

COUNCIL REPORT

2nd Ordinary Council Meeting

AGENDA ITEM:	13.1.1
REPORT TITLE:	Playground Refurbishment Consultation Outcomes and Lighting Options
MEETING DATE:	Tuesday 15 October 2024
AUTHOR:	Executive Manager Environment, Katie O'Neill
APPROVER:	General Manager of Infrastructure, Nadine Nilon

COMMUNITY PLAN

Family and Community: Palmerston is a safe and family friendly community where everyone belongs.

PURPOSE

This Report seeks to inform Council on the outcomes of community engagement undertaken for the redevelopment of Sanctuary Lakes and the Marlow Lagoon Playgrounds and considers the option of lighting regional playgrounds.

KEY MESSAGES

- Council has assessed and awarded a tender for redevelopment of the Sanctuary Lakes Playground and the Marlow Lagoon Junior Unit Playground at Marlow Lagoon, with construction on each playground due to start in 2025, following the wet season.
- To ensure that community input has been adequately considered in the final design of each playground, a stakeholder engagement program was undertaken from 15 September until 6 October 2024.
- The results of the stakeholder engagement indicated that sensory and accessible play options was considered the most important design element for Sanctuary Lakes. For the Marlow Lagoon Junior Unit Playground, the community requested swing activities, and more platforms, slides and ramps.
- Additional suggestions that were provided through the consultation will be considered in the final designs for the playgrounds and included as appropriate and practical for the available space and budget.
- On finalisation of designs, equipment will be ordered in time for construction in 2025, when access is available following the wet season.
- In August 2024, Council requested lighting to be reviewed for regional parks. It is recommended that;
 - pathways within parks are included in dark spot lighting upgrades to improve connectivity and accessibility, and
 - lighting infrastructure for the lighting of play spaces is installed as refurbishment of regional parks occur with the lighting only to be used as options for events and booking requests, where available.

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT Report entitled Playground Refurbishment Consultation Outcomes and Lighting Options be received and noted.
2. THAT Council notes the inclusion of the consultation outcomes to be included in the final designs of the Sanctuary Lakes Playground and the Marlow Lagoon Junior Unit Playground refurbishments, and

that the designs are made publicly available, including acknowledgement of the contribution from the community in their development.

3. THAT Council includes the installation of lighting infrastructure of play spaces within regional parks as part of refurbishment projects, and that the use of lighting where it is available is to occur as part of approved events and bookings.
4. THAT Council notes that pathway lighting within parks is included within the dark spot public lighting upgrade program.

BACKGROUND

Council's Palmerston Play Space Strategy was adopted at the 1st Ordinary Council Meeting of February 2022, for the purpose of providing a consistent approach to playground planning in the City's open space network. The Strategy is focused on delivering priority outcomes for Palmerston play spaces, including:

- Increasing diversity and quality of play experiences and environments.
- Increasing community involvement and information in play space planning.
- Improving the maintenance and resourcing of play spaces.

To meet the objectives of the Strategy, Council recently released and awarded a tender for the redevelopment of playgrounds within two (2) of Council's regional parks, Sanctuary Lakes playground in Gunn, and the Marlow Lagoon junior unit playground, Marlow Lagoon. The aim is to replace aging infrastructure at these parks with diverse high-quality play experiences. Community input on the design of these playgrounds was sought through a consultation program, undertaken from the 15 September until 6 October 2024

At the 2nd Ordinary Council Meeting of 20 August 2024 Council made the following decision in relation to lighting of playgrounds.

17.1. Lighting of Regional Playground Equipment

THAT a report be prepared regarding the feasibility to light Regional Parks Playground equipment by the second ordinary council meeting in October 2024.

CARRIED 10/1486 - 20/08/2024

This Report provides Council with the outcomes of the community consultation undertaken for the redevelopment of the Sanctuary Lakes Playground and the Marlow Lagoon Junior Unit Playground.

The Report also considers introducing lighting of regional parks throughout the municipality.

