**BY THE KINGSTON AND BARTON RESIDENTS GROUP**

**30 JULY 2018**

**The value of play spaces for Kingston and Barton Residents**

With an increasing number of families moving into high density housing in Kingston and Barton, there is a growing need for communal play spaces. Children need to run, climb and play outdoors, and generally apartment and townhouse complexes do not provide the space for these types of activities. Public playgrounds are consequently the “backyard” for many children growing up in Kingston and Barton today.

Telopea Park is beloved of many local families and the old playground and new nature play area are well patronised. These play spaces also act to bring parents together as they meet and chat while watching their children play. In this way, new friendships are formed in a natural way that is often easier than trying to build relationships with neighbours in large apartment complexes. Telopea Park is also the site for a variety of child-friendly activities, such as children’s birthday parties, school running races, community group picnics and the annual Carols in the Park.

In this way, Telopea Park plays a central role in bringing together children, families and communities in a beautiful setting that encourages people to make connections. The other smaller play spaces in the Kingston-Barton area, such as Norgrove Park and Bowen Park, are invaluable green spaces where children (and adults) can ride, run and play in open parkland. This is especially important for this Kingston foreshore area, where the majority of accommodation is apartments and townhouses that provide limited or no outdoor play space.

**Recommendations we would like to communicate to the Forum**

The below recommendations apply both to play spaces in Kingston and Barton, and beyond:

***1. Fenced playgrounds***

Surrounding a play space with comprehensive (i.e. no gaps) and attractive fencing means parents can let their children explore without them having to be in arms’ reach. This benefits both the children, who can enjoy the sense of adventure and explore their capacities, and parents who do not have to hover anxiously near the child. Whether a playground is fenced or not can be the deciding factor for parents of young children with a tendency to “bolt.”

***2. Toilets and drinking fountains***

It is surprising that some play spaces do not have toilets within a short walking distance. Norgrove Park in Kingston Foreshore is one such example, where there is no toilet at all. Young children simply cannot wait to be transported to toilets further than 250 metres away. In other cases, drinking fountains are not provided. This is generally the case for older playgrounds, such as at Telopea Park.

***3. All age and ability play spaces***

Boundless is a fantastic example of a playground that appeals to a wide age-range: from as young as 18 months up to young teens. As older playgrounds are updated (Telopea Park playground for example is ageing and in need of more contemporary equipment), we recommend that replacement playgrounds be designed to have broad age appeal and functionality for toddlers through to teens, as well as for children with a disability.