Fully Fenced Play Spaces Help Ensure Equitable Access - A Petition for More Fully Fence Play Spaces

**[Play Spaces Policy Position](http://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/parks-and-reserves/recreational_activities/play-spaces/play_spaces_policy)**

*The ACT Government recognises the value of play and an active lifestyle for all children and their carers. They are committed to providing accessible, diverse, stimulating and manageable play spaces which foster healthy social, physical and mental child development. It also recognises that play spaces integrated with other community activities and amenities have potential to strengthen the social fabric.*

A significant proportion of Canberran families are not able to fully access these benefits due to a wide range of issues. Fully fencing play spaces is a simple and relatively inexpensive way of increasing accessibility and inclusivity.

People who benefit from fully fenced play spaces include;

* Parents or carers with more than one young child.

*“When I had twins (and when they learned to run) I stopped going to playgrounds.”*

*“I had a choice when my two children went in opposite directions. Which one should I chase?”*

* Parent or carers with a child or children with a disability, e.g. an autism spectrum disorder.

*“My 4½ year old child with autism has no sense of danger. I have two other younger children. One is breastfed”*

* Pregnant women with young children.

In late pregnancy some mothers find it hard to move easily, let alone chase children.

* Older people caring for young children.

Older people are more likely to have restricted movement.

* Parents or carers who have a disability or health issue that restricts their mobility.

These issues range from wearing a moon boot, using a walking stick to using a wheelchair.

* Educators taking groups of children to play spaces.

Family day carers need to provide a safe and stimulating environment for multiple young children.

* Day care groups for people with dementia.

Carers value outdoor experiences with a minimal risk of wandering.

The first of eight recommendations from the [Canberra Destination Playgrounds Study 2018](https://www.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1230826/Canberra-Destination-Playgrounds-Study-A16452213-A16540946.pdf) includes fencing around play equipment for younger children as one of three priorities. p137

Canberra is clearly lacking in fully fenced play spaces.

* Queanbeyan has 6 fully fenced play spaces providing one for every 7,000 residents which is outstanding nationally.
* Adelaide provides 90 fully fenced play spaces providing one for every 13,000 residents.
* Canberra provides 1 fully fenced play space for every 130,000 residents with 60 play spaces partly fenced for hazards within 20m.

The petition recommends;

1. Within 6 months, finalise a 3 year plan for at least 30 fully fenced play spaces (one per 13,000 residents). This plan must have guaranteed recurrent annual funding.
2. Provide an app or website for locating fully fenced play spaces.

“More than simply providing physical infrastructure, the provision of play spaces supports multiple health, wellbeing, social, and economic benefits.” [City Renewal Authority chief executive Malcolm Snow](https://the-riotact.com/report-urges-bigger-more-challenging-playgrounds-with-shade-and-facilities/259359/comment-page-1#comment-586137)

Play spaces are easily accessed by most Canberrans yet there is a significant proportion of the population that needs spaces to be fully fenced in order to access these benefits.

Submitted by Matthew Armstrong as the Principal Petitioner of [*More Fully Fenced Playspaces*](http://epetitions.act.gov.au/CurrentEPetition.aspx?PetId=88)

Please see *epetitions.act.gov.au* then Current Petitions.

**Excess material**

Quotes from the study p26

*For those playgrounds near roads it’s a must to have fencing.*

*Even well behaved kids run off! More fencing, especially where close to roads (eg Gowrie shops playground)*

*More shade and fencing (or further from roads).*

*With a 4 and 1 year old, it can be hard at playgrounds near roads to keep an eye on them.*

[*https://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/act/where-is-canberra-s-most-popular-park-20180807-p4zw0j.html*](https://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/act/where-is-canberra-s-most-popular-park-20180807-p4zw0j.html)

"It's nice if it's fenced in because you can give a child attention without worrying about the other one running into traffic or something like that."

Parking as an issue…. Very limited close by parking at Boundless and paid parking at the Acorn Arboretum.(?not cheap)

Stories

Mothers Franklin Paint and Play – 9.8.18

lives in a 2 bedroom apartment with 3 children under 5 years old. The older child has autism and is non-verbal. Her husband is a shift worker at the hospital. In this medium to high density housing area no-one has a garden at the most a small courtyard.

The Tank St Park is in the middle of a roundabout in a heavy traffic construction zone. It was impossible watching the three children play in the roundabout.