DISCUSSION

The stakeholder engagement program for the Sanctuary Lakes and Marlow Lagoon Junior Unit playground redevelopment was undertaken from 15 September until 6 October 2024. The objective of the engagement was to seek community input on play experiences, activities and equipment that were considered the most important for each playground.

The tender was awarded based on concept designs, with the consultation intended to inform the final design for construction for both playgrounds.

An online survey was developed, outlining six (6) key playground elements, and asking the public to rate each according to the level of importance. A face-to-face community engagement session was undertaken at the Joan Fejo 'Brekkie in Park' event on the 15 September 2024. Additionally, the survey was presented to Palmerston schools, early learning centres and the Palmerston Kids Network Group, seeking input.

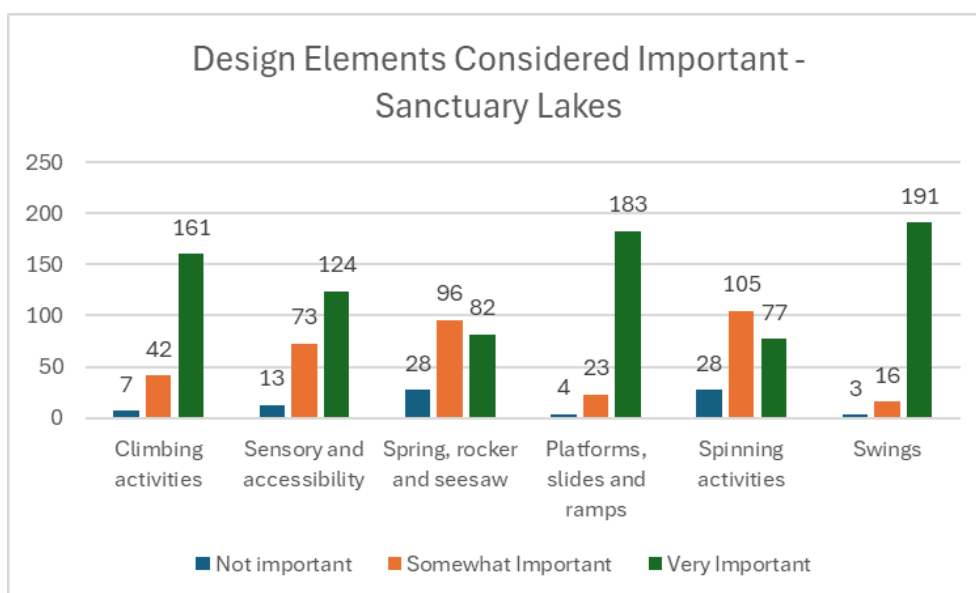
The playground elements that were listed for feedback included equipment that could fit into the following categories:

- Climbing activities
- Sensory and accessibility activities
- Spring, rocker and see-saw activities
- Platforms, slides and ramps activities
- Spinning activities
- Swings

The online survey was completed by 270 residents, with a further 30 residents providing Facebook comments, and direct commentary at the engagement session held at the Brekkie in the Park event.

Results – Sanctuary Lakes

For the Sanctuary Lakes Playground, 'Swings', 'Platforms, 'Slides and Ramps' and 'Climbing Activities' followed by 'Sensory and Accessibility Activities' were considered the most important design elements.



Community members were also given the opportunity to provide free text in the survey. Many comments provided confirmed the overall need for increased accessibility at the playground, including the following.

- Please keep in mind kids with special needs.
- Play equipment needs to be inclusive so that it opens up for all children to be included.
- All abilities equipment.
- I would also like to see more disability equipment such as wheelchair swing.
- Would really love to see it being more inclusive to allow children with disabilities or physical restrictions to be able to join in with the other kids.
- Accessibility is very important, even from an able body family, as it is important that communities are inclusive, and children can engage with each other in play.
- Palmerston needs an all-abilities accessible playground.

Additional free text comments that were received in relation to the Sanctuary Lakes Playground included:

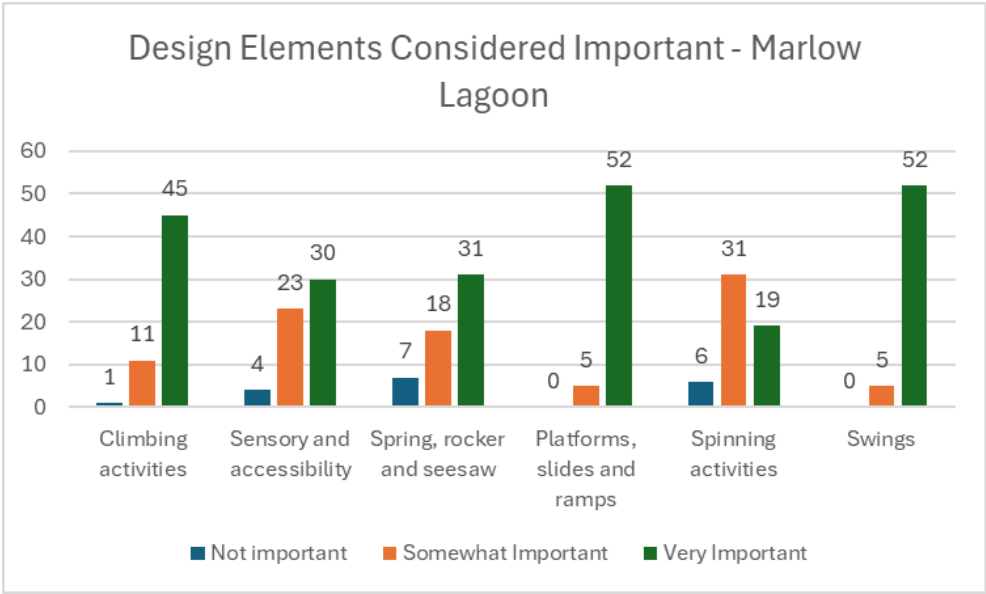
- 12 individual comments asking for water-based play activities, and misting sprays.
- 10 comments asking for toddler specific aged activities, with four (4) comments suggesting zoning of play areas to cater for diverse age groups.
- 16 comments requesting that shade is all encompassing, including over seating.

A Place for People

- Five (5) comments indicating a preference that sand Softfall is not included in the redesign.
- Three (3) comments requesting that the park remain fenced.

Results – Marlow Lagoon

For the Marlow Lagoon Junior Unit, the most important design element identified by the community was for ‘Swings’, followed closely by ‘Platforms, Slides and Ramps’ and ‘Climbing Activities’.



Free text provided by the community for this playground included:

- Large connecting structures like bridges would be good between platforms.
- Large slides and lots of climbing frames i.e. monkey bars for all ages, low line and ones for teens.
- 100% must be shaded, and a lot of seating for families.
- Lots of shade for the hot Darwin days and seating for the adults directly next to the equipment to keep an eye on the kids.
- Would be great to have a fence around the playground so kids can't run away.
- Age friendly areas for small and bigger kids and families.
- Adventurous climbing frame with levels and activities.
- Swings are always popular. Don't forget to include toddler swings.
- Incorporate music and sound.

Lighting

Council's public lighting includes all street lighting and lighting of public spaces, including parks. Current priorities for lighting are focussed on roads and pathways to ensure dark areas are upgraded to meet current lighting standards which improves safety for all users. There are also a number of gazebos and seating areas that do have lighting installed.

Play spaces, including playgrounds do not have lighting installed for night-time use. To light playgrounds requires consideration of the intended users of the playgrounds and spaces, including nearby residents and the type of park and other amenities.

The Play Space Strategy doesn't specifically outline play space lighting as a priority; however, it is captured within the design guidelines to be considered, along with lighting pathways.

Regional parks are Councils parks that have the greatest diversity of play spaces, public amenities such as toilets, barbecues, and are designed to have the highest usage. As a result, they also typically have the highest numbers of bookings, both by Council for events and by other users. If a program was to be established, it would be recommended to start with regional play spaces.

As a detailed review of all lighting options and requirements for parks have not been investigated and are not considered a current priority for play spaces in accordance with the strategy, it is not recommended to introduce lighting to all parks, or to introduce a new program for play space lighting. The lighting of pathways would continue to be incorporated into the dark spot public lighting upgrade program.