It was recently fenced, not just around the play equipment but included a grassed area to run. It is a major improvement in our lives.  All the families with small children now come out. In the school holidays there were at least 15 children in the park. I was shocked coming from Perth and Sydney where there are fenced parks everywhere.

Check with Patrick

<https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/meegan-fitzharris-mla-media-releases/2018/better-suburbs-citizens-forum-to-help-plan-canberras-future>

Minister Fitzharris said the Citizens’ Forum will also be asked how funding for playground improvements should be utilised.

“Playgrounds are a recognised priority in the Better Suburbs program. They were listed by the community as a top five feature, with the quality of playgrounds valued more than how many there are in each suburb.

“Playing and having fun is important for all children, and with over 500 playgrounds across Canberra competing for investment, I’m keen to work with the Citizens’ Forum on a new approach to playground investment that more closely involves the community in the process.

“Therefore I will ask the Better Suburbs Citizen’s Forum to directly allocate $1.9 million set aside in this year’s Budget for local community upgrades, $1 million of which must be spent on playgrounds.

“Work will then start on their defined projects straight after the Better Suburbs Statement is released in September 2018,” said Minister Fitzharris.

Hello ABC

Following your discussion of report on Canberra's playgrounds.

Fenced playgrounds are part of their first recommendation.

https://www.act.gov.au/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0004/1230826/Canberra-Destination-Playgrounds-Study-A16452213-A16540946.pdf see p137

This epetition asks for 30 fully fenced play spaces in the ACT.

http://epetitions.act.gov.au/CurrentEPetition.aspx?PetId=88

I have collected stories of parents experience of unfenced play spaces.

The Citizens Forum meeting on August 19 has over $1 million to allocate to play space improvements. With 60 of Canberra's 500 play spaces already partly fenced some of these could be fully fenced at a reasonable cost. This petition will be presented at the forum

https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/BetterSuburbs. - see play spaces tab

https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open\_government/inform/act\_government\_media\_releases/meegan-fitzharris-mla-media-releases/2018/better-suburbs-citizens-forum-to-help-plan-canberras-future

RECOMMENDATIONS The following are recommendations for current and future destination playgrounds in Canberra (and for playgrounds in general) based on the outcomes of the Audit:

1. Shade, age-appropriate enclosures and extreme weather protection - Shade over equipment and adult seating spaces/tables - Fencing around play equipment for younger children - Windbreaks and protection from extreme weather

2. More challenging and diverse forms of play - More and better nature play options that immerse children in the sensorial natural elements (e.g. mud, water, dirt, sticks, rocks, branches, boulders, trees, ponds, fauna) - More challenging equipment and risky play (large climbing walls, treehouses, big flying foxes, risky equipment for younger children) - More imaginative play e.g. features that encourage imaginative engagement and interaction, pretend play, creative expression e.g. mazes, public art, whimsical play equipment - More water play features to entertain children in the warmer months - More all-weather play equipment and features that enable children to engage with playgrounds all year round.

3. More and better facilities - Ample seating for carers, picnic tables, BBQs, bins and toilets - Shade over facilities (seating; picnic tables and BBQs) - Access to drinking water: water fountains/bubblers - Facilities in good working order all year round - Facilities in close proximity to playground areas

4. Equipment for a wider range of ages - More play equipment for very young children (babies and toddlers) – e.g. small swings and slides, small climbing opportunities - More play equipment for older children (8-16) such as flying foxes, treehouses, climbing walls, skate parks, bike parks

5. Natural features - Soft, green grass - Shady trees - Water features - Attractive setting - Diversity of natural features

6. Make larger, quality playgrounds NOT more, smaller playgrounds Although respondents appreciate the number and range of local playgrounds in close proximity to residences, the vast majority want larger quality playgrounds rather than more, smaller playgrounds. An example of this is Moncrieff, which is much larger and with substantially more equipment than the average neighbourhood playground. People from across the entire of the Gungahlin area travel to Moncrieff to use this playground.

7. Improve older playgrounds - Update old equipment and add new quality equipment - Replace tan bark with soft fall - Maintain and/or replace facilities

8. Proximity - Playgrounds in close proximity to homes offer ease of access, and the patterns for many of the destination playgrounds suggests that location is a key factor - Canberra citizens will travel across the ACT to visit a large, quality playground - Visitors want cafes or food and beverage facilities co-located or in close proximity to playgrounds