The refurbishment of play spaces does provide an opportunity to incorporate lighting as part of a larger project such as the regional playground refurbishment projects currently planned.

Therefore, it is recommended that regional play space refurbishment includes the provision of lighting to enable use after dark, with the use of the lighting restricted to approved park bookings and events.

In the future, Council may determine to consider set times for lighting play spaces after dark on a regular basis, however this is not recommended until the spaces have sufficient, compliant lighting infrastructure in place, and consultation occurs in relation to lighting levels and operation times.

Summary

The results of the community survey closely align with the priority outcomes of the Play Space Strategy. The Strategy aims to actively identify where changes and improvements are required to deliver universally accessible play spaces. The Strategy also aims to review and increase resourcing of play space upgrades to ensure Council is responsive to community needs. The provision of sensory and accessible play options at Sanctuary Lakes and increasing the resourcing for the upgrade of the Marlow Lagoon Junior Unit to include swings, platforms and slides, will help meet these overall objectives.

The lighting of these playgrounds is also recommended to be included as part of the upgrades, with use to be restricted to approved park bookings and events.

Next Steps

Council will engage with the awarded playground installer to finalise designs based on community feedback. The budget of the playgrounds has been set, and along with the available space, will inform the final designs.

The final design and elements of the playgrounds will enable the equipment to be ordered, which typically has a 3-month lead time. This will result in the playgrounds being constructed in 2025 as soon as the site permit following the wet season.

Feedback that has been received will also be used to inform future programs and future reviews of the Play Space Strategy.

CONSULTATION AND MARKETING

A consultation plan was prepared for the community engagement program.

Primary stakeholders were identified as part of the consultation plan and included the following groups.:

- Palmerston and Rural Youth Services Network group
- Palmerston primary schools
- Palmerston early learning centres
- Playground visitors – Sanctuary Lakes and Marlow Lagoon
- Elected Members
- Community Wellbeing committee

- Community Safety committee
- Brekkie in the Park attendees
- Palmerston Markets attendees

Information flyers, with QR codes linking the online survey, were utilised at the face-to-face Brekkie in the Park Event, and at the Palmerston Markets Elected Members Stall.

The following City of Palmerston staff were consulted in preparing this Report:

- Team Lead of Open Space
- Community Development Lead
- Community development Officer
- Acting Manager Sustainability
- Marketing and Communications team

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Community Engagement Policy was applied in the development of the communication engagement program.

BUDGET AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

For the 2024/2025 financial year the Play Space Renewals and Upgrades budget is \$846,600, however this includes \$250,000 of anticipated grant funding that has not been committed at this time, leaving \$596,600 of available funds

At the 2nd Ordinary meeting in August 2024, Council approved the transfer of \$498,968.45 from Unexpended Capital Works Reserve on the award of TS2024-06 Playground Refurbishment at Marlow Lagoon and Sanctuary Lakes.

In total, the available budget for playground renewals is \$1,095,568.45 and the finalisation of the designs will be aligned to ensure that the project costs are within the available budget.

The costs relating to the inclusion of lighting will be determined following quotes from Council's current contractor. Allocation of funds will be identified from relevant budgets when required.

RISK, LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

This Report addresses the following City of Palmerston Strategic Risks:

4. Inclusion, Diversity and Access
Failure to balance meeting needs of Palmerston's cultural mosaic
5. Infrastructure
Failure to plan, deliver and maintain fit for purpose infrastructure.

STRATEGIES, FRAMEWORK AND PLANS IMPLICATIONS

The Play Space Strategy aligns with the priorities in the Community Plan and represents the City of Palmerston's commitment to improving open space amenity with fit-for-purpose infrastructure that meet community requirements. The Strategy requires playground activation with a focus on regional and new or updated playgrounds. The Strategy also requires increased resourcing to deliver higher quality play spaces, with lighting of Regional Parks Playgrounds designed to improve the quality and use of these areas.

COUNCIL OFFICER CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

We the author and approving officer declare that we do not have a conflict of interest in relation to this matter.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil