



**Final Report**  
**Southern**  
**Grampians**  
**Shire**  
**Council**  
**Playground**  
**Strategic**  
**Development**  
**Plan**  
**October 2007**

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A close-up, high-angle photograph of a lush green lawn. The grass blades are vibrant green and densely packed, creating a textured, slightly uneven surface. The lighting is bright and even, highlighting the natural sheen of the grass.

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# **Executive Summary**

## 1. Executive Summary

Southern Grampians Shire Council takes a lead role in the planning and provision of leisure services and facilities for the Shire. The Shire recently completed (2006) the development of a *Leisure Services Strategic Plan* to guide the future use, management and development of a range of sport, recreation and leisure facilities and services to meet the current and future needs of the community.

A key recommendation of the *Leisure Services Strategic Plan* identified the necessity for the development of a strategic plan to guide the future management of playgrounds across the Shire.

The scope of the project is limited to Council owned or managed public playgrounds. Therefore playgrounds that are located on Crown Land managed by the DSE, or DSE appointed (non-Council) Committees of Management, are not included in the scope of this project, nor are playgrounds provided within other community facilities such as kindergartens, pre-schools, playgroups, education facilities or other private facilities.

A review of background research and existing planning documents was undertaken to identify possible implications and considerations for this strategy. A summary of twelve relevant key documents is presented in Section 2.3. Of particular note were Council's recently adopted *Playground Policy* and *Leisure Services Strategic Plan*. Another particularly good resource is the recently released "*The Good Play Space Guide: I can play too*" (March 2007), developed by Sport and Recreation Victoria in association with the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV). The guide provides a range of examples, ideas and principles to guide playground provision and development.

The planning process also involved a comprehensive review of the Shire demographics, in particular the number and distribution of children aged 0-19 years, as well as a review of industry playground provision and development trends, and current facility provision.

A detailed compliance audit was undertaken to identify issues of non-compliance with current Australian Standards, potential hazards, safety matters and general maintenance requirements. Appendix 1 provides a detailed summary of the compliance audit results for each of Council's playgrounds.

The compliance audit revealed that the majority of Council playgrounds do not currently comply with relevant standards, primarily due to old or outdated equipment, identified risks or hazards, or outstanding maintenance requirements (or a combination of all three factors).

There are currently 29 public playgrounds located throughout the Shire, the majority (22) of these are owned or managed by the Shire and therefore form part of this strategy. The remaining 7 playgrounds are located on Crown Land managed by the DSE or DSE appointed Committees of Management.

- Each of the Shire's main urban settlements have access to at least one Council managed public playground except for:
  - Dunkeld (DSE playground provided), and
  - Branxholme (DSE playground provided).
- Smaller settlements within the Shire including Byaduk, Tarrington, Wannon, Tabor and Warrayure do not have access to a local playground.
- Hamilton has a total of 16 Council playgrounds, including 12 local

- playgrounds, 3 neighbourhood and 1 regional (skate park). Eight of the 16 playgrounds rated as average or below in terms of overall quality.
- Of the 22 Council playgrounds across the Shire, 3 reportedly receive a low level of use, 11 medium and 8 high levels of use.
  - At the time of the audit, only 5 of the 22 playgrounds currently meet relevant Australian Standards. Non-compliance issues are evident in relation to the actual equipment used as well as general maintenance matters (e.g. mulch).
  - In terms of the overall rating of the playgrounds, 3 rated excellent, 9 good, 6 average, 2 poor and 2 very poor. Therefore 10 of the 22 playgrounds rated average or below, representing slightly under half of the total provision.
  - Playgrounds in Hamilton attracted the lowest overall quality rating, accounting for each of the very poor (2), poor (2) and 4 of the 6 average playgrounds across the Shire.

The planning process also included a review of previous consultation results relevant to playground provision that were obtained from other Council planning projects which was supplemented by a community workshop and stakeholder workshop specific to this project. A letter was sent inviting representatives from all playgroups, preschools, kindergartens, service clubs and other stakeholders throughout the Shire to attend the workshop/s.

Furthermore, the initial draft report was placed on public exhibition for a period of approximately four weeks, which provided an additional opportunity for community and stakeholder input. A total of six submissions were received as a result of the exhibition period with subsequent changes incorporated into this report.

Section 3.5 provides a summary of key consultation outcomes obtained during the study process.

Fundamental to the project was a review of Council's existing playground management practices in order to identify possible opportunities for improvement in order to meet contemporary management requirements and to address Council's insurer recommendations.

Section 4 provides a summary of the main issues and opportunities identified through the background research, consultation and audit results. Key findings are grouped under the key themes:

- Planning,
- Management,
- Development, and
- Resource allocation.

The issues and opportunities were considered by the project Steering Committee prior to the development of the recommendations contained in this report. Section 5 provides a summary of 'current playground provision', 'key demographic characteristics', and 'evidence of demand' prior to presenting recommendations for each major settlement and the rural balance. The township specific recommendations are supported by broader strategic directions for each of the key themes identified above.

In terms of Council's existing playground budgets, the existing annual allocation of \$30,000 appears adequate to address the ongoing maintenance and minor improvement requirements (including installation of park furniture) as identified in the

audit results, however this allocation provides minimal scope for substantial playground upgrade requirements.

Therefore it is recommended that Council consider additional capital allocations to address the upgrade requirements as identified in this plan (see Section 7: Implementation Plan). A summary of total implementation costs (maintenance and capital improvement) are as follows:

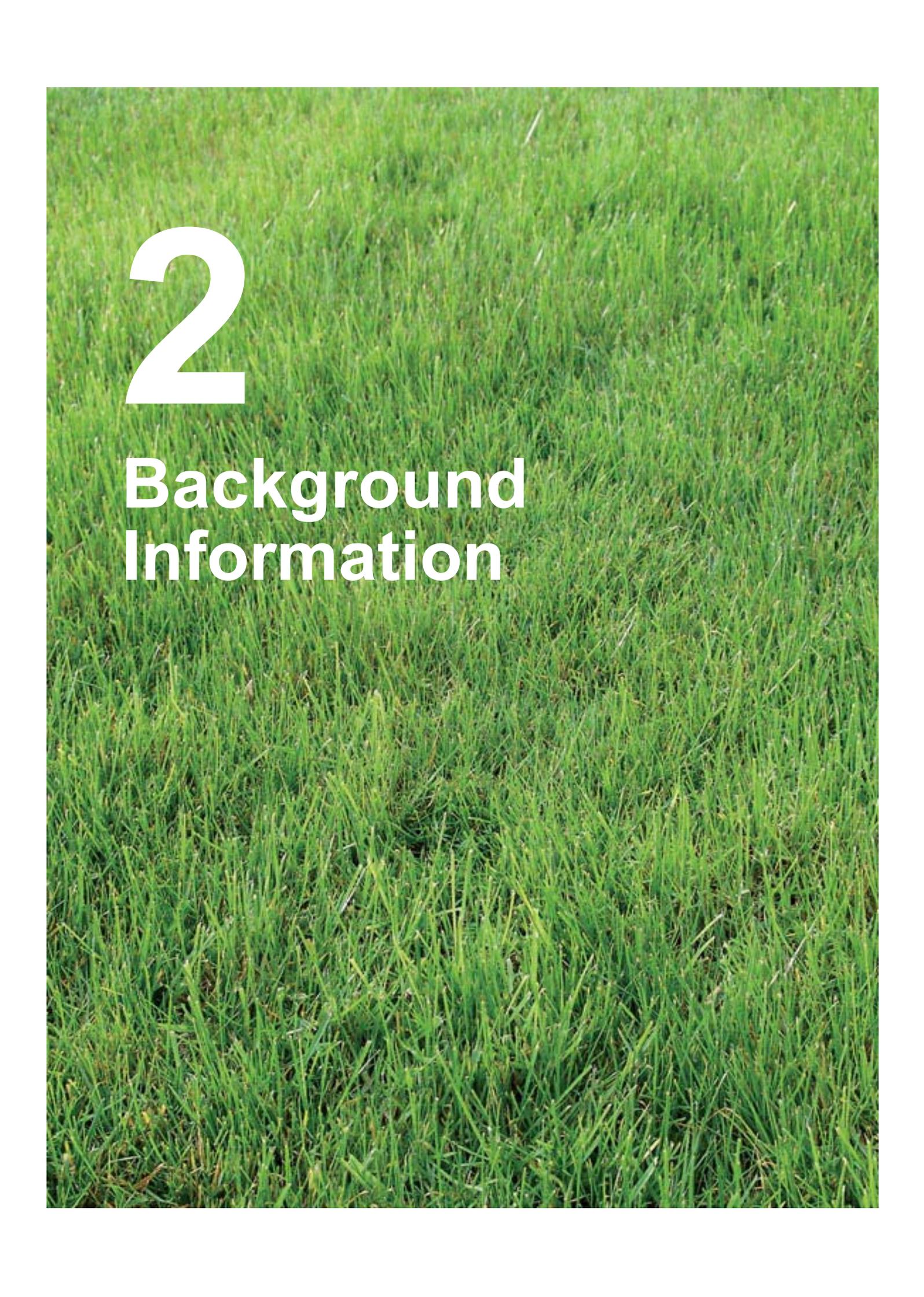
Urgent	=	\$24,700 (within 6 months)
High	=	\$142,400 (within 12 months)
Medium	=	\$215,600 (within 2-3 years)
Low	=	\$259,300 (within 3-5 years)
Total	=	\$642,000

The report also supports the development of a Youth Precinct and Regional Playground in Hamilton within the next five years, however eventual construction will largely be dependant on Council's ability to attract support funding for these projects (including developer contributions). Development of these facilities will provide a significant regional attraction for Hamilton and the Shire as well as providing quality recreation experiences for children and young people.

Therefore in order to assist implementation of these items, it is recommended that Council establish a capital reserve fund with an appropriate annual allocation (e.g. \$30,000 p.a.) which will accumulate for the future development of the Regional Playground and Youth Precinct. Establishment of the reserve fund may also assist Council in attracting external support funding for such projects on a matching contribution basis.

In addition to maintenance and upgrade requirements, the report identified the need for the establishment of a more formal playground safety management system and recording procedures. Implementation of such a system (as provided in Appendix 3) is critical to Council's successful management of public risks and duty of care associated with these facilities.

In summary, the *Playground Strategic Development Plan* provides Council with the necessary strategic framework, direction and recommendations to guide the ongoing management and development of Council owned and managed playgrounds throughout the Shire.

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a lush green lawn. The grass blades are vibrant green and densely packed, creating a textured, repetitive pattern across the entire frame. The lighting is bright and even, highlighting the natural sheen and color of the grass.

# 2

## Background Information

## 2. Background Information

The Southern Grampians Shire is located in the centre of the Western District of Victoria, approximately 300km west of Melbourne and 500kms south east of Adelaide. The Shire has an estimated population of approximately 17,000 people, with around 9,000 people residing in Hamilton. Hamilton is the main retail and service centre of the Shire. Smaller townships which surround and support Hamilton include Balmoral, Branxholme, Byaduk, Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld, Glenthompson, Peshurst and Tarrington.

Agriculture and sheep grazing are the dominant industries in the region. However, the Shire is currently undergoing a period of change, mainly due to recent new commercial investments in a diversity of industries, in particular mineral sands processing and timber plantations which is gradually impacting the growth, profile and distribution of the population.

Southern Grampians Shire Council takes a lead role in the planning and provision of leisure services and facilities for the Shire. The Shire recently completed (2006) the development of a *Leisure Services Strategic Plan* to guide the future use, management and development of a range of sport, recreation and leisure facilities and services to meet the current and future needs of the community.

A key recommendation of the *Leisure Services Strategic Plan* identified the necessity for the development of a strategic plan to guide the future management of playgrounds across the Shire.

Council subsequently developed a Project Brief and invited submissions from suitably qualified consultants to undertake this project, as a result *Insight Leisure Planning* was appointed in May 2007 and we have been working in close collaboration with Council to develop this report.

### 2.1 KEY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The following section summaries the key aims and objectives as identified in the original project brief.

The three key aims of the project were to:

- Analyse Council's playground facilities to assess how they meet the needs of the community and identify possible risks,
- Provide a framework for Council to develop key assets and increase their use, and
- Involve community input and develop community pride in Council's playground facilities and to establish a strategic plan within the context of Council's playground policy.

Key objectives included:

- Audit existing playgrounds, identify risks and review their current role in meeting community needs,
- Identify possible gaps in playground provision,
- Prepare a strategy to guide the future development of playgrounds across the Shire,
- To provide strategic direction to Council in future management of playgrounds that will satisfy the requirements of Council's insurer,
- Assess the quality of playgrounds and identify opportunities for

- improvements, including consideration of access to a range of play experiences across the Shire,
- Ensure consistency with other adopted strategic plans and relevant Council policies,
- Assess existing facilities with reference to current standards and the adequacy of facilities to meet those standards, and
- Provide recommendations in relation to the possible development of a regional playground and youth precinct in the Shire.

## 2.2 PROJECT SCOPE

The scope of the project is limited to Council owned or managed public playgrounds. Therefore playgrounds that are located on Crown Land managed by the DSE, or DSE appointed (non-Council) Committees of Management, are not included in the scope of this project, nor are playgrounds provided within other community facilities such as kindergartens, pre-schools, playgroups, education facilities or other private facilities.

Having said this, playgrounds that are provided on DSE controlled land (non-Council managed) often provide a valuable contribution to the recreation and leisure options available to local communities. Therefore the strategic recommendations outlined in this report have considered non-Council managed facilities within this context, however Council accepts no responsibility for their ongoing management or development. Non-Council managed facilities have not been included in the detailed compliance audit undertaken as part of this project.

## 2.3 BACKGROUND RESEARCH REVIEW

The following section provides a summary of key Council planning directions or policies that relate to playgrounds within other strategic documents and also highlights key consultation results from previous research that may be relevant to this project.

### 2.3.1 Playground Policy (May 2007)

The Shire adopted a new playground policy in May 2007 to guide the future provision and management of playgrounds throughout the Shire. The policy outlines a number of key principles that will underpin the provision of playgrounds, in summary these include:

- Equitable distribution of playgrounds,
- Application of high standard designs and diverse approaches,
- Design and siting to enhance the park setting,
- Safe and well maintained,
- Designed to enable ease of maintenance and repair,
- Include community input into siting and design,
- Maximise accessibility, and
- Aim to theme and/or integrate artwork to add value to the play experience.

The policy also outlines a proposed hierarchy for playground provision comprising 'regional', 'neighbourhood/township' and 'local' playgrounds. Additional Council commitments include:

- Aim to ensure compliance with relevant Australian standards,
- Consideration of access for all abilities,

- Undertake regular inspection and maintenance audits (annually as a minimum),
- Consideration of CPTED<sup>1</sup> design principles,
- Allocation of annual funds to maintain, upgrade and (where appropriate) provide new playgrounds or equipment,
- Encourage other public land managers and/or service clubs to develop and maintain playgrounds consistent with this policy, and
- Engage local residents and other stakeholders when planning the construction of new or upgraded playgrounds.

### 2.3.2 Leisure Services Strategic Plan (Nov. 2006)

The *Leisure Strategy* noted the importance of playgrounds in contributing to the physical, mental and social development of children. It also recognised the role of playgrounds in creating a “social hub” for children and parents within local communities. The report noted that Council does not have a formal policy or framework to guide the future use or development of playgrounds (a Playground Policy has subsequently been adopted by Council) and identified that a number of facilities have historically been provided and maintained by local service clubs or groups (with varying degrees of success).

The following key consultation results from the *Leisure Strategy* in relation to playgrounds remain relevant for this project. According to the *Household Survey* results (350 completed interviews from across the Shire):

- *Respondents were asked to rate the overall quality and distribution of playgrounds located within the Southern Grampians Shire – there was general satisfaction with the quality and distribution of playgrounds (< 10% saying “poor” or “very poor”).*
- *Residents from Coleraine more likely to rate the quality and distribution of playgrounds lowly, whilst residents from Hamilton and Penshurst more likely to rate them highly.*

However, results from the 100 completed *In-Field Surveys*, that is, face to face interviews within parks and other locations throughout the Shire, the results varied to the *Household Telephone Survey* when respondents were asked to rate the quality and distribution of playgrounds across the Shire, specifically:

- *Half of all respondents (50%) rated the quality of playgrounds within the Shire as either “very good” or “good”, with 38% rating their distribution as either “very good” or “good”.*
- *A significant number of respondents rated the quality (21%) and distribution (30%) of playgrounds as either “poor” or “very poor”.*
- *25% of Hamilton residents rated the quality of playgrounds as either “poor” or “very poor” (conversely, 51% rated the quality “very good” or “good”).*
- *33% of Hamilton residents rated playground distribution as either “poor” or “very poor” (conversely, only 39% rated the distribution “very good” or “good”).*

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<sup>1</sup> CPTED = Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, Crime Prevention Victoria (2002).

Respondents were also asked in what ways could Council improve existing playgrounds, key results include:

- *Almost a quarter (24%) of respondents suggested that “replacing old equipment” or “providing more seating” might improve existing playgrounds.*
- *A similar proportion of respondents suggested “providing shade and shelter” (23%) and “installing BBQ and picnic facilities” (22%) would improve existing playgrounds.*
- *12% of respondents commented that nothing needs to be done (“they are fine”).*

The *Leisure Strategy* planning process also included community forums in each of the main Shire townships. The following consultation results in relation to playgrounds were identified in the *Leisure Strategy*:

- *Provision of a playground, BBQ/picnic area, seating and shade are important qualities that influence people’s decision to use a park.*
- *The Branxholme Forum suggested that the former Bowling Club site could be developed as a town park, including a playground.*
- *The Cavendish Forum identified a desire for a new playground at the Cavendish Recreation Reserve.*
- *The Coleraine Forum suggested a need to relocate the playground (from the Turnbull Street Sports Precinct) to the skate park area.*
- *The Glenthompson Forum suggested the need for an upgraded playground at the Lions Park and a new playground at the Recreation Reserve (within a broader ‘youth precinct’). This was also supported by a separate written submission from the Glenthompson and District Community Association.*

The following extract from the *Leisure Strategy* summarises the key directions and findings in relation to playgrounds.

- *There appears to be a relatively even distribution of playgrounds throughout the Shire, that is, within Hamilton and most smaller townships have at least one playground facility (exception Byaduk).*
- *In the smaller townships, the playground(s) invariably are located in parks or settings which double as the main visitor stop.*
- *There is little diversity in the range of play equipment, that is, most offer similar experiences and cater for a limited age group, such as pre-primary (2 – 4 years) and young primary aged children (4 - 7 years).*
- *Play opportunities are not well provided for older primary (7 – 12 years) and teenagers, and there is little use of natural features and landscaping to provide play experiences.*
- *There does not appear to be a hierarchy of playgrounds in Hamilton that provides for local and regional needs of the community, symptomatic of there being no playground policy/strategy.*
- *The main playgrounds and family recreation areas in Hamilton are located at Helens Park, the aquatic precinct at Lake Hamilton, Pedrina Park and Hughan Park.*
- *Lake Hamilton has three playground areas located around its circumference.*
- *General quality and maintenance of playgrounds appears satisfactory, however, the playgrounds which appear to fall short of Australian Standards in relation to design and/or safety are those at Mitchell Park (Hamilton) and*

*Patterson Park (Hamilton).*

*The household telephone survey and the resident infield survey undertaken during this study both sought information from people about their level of satisfaction with the current provision of playgrounds throughout the Shire, with the key outcomes being:*

- Mixed views on the level of satisfaction with the quality and distribution of playgrounds throughout the Shire.*
- Over three quarters of respondents from Hamilton rated the quality and distribution of playgrounds as satisfactory, whilst a majority of respondents from Coleraine rated them poorly.*

*A Shire the size of Southern Grampians warrants consideration for the provision of an “all abilities” playground. These playgrounds are of a large-scale and offer a range of play spaces and experiences for children of all ages and abilities, and are specifically designed to cater for people with poor mobility, such as people with a disability (wheelchair bound) and older adults who might have mobility constraints but wish to supervise children on playgrounds.*

*A draft Playground Policy (was provided in the Leisure Strategy) to guide the future provision of playgrounds across the Shire:*

- To meet the changing needs of residents.*
- To meet new demand as the population increases (Hamilton).*
- To provide a more diverse suite of playgrounds for the Shire, in scale, design, equipment choice and materials.*
- To ensure compliance of all play equipment with relevant guidelines for playground construction and maintenance.*
- To enable Council to forward plan its resource commitment to the provision of playgrounds.*

*When applying the directions of the draft Playground Policy (subsequently adopted by Council) to the Shire setting the following specific issues and opportunities need to be considered:*

- 1. Upgrade of the playground at Lake Hamilton beach with a Neighbourhood playground (consider funding partly or wholly from Developer Contributions collected from residential sub-division occurring east of Lake Hamilton).*
- 2. Replacement of the playground at Mitchell Park with a new Local playground.*
- 3. Installation of a regional “all abilities” playground in Hamilton (site options to include Hughan Park, Patterson Park and the aquatics precinct at Lake Hamilton). If not at Patterson Park, replace the existing playground with a new Neighbourhood playground.*
- 4. Installation of a teenage playground in Hamilton (site options include Helens Park, Hughan Park and Patterson Park, but to co-locate with an upgraded skate facility).*
- 5. Provision of shade structures and fencing at strategically significant playgrounds.*
- 6. Development of new Local play space and family area at the former bowling club site in Branxholme.*
- 7. Development of new Local playground at Penshurst Recreation Reserve and one at Byaduk which could possible be themed to reflect the volcanic heritage of the area.*
- 8. Upgrade of the existing playground in Lions Park (Glenthompson) to a Neighbourhood level.*

9. *Relocate the existing playground at Turnbull Street (Coleraine) to the Skate Park sub-precinct and upgrade to a Neighbourhood level.*

Finally, the *Leisure Strategy* also included the development of three Concept Plans for specific reserves, each of these included recommendations related to playgrounds, these are:

- Pedrina Park (Hamilton) – establish a new family recreation area to include an upgraded playground. Estimated capital cost approximately \$92,000.
- Mitchell Park (Hamilton) - establish a new family recreation area to include an upgraded playground. Estimated capital cost approximately \$75,000.
- Coleraine Sports Grounds Precinct:
  - Turnbull Street – new family recreation area, including an upgraded playground etc estimated cost approximately \$93,000.

### 2.3.3 Municipal Early Years Plan (2005-2006)

The Municipal Early Years Plan is a local area plan designed to provide strategic direction for the development of coordinated educational, care and health programs, activities and other developments that impact on children 0-12 years.

The plan highlights that approximately 21% of the total Shire population are aged 0-14 years. Additional demographics characteristics are discussed in Section 2.4.

The report makes no specific reference to playgrounds although we note that at the time of writing (i.e. 2005) there were 10 preschools and 14 playgroups active in the Shire.

### 2.3.4 Lake Hamilton Management Plan (June 2005)

The report highlights that *“Lake Hamilton and its surrounds are actively promoted to tourists and have become popular for picnics, walking and cycling. The Lake is used by the regional community for water based activities including swimming, sailing, skiing, fishing, diving and rowing. The Lake has high environmental, social and economic value to Hamilton and the regional community.”*

The report makes no specific reference to playgrounds or land based recreational activities.

### 2.3.5 Melville Oval Strategic Plan (2004)

Melville Oval is the premier cricket and football arena in the municipality. The Strategic Plan provides a framework and rationale for the future use and development of the site. Four specific recommendations are made in relation to the existing playground and proposed redevelopment of the site, these are:

1. *Relocate the existing playgrounds equipment from its current position to a new play zone to the west of the proposed shared use facility.*
2. *Construct a play area which consists of relocated equipment and additional play equipment. The focus of the area is to contribute to Council's overall mix of playgrounds throughout the Shire, and recognise the importance of a comprehensive play area within the central hub of the Hamilton township. Play equipment should cater for a range of age groups and abilities and offer creative play opportunities.*
3. *The new playground should be sited in relation to the shared use facility to*

*enable clear sightlines between the play area and...spectator area. This position will allow convenient access to toilets and seated areas.*

4. *Supporting amenities to the play area should include shade structure, peripheral seating and child proof fencing. Consideration should be given to a drinking fountain.*

The report estimated the total cost of these works at approximately \$105,500.

### **2.3.6 Community Inclusion Plan (2004-2007)**

The report is developed by Council to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1992) and outlines Council's commitment to addressing the needs of all members of the community.

One of the key recommended strategies of the report relate to the "Enhancement of Recreational Opportunities", with specific reference to the need to ensure all developments to recreational facilities, parks and open space enhance access for all people. Development of a playground strategy is identified as a key action in support of this objective.

### **2.3.7 Southern Grampians Leisure Services Best Value Final Report (Aug. 2005)**

The report identified the need to develop a Playground Policy and Playground Strategy to guide the future use, management and development of playgrounds across the Shire.

### **2.3.8 The Grange Burn Masterplan (May 2005)**

The Masterplan provides a framework for the future development of the Grange Burn. The plan concentrates on vegetation and water quality management and makes no reference to playgrounds, although the ongoing development and improvement of walking opportunities along the length of the Grange Burn are identified.

### **2.3.9 Urban Design Frameworks**

The Shire has development draft Urban Design Framework documents for Wannon, Peshurst, Tarrington, Glenthompson, Cavendish, Byaduk, Branxholme and Balmoral. There are no specific references to playgrounds in any of these documents.

The Shire has also developed an Urban Design Framework for Dunkeld (2002) which recommends upgrading play equipment at the main town park (DSE) and the provision of an 'adult' outdoor play area or adventure playground on DSE land along Salt Creek. Both of these initiatives were identified as "Medium" term priorities to be implemented within 3 years from adoption of the plan (i.e. by 2005).

The Coleraine Urban Design Framework (2003) recommended the installation of additional park furniture and a skate park in the land north of Turnbull Street as well as additional play equipment in the Community Park (Railway Station Area).

### **2.3.10 Asset Management Strategy (June 2005)**

An Asset Management Strategy (AMS) for playgrounds has not been developed, however it is proposed that a broader AMS be developed for Parks and Recreation Facilities. The first draft of the Parks and Recreation Facility AMS was due for

completion by June 2007, however this has not been completed at the time of writing this report.

### 2.3.11 Moyne - Southern Grampians Community Building Initiative – Planning Forums

Three community planning forums were conducted in Southern Grampians Shire in April and May 2007. Forums were held in Dunkeld, Glenthompson and Peshurst. The three reports from these forums have been reviewed and relevant (to the playground strategy) comments or issues identified below.

#### Glenthompson:

- The community value the provision of a range of sport and recreation opportunities. Streetscape improvements, including 'playground' and additional playground equipment of older children were two projects identified (and supported by 4 'votes') as 'easy local projects to achieve'.

#### Dunkeld:

- The community value the provision of a range of sport and recreation opportunities, although playgrounds were not specifically identified.

#### Peshurst:

- The community value the provision of a range of sport and recreation opportunities. Although playgrounds were not specifically mentioned, there appeared to be strong support for the development of a local skate park (development of a skate park received 17 'votes' (third highest) in the list of 'easy local projects to achieve' and 16 'votes' on the 'more difficult local projects'. It is unclear from the report if this reflects the same people voting in each category).

### 2.3.12 The Good Play Space Guide: "I can play too", Sport and Recreation Victoria, March 2007.

This report provides a comprehensive guide to local authorities and other public land managers for the provision and development of playgrounds. The guide provides information on:

- The benefits of play,
- Providing quality play spaces,
- Planning and upgrading play spaces, and
- Design issues and solutions (a range of topics are covered).

The guide reinforces the importance of quality local playground provision, including the need for diversity in play provision and incorporation of natural elements and accessibility where ever possible.

The guide provides a wealth of valuable information, ideas and suggestions. It is recommended that the guide be reviewed by Council officers for suggestions and examples on how to improve equipment selection and increase the overall range of possible play experiences.

## 2.4 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The following section highlights key demographic characteristics and projections that have a direct relevance or influence on future playground provision across the Shire. Information has primarily been sourced from:

- ABS 2006 Census (Source: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)).
- ABS 2001 Census (Source: [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)).
- A Profile of Southern Grampians, Prospero Research & Policy Analysis Pty Ltd (2003).
- Census 2001 Information Paper: Families with Children in the Southern Grampians Shire.
- Municipal Early Years Plan (2005-2006).
- Victoria in Future, Department of Sustainability & Environment (2004).
- Leisure Services Strategic Plan (2006).

The estimated 2006 population of Southern Grampians Shire was 16,639 people, an increase of approximately 155 people from the 2001 Census. This growth is in contrast to longitudinal population projections prepared by the Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) in 2001 which predicted a net decline in the Shire population to 2031.

The usual resident population of the main townships in Southern Grampians Shire according to the preliminary 2006 Census results were:

Township	2001 Population	2006 Population	Population change 2001-2006 (Persons)
Hamilton	9,034	9,114	80
Coleraine	1,013	992	(21)
Penshurst	484	460	(24)
Dunkeld	370	397	27
Balmoral	203	188	(15)
Glenthompson	151	140	(11)
Cavendish	116	144	28
Branxholme	110	234	124 <sup>2</sup>
Rural Balance	5,003	4,970	(33)
<i>Total</i>	<i>16,484</i>	<i>16,639</i>	<i>Net 155</i>

<sup>2</sup> The Census Collector District for Branxholme was increased in 2006, resulting in a higher population count for Branxholme and reduction in the Rural Balance.

Southern Grampians Shire is considered to be a relatively “old” Shire, characterised by:

- In 2001 the median age of the Southern Grampians population was 40 years old, compared to 37 years for Regional Victoria. By 2006 the median age of the Shire had reached 41.9 years.
- Approximately 46% of the Shire population are aged over 45 years (7,663 people).
- An equal proportion, approximately 27% or 4,487 people, are aged below 19 years or within the 20-44 year age range.

The following tables provide a breakdown of the distribution of children (0-19 years) according to the ABS preliminary 2006 Census results (NB: Information for the Rural Balance was not available at the time of writing this report).

	0-4 years	% of town.	5-9 years	% of town.	10-14 years	% of town.	15-19 years	% of town.	Total Population	% of Town Pop.
<b>Hamilton</b>	510	5.5%	542	5.9%	637	6.9%	717	7.8%	2,406	26.3%
<b>Coleraine</b>	32	3.2%	49	4.9%	57	5.7%	57	5.7%	195	19.6%
<b>Penshurst</b>	22	4.7%	27	5.8%	30	6.5%	31	6.7%	110	23.9%
<b>Dunkeld</b>	23	5.7%	19	4.7%	16	4.0%	22	5.5%	80	20.1%
<b>Balmoral</b>	0	0.0%	18	9.5%	15	7.9%	13	6.9%	46	24.4%
<b>Glenthompson</b>	13	9.2%	4	2.8%	5	3.5%	0	0.0%	22	15.7%
<b>Cavendish</b>	7	4.8%	10	6.9%	9	6.2%	11	7.6%	37	25.6%
<b>Branxholme</b>	20	8.5%	18	7.6%	26	11.1%	12	5.1%	76	32.4%
<b>Tarrington</b>	10	5.1%	11	5.6%	19	9.7%	17	8.7%	57	29.2%
<b>Total &amp; Average % (Ex. Rural Bal.)</b>	637	5.1%	698	5.9%	814	6.8%	880	6.0%	3,029	24.1%

An analysis of the table above reveals (based on 2006 Census preliminary data):

- Slightly under one fifth (18.2%) of the total Shire population are aged 0-19 years old.
- Glenthompson (15.7%) and Coleraine (19.6%) have the lowest percentage of the population aged 0-19 years. Conversely, Branxholme (32.4%), Tarrington (29.2%) and Hamilton (26.3%) have the highest proportion of the town population aged 0-19 years.
- Despite Glenthompson having a low overall proportion of 0-19 year olds, it has the highest proportion of 0-4 year olds (9.2%), followed by Branxholme (8.5%), Dunkeld (5.7%), Hamilton (5.5%) and Tarrington (5.1%).

- Balmoral (9.5%) has the highest proportion of 5-9 year olds, followed by Branxholme (7.6%), Cavendish (6.9%) and Hamilton (5.9%).
- Branxholme (11.1%), Tarrington (9.7%), Balmoral (7.9%) and Peshurst (6.5%) have a relatively high proportion of children aged 10-14 years.
- Tarrington also has the highest proportion of 15-19 year olds (8.7%), followed by Hamilton (7.8%), Cavendish (7.6%) and Peshurst (6.7%).

The above statistics have been represented visually in the *'Playground and Demographic Distribution Maps'* provided in Appendix 4 for the Shire as a whole and a breakdown for the Hamilton Census Collector District. This information provides a valuable tool to assist in identifying playground provision improvement opportunities and possible gaps. This information has therefore been used to help inform the recommendations section of the report.

Finally, according to 2006 Census results, approximately one-third (30%) of all households in the Shire comprised a "couple family with children". The information in the table below has been provided by Council and identifies the Birth Notification statistics for the Shire over the last six years.

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Average
<b>Hamilton*</b>	133	111	153	129	119	144	143	133
<b>Coleraine</b>	20	16	12	12	17	11	20	15
<b>Peshurst</b>	8	9	13	13	14	18	12	12
<b>Dunkeld</b>	9	5	6	7	3	11	9	7
<b>Balmoral</b>	15	10	10	8	12	9	7	10
<b>Glenthompson</b>	2	5	6	3	5	6	1	4
<b>Cavendish*</b>	0	0	0	7	5	6	5	6
<b>Branxholme</b>	3	5	7	6	7	4	5	5
<b>Total</b>	190	161	207	185	182	211	202	191

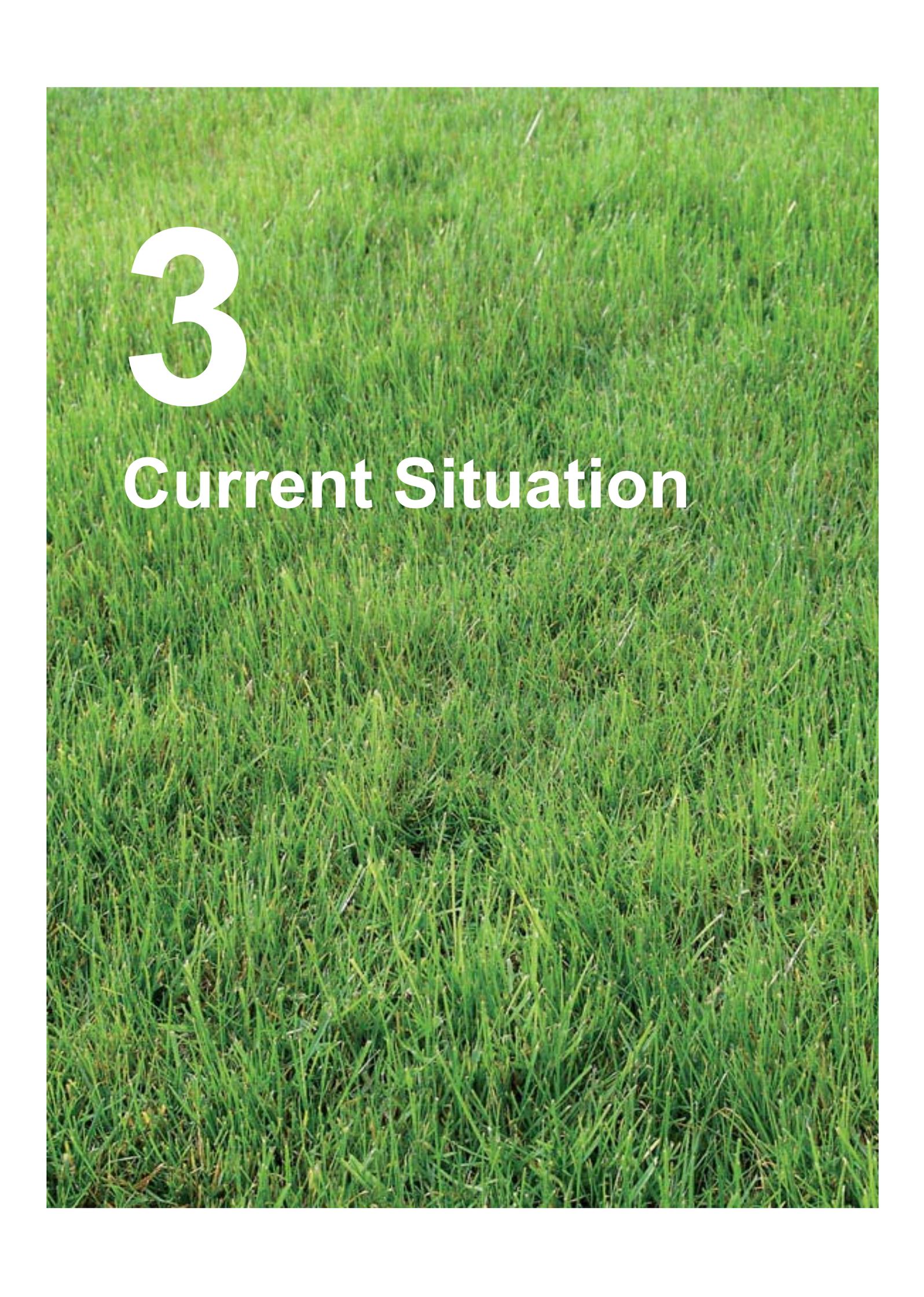
\* NB: Birth notifications for Cavendish were included in the Hamilton results from 2000-2004.

The Birth Notification statistics highlight the annual consistency of births in these townships, which suggests that current levels of demand for playground facilities will remain consistent in coming years.

## 2.5 PLAYGROUND PROVISION TRENDS

Consultation was conducted with industry specialists (including the Executive Director of PRAV) to identify the following contemporary playground provision trends:

- Inclusion of more natural features and landscaped elements within playgrounds, particularly to promote sensory stimulation and access for all abilities.
- Move themed playgrounds, for example trains, boats etc.
- Replacement of arsenic treated pine playgrounds at the end of their useful life with alternative timber or manufactured products.
- Development of larger, more expensive playgrounds.
- Increasing costs for individual playground elements, associated with innovative designs and changing use of materials, including the use of galvanised steel.
- Inclusion of more climbing play elements, including ropes, 'spiders webs', 'rockets' etc.
- Increasing recognition of the importance of at least one substantial (regional) playground in each municipality or geographic area.
- Greater provision of access for all abilities.
- Skate parks and playground equipment are usually not located together (in close proximity).
- Fencing of playgrounds is not common and usually discouraged unless to address specific safety issues (i.e. adjacent to busy roads). When fencing is included it is usually barrier fencing as opposed to secure, lockable (pool style) fencing.
- Very small local playgrounds still have a role to play but are usually supported by larger district/neighbourhood or regional facilities.



**3**

**Current Situation**

### 3. Current Situation

The following section provides an overview of the existing playground provision, the basis for determining playground improvement priorities, indicative costs (based on the audit results), age groups catered for and indicative *play value* ratings. Council's current management practices and community consultation results are also discussed.

#### 3.1 EXISTING PLAYGROUND PROVISION

There are currently 29 public playgrounds located throughout the Shire, the majority (22) of these are owned or managed by the Shire and therefore form part of this strategy. The remaining 7 playgrounds are located on Crown Land managed by the DSE or DSE appointed Committees of Management.

The table below highlights the current location, planning category<sup>3</sup>, level of use<sup>4</sup>, assessment of conformance to relevant Australian Standards and overall quality rating. The quality rating is somewhat subjective, however includes consideration of the general condition of equipment, site suitability, 'play value' of equipment and setting, visual appeal and overall attractiveness of the site. A scale of Excellent, Good, Average, Poor and Very Poor has been used.

Appendix 1 presents the detailed results from the compliance audit for each individual playground.

Town	Playground Name/Location	Planning Category	Level of Use	Conformance To Australian Standards	Overall Quality Rating
Balmoral	Balmoral Reserve	Township	Medium	No	Average
Cavendish	Cavendish Reserve	Township	Medium	No	Average
Coleraine	Coleraine Reserve	Township	High	No	Good
	Coleraine Visitor Information Centre	Local	Low	Yes	Good
Glenthompson	Lions Park	Township	High	No	Good
Hamilton	Apex Park	Local	Low	No	Very Poor
	Botanic Gardens	Neighbourhood	High	No	Excellent
	Bree Park	Neighbourhood	High	Yes	Good
	Bromley Park	Neighbourhood	High	Yes	Average

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with Council's Playground Policy i.e. Local, Neighbourhood/Township and Regional.

<sup>4</sup> As identified by Council in the annual Playground Checklist Audit Report.

Town	Playground Name/Location	Planning Category	Level of Use	Conformance To Australian Standards	Overall Quality Rating
Hamilton	Coleraine Road Reserve	Local	Low	No (mulch only)	Average
	Hughan Park	Local	Medium	Yes	Good
	Kokoda Avenue	Local	Medium	No	Very Poor
	Lake Hamilton Beach	Local	Medium	No	Average
	Lake Hamilton Skate Park	Regional	Medium	N/A	Average
	Helens Park	Neighbourhood	High	Yes	Excellent
	Melville Oval	Local	Medium	No	Good
	Mitchell Park	Local	Medium	No	Poor
	Patterson Park	Local	Medium	No	Poor
	Pedrina Park	Local	High	No	Good
	Quigley Reserve	Local	Medium	No	Good
	Rasmussen Reserve	Local	Medium	No (mulch only)	Average
	White Avenue Reserve	Local	Medium	No	Good
	Penshurst	Botanic Gardens	Township	High	No

An assessment of the above table reveals the following key points:

- Each of the Shire's main urban settlements have access to at least one Council managed public playground except for:
  - Dunkeld (DSE playground provided), and
  - Branxholme (DSE playground provided).
- Smaller settlements within the Shire including Byaduk, Tarrington, Wannon, Tabor and Warrayure do not have access to a local playground.
- Hamilton has a total of 16 Council playgrounds, including 12 local playgrounds, 3 neighbourhood and 1 regional (skate park). Eight of the 16 playgrounds rated as average or below in terms of overall quality.
- Of the 22 Council playgrounds across the Shire, 3 reportedly receive a low level of use, 11 medium and 8 high levels of use.
- At the time of the audit, only 5 of the 22 playgrounds currently meet relevant Australian Standards. Non-compliance issues are evident in relation to the actual equipment used as well as general maintenance matters (e.g. mulch).

- In terms of the overall rating of the playgrounds, 3 rated excellent, 9 good, 6 average, 2 poor and 2 very poor. Therefore 10 of the 22 playgrounds rated average or below, representing slightly under half of the total provision.
- Playgrounds in Hamilton attracted the lowest overall quality rating, accounting for each of the very poor (2), poor (2) and 4 of the 6 average playgrounds across the Shire.

### 3.2 PLAYGROUND PRIORITIES AND UPGRADE COSTS

For each identified hazard or defect, the playground audit report (refer to Appendix 1) provides an assessment of the likely level of risk, or likelihood of an accident occurring, (i.e. no chance to highly probable) and the expected consequences of such accidents (e.g. minor to permanent injury). The grid below has then been used to identify the appropriate rating for each hazard or defect (e.g. C5 = Possible likelihood of extreme permanent injury).

Injury Type		Likelihood				
		Little/None 1	Minor 2	Moderate 3	Serious 4	Permanent 5
Very likely	A	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	B	Moderate	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme
Possible	C	Low	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
Unlikely	D	Low	Low	Moderate	High	High
Highly unlikely	E	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

Following this, an overall priority has been identified for each recommended action, that is, Urgent, High, Medium or Low. An indicative cost has also been estimated to complete the proposed scope of works to address identified risks, hazards, defects, or compliance requirements. The compliance audit results for each playground are presented in Appendix 1.

It is acknowledged that the assessment of 'likelihood' and 'consequence' are subjective and therefore may differ over time and/or between individuals. To help minimise this possibility in future assessments, Appendix 2 provides a list of scores for likelihood and consequence that could be used to guide hazard and defect identification.

The recommendations from the compliance audit will be considered in the overall strategic context developed in the report, that is final recommendations may vary from the initial compliance audit pending the overall demand assessment (to follow), however a summary of the initial compliance results reveals:

- Total maintenance and upgrade works valued at approximately \$223,700.
- \$17,200 worth of 'urgent' maintenance works required at 7 locations across the Shire. These works should be undertaken as soon as possible (i.e. completed within 6 months).
- A further \$13,900 worth of 'high' priority maintenance works that should be completed within the next twelve months.
- There is evidence of a considerable backlog of asset maintenance

requirements.

- The audit results reinforce the need for this project to provide clear strategic direction to Council in order to guide future playground upgrade priorities.

### 3.3 AGE GROUPS AND RANGE OF PLAY EXPERIENCES

Determining the age groups and range of play experiences provided by a playground are both highly subjective judgements. For example, two year olds can easily play on equipment designed for 8-12 year olds. Furthermore, the age ranges do not necessarily reflect what is available in a playground as there only needs to be one item in a playground that suits an age range for it to be identified as catering for that age range.

For example, if a playground includes a cradle swing it would be identified as catering for the 0-3yo age range; likewise if there was spring rocker. Another example which highlights the limitations of defining age groups is that a small playground with a single piece of equipment e.g. double swing (junior seat and toddler seat) would be identified as catering for 0-3, 4-7 and 8-12 year olds. Whereas, a playground with a large combination unit might only be identified as catering for 4-7 and 8-12 year olds. In most instances it can be assumed that children of all ages would much rather play at the latter (larger) playground, even those under 4 years old.

Therefore in attempting to define the age categories each playground caters for, we acknowledge the inherent limitations of this approach, and therefore view this information as an indicative guide only.

Assessing the range of play experiences provided by each playground also has similar limitations. That is, whilst playground equipment can be designed to stimulate one or more of the four key activity themes, that is, physical (gross motor), social (dramatic play), creative or cognitive (intellectual) activities, the range of play experiences may only be limited by the individual users imagination.

However, in the publication "*Playgrounds...the Australian Way*"<sup>5</sup> the author has attempted to provide a basis for determining a 'per person play value score' to specific items of equipment. The table below outlines the scoring system proposed.

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<sup>5</sup> *Playgrounds...the Australian Way*, by Jack Grealy, published by John R Grealy and Associates, 2004, p92. ISBN: 0-646-43178-1.

Equipment Item	Play Activity	Play Value Rating
Platform Deck	Stand; Sit; Climb	2
Tunnel	Crawl; Balance	2
Log-Roll	Balance	2
Spiral Climb	Balance; Climb	2
Scaling Wall	Climb, Hand-Swing-Static, Balance-Static	3
Hoop-Climb	Hand-Swing; Balance; Climb; Crawl	4
Horizontal Ladder - Fixed	Climb, Hand-Swing-Static, Balance-Static; Crawl; Jump	5
Scramble Wall	Balance; Bounce; Climb	5
Bridge	Balance; Bounce; Climb; Ambulate	6
Spring Rocker	Ride; Balance; Bounce	7
Horizontal Ladder – Mobile	Climb, Hand-Swing-Mobile, Balance-Mobile; Crawl; Jump	7
Roundabout	Spin; Ride; Balance; Bounce	8
Sliding Rails	Slide; Ride; Balance; Climb; Hand-Swing	10
Slide	Slide; Ride; Bounce; Balance; Climb	11
Swing	Swing; Spin; Ride; Balance; Jump	12
Monorail	Swing; Spin; Ride; Bounce; Hand-Swing Balance	16
Flying Fox	Swing; Spin; Ride; Bounce; Hand-Swing Balance; Ambulate	17

The scoring system outlined above has been used as a basis of quantifying the ‘play value’ of specific playgrounds throughout the Shire. Where specific items of equipment do not match the direct description above, an indicative score has been applied based on the likely play activities undertaken.

It is acknowledged that the “play value rating” system has limitations, most notably the system concentrates on rating the physical aspects of play without recognising creative or social outcomes.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the table below presents the indicative play value and age groups catered for at each of the Council playgrounds.

Town	Playground Name/Location	Age Groups (years)				Indicative Play Value Score
		<4	4-7	8-12	13+	
Balmoral	Balmoral Reserve		✓	✓		29
Cavendish	Cavendish Reserve	✓	✓			60
Coleraine	Coleraine Reserve		✓	✓		42
	Coleraine Visitor Information Centre	✓	✓	✓		24
Glenthompson	Lions Park	✓	✓	✓		68
Hamilton	Apex Park	Not rated, disused and non-compliant, remove immediately.				

Town	Playground Name/Location	Age Groups (years)				Indicative Play Value Score
		<4	4-7	8-12	13+	
Hamilton	Botanic Gardens	✓	✓	✓		78
	Bree Park	✓	✓	✓		49
	Bromley Park		✓	✓		48
	Coleraine Road Reserve	✓	✓			31
	Hughan Park	✓	✓	✓		52
	Kokoda Avenue	✓	✓			48
	Lake Hamilton Beach	✓	✓	✓		46
	Helens Park	✓	✓	✓		65
	Melville Oval	✓	✓	✓		70
	Mitchell Park	✓	✓			48
	Patterson Park	✓	✓			68
	Pedrina Park	✓	✓			62
	Quigley Reserve	✓	✓	✓		60
	Rasmussen Reserve	✓	✓			55
	White Avenue Reserve	✓	✓			79
	Victory Park	✓	✓			31
<b>Penshurst</b>	Botanic Gardens	✓	✓	✓		80

Setting aside the acknowledged limitations of this assessment approach, a few important points can be drawn from the table, these include:

- Only one location (Hamilton Skate Park) is primarily designed for older age groups, i.e. 13+ years.
- High play value scores do not necessarily relate to high quality equipment, condition or playground appeal. That is, many older style (non-compliant) playgrounds scored highly because they may have included two sets of two

swings (automatically scoring 48 points). Therefore, the play value score should not be considered in isolation.

- Scores of around 30 and below tend to reflect playgrounds with limited play activity opportunities.

### 3.4 CURRENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

A key objective of this project is to provide Council with strategic guidance to better address insurer and duty of care responsibilities for the ongoing management of Council playgrounds across the Shire.

At present Council has a "Periodic Maintenance Checklist" which is used to assess playgrounds and reserves throughout the Shire, however there is no defined policy or procedure outlining the frequency of these assessments. That is, there is no formal system in place that identifies a schedule for the regular inspection or assessment of playgrounds throughout the year. Therefore it appears that the checklist is currently applied on an annual basis only. The results from this assessment are then summarised into an annual assessment report which identifies key works required, responsibility and date information (i.e. date reported, date action completed etc).

Feedback from Council's insurers has concentrated on the need to ensure these records are kept up-to-date and include a process which facilitates 'closure' or sign-off of works completed. This does not currently occur.

The above process is supported by outdoor maintenance staff who report risks or maintenance issues that they identify in playgrounds as part of their ongoing mowing and maintenance regime for each reserve. This usually occurs every two-three weeks. However, there is no formal (written) procedure or reporting process that records and or follows up these assessments.

Furthermore, at present there is no formal procedure or process for recording incidents or customer requests related to playgrounds. However Council are currently in the process of implementing a new *Customer Request System (Merit)* and *Asset Management Software (Conquest)* which will provide an opportunity for the establishment of more comprehensive maintenance, management, inspection and reporting process for Council playgrounds.

### 3.5 CONSULTATION RESULTS

The planning process for this project has intended to build upon the consultation results related to playgrounds that were identified in the recently completed *Leisure Services Strategic Plan (2006)*. These have already been outlined in Section 2.3.2 of this report.

Therefore, consultation undertaken as part of this project (to date) has concentrated on three key components:

- i. Public submissions – opportunities for public submissions were promoted in local media at the commencement of the project. Three written submissions were received.
- ii. Community Workshop – held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007, attended by 4 people, and

iii. Stakeholder Workshop - held on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007, attended by 12 people/groups. A letter was sent inviting representatives from all playgroups, preschools, kindergartens, service clubs and other stakeholders throughout the Shire. Council's Teamleader Aged and Disability Services also attended. As a result the following community groups were represented:

- Glenthompson Playgroup,
- Penshurst Preschool and Combined Preschools of Southern Grampians,
- Cavendish Preschool,
- Cavendish Police,
- Southern Grampians Shire Council Children's Services,
- Coleraine Skate Park and Adventure Playground,
- Mitchell Park Playgroup,
- Tarrington Recreation Reserve Committee,
- Church Hill Kindergarten (Hamilton), and
- Lions Club (Hamilton).

A further opportunity for community input into the outcomes of this project will be made available via public exhibition of the Draft Report and consideration of any written comments or feedback prior to the development of a Final Report.

The following section summaries the key comments, suggestions or issues raised in the submissions and workshops.

### 3.5.1 Initial Public Submissions

- a) From Lorna Elliott – Family Day Carer (Hamilton). Key comments include:
  - Request improvements to maintenance and equipment at Strachan Street (Kokoda Av. playground) and Lord Street (Rasmussen Reserve playground), including vegetation management to improve casual surveillance and safety ("opening-up" the reserves).
- b) From Shirley Gibson – Secretary Byaduk Progress Association Key comments include:
  - Request installation of a playground in Byaduk to service residents and passing traffic (visitor stop), potentially near the "slab" (paint to include hop-scotch and hand-ball) near the public toilets, BBQ, hall and pavilion.
- c) From Debra (surname not recorded) – Hamilton Community House. Key comments include:
  - Concerned about anecdotal reports of syringes being found near the Hamilton Skate Park.
  - Suggested that the playground near Hamilton Lake Beach is not being used due to poor equipment and 'seedy' nature of the area.

### 3.5.2 Community Workshops

The workshops involved open discussion about the current provision of playgrounds, possible issues, deficiencies and opportunities for improvement. Key results, comments and suggestions from both workshops are summarised below.

#### General Comments, Feedback and Suggestions:

- Consideration should be given to secure fencing of some playgrounds throughout the Shire, particularly near roads, water or other safety hazards.

(This was expressed as particularly important by parents of children with autism).

- The quality of playgrounds needs to improve. The majority appear outdated and may not meet compliance requirements.
- Playgrounds need to provide a range of play equipment and cater for a range of age groups (not necessarily in separate areas).
- Lake Hamilton is preferred as a site for a regional playground, although it was noted that the location would not matter too much as people would be prepared to travel to a quality facility.
- The importance of small playgrounds in rural townships should not be underestimated, particularly associated with rest stop areas. These facilities help promote visitation and economic activity in these towns (Lions Park Glenthompson and Cavendish are noted as good examples).
- Shade is an important consideration, however prefer natural trees to manufactured shade sails or similar. Additional and/or improved equipment is considered more important than shade sails.
- Establishment of a Youth Precinct and Regional Playground could be collocated, however there should be some separation (e.g. 40-50 metres).
- It was suggested that the smaller towns would prefer to retain non-compliant equipment as opposed to having none at all.
- The majority of playgrounds have poor (mobility) accessibility. Not all parks, or all equipment, should cater for people with disabilities, however some nominated parks across the Shire should.
- Greater use of natural features, trees and sensory landscaping should be encouraged.
- Playgrounds lack themes.
- More adventure play equipment should be provided, including climbing elements and flying foxes or similar.
- Seating, cleanliness and support amenities such as BBQ's, drinking taps and access to public toilets are important considerations.
- Improved signage should be provided to key playgrounds to promote additional use and awareness.
- Diggers are often too difficult for small children to use.
- The principle of a regional playground and youth precinct are supported, however the community do not wish this to be at the expense of maintenance or upgrade to existing facilities.
- Feedback suggested that consideration of removing some smaller playgrounds (particularly around Hamilton) in preference for better developed neighbourhood or district facilities would be supported. Although it was noted that community input into which playgrounds to remove and develop should be included in the decision making process.
- Development of youth precinct may be more suited closer to the Hamilton town centre as opposed to the current skate park site (Lake Hamilton). Consider elements such as a flying fox, rock wall and adventure play as well as skate-park. Ensure the location allows adequate casual surveillance.
- It was suggested that each small town should have at least one playground.
- Consider opportunities for greater use of service clubs and community groups in the ongoing maintenance and management of specific

playgrounds.

- It was acknowledged that this project is confined to public Council playgrounds, however similar strategic direction and assessment of playgrounds provided at Council preschool buildings (or similar) is also needed.

**Site Specific Comments, Feedback and Suggestions:**

- Glenthompson:
  - Lions Park playground needs upgrading/updating.
  - The playground provided in the Glenthompson MCH building requires upgrading.
- Balmoral – concentrate playground development at the recreation reserve whilst maintaining a modest playground in the main street associated with the rest stop area. The recreation reserve committee has developed a capital improvement plan which identifies upgrading the playground in year three at a cost of \$60,000.
- Dunkeld - the memorial park playground is considered a good model for township provision.
- Tarrington - a playground at the recreation reserve was requested (DSE facility).
- Hamilton:
  - The Hamilton Botanic Gardens playground is popular and well used. Additional equipment would be beneficial, for example a rock wall and slide for older age groups (also consider fencing the playground area).
  - The Lake Hamilton Beach area needs to improve, including playground, water quality and beach nourishment (import sand).

**3.5.3 Second Round Consultation Results**

The initial Draft Report (August 2007) was placed on public exhibition for approximately four weeks between mid-September to mid-October 2007. Public comments, feedback and submissions were invited in order to identify possible opportunities to improve the report, clarify objectives and ensure consistency with community playground aspirations.

As a result of the exhibition period, six written submissions were received. The key issues, comments or suggestions from these submissions are summarised in the table below, along with identification of resultant changes for the Final Report.

Submission From	Key Comments	Steering Committee Response / Changes to Final Report
<p>South West Sports Assembly – Lyn Donaldson, Manager Access for All Abilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congratulates the Shire on the development of the Playground Policy (May 2007) and Draft Strategy (Aug 2007).</li> <li>• Support the development of an Access for All Abilities playground in Hamilton and use of the “The Good Play Space Guide” to help inform equipment selection and proposed developments (for all playground developments).</li> <li>• Support upgrade of the Lions Park Playground in Glenthompson in consultation with the Community Association.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These initiatives were already included in the initial draft report, therefore no changes are required.</li> </ul>
<p>Advance Peshurst – Catherine Loria, President.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request that the Peshurst Botanic Gardens Playground be fenced all round (concerned about user safety due to location near open water).</li> <li>• The report suggests that there is no evidence of demand for new playground locations, however is not clear in support for upgrading play facilities at the recreation reserve (DSE).</li> <li>• The Apex Club may consider a skate park as a future project in Peshurst.</li> <li>• Support the Shire adopting the playground safety management system, with regular maintenance and upgrading of facilities in accordance with Australian Standards.</li> <li>• The community value the playground at the Botanic Gardens and would like to see it retained and upgraded.</li> <li>• Support the development of an all abilities regional playground in Hamilton and development of a Youth precinct.</li> <li>• Review the summary “Implementation Table” the incorrect playground is listed against Peshurst.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The playground is located within a broader open space parkland setting and is not immediately adjacent to open water. Fencing the entire playground is therefore not considered essential and may detract from the play experience that this location facilitates (i.e. relationship to grassed areas for informal play). Consideration could be given to the use of landscape elements to deter direct access to water from the playground (e.g. hedge planting or similar).</li> <li>• Demand for upgrading of play facilities at the recreation reserve should be considered by DSE.</li> <li>• The recommendations will be altered to reflect consideration of landscape barriers at the Botanic Gardens, the Implementation Table will be rectified. No other changes are recommended.</li> </ul>
<p>Glenthompson Community Association – Michelle Henry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Association have expressed in principle support for the Draft Strategy.</li> <li>• The submission outlines an argument (and community support) for identifying upgrade of the Lion’s Park playground as a “high” priority as opposed to the “medium” priority listed in the Draft Report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alter the final report to identify upgrading the Lion’s Park Playground as a high priority in recognition of the community support and fundraising initiatives currently being undertaken for this cause.</li> </ul>
<p>Resident – James Ross (teenager).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not support development of a “teenage playground”, preference for improved skate facilities.</li> <li>• Hamilton skate park requires substantial upgrade, not just repair.</li> <li>• Council could consider development of a new skate park in a different location (away from trees, due to debris).</li> <li>• Consider providing less playgrounds in preference for fewer, although better facilities.</li> <li>• Improve the skate park as a higher priority than improving paths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of designs for a new/upgraded skate park/youth precinct was initially listed as a high priority (\$15,000) with construction (notionally \$150,000) identified as a low priority (i.e. within 5 years from design). It is acknowledged that the existing facility is quite old, has limited appeal and requires substantial improvement. The</li> </ul>

Submission From	Key Comments	Steering Committee Response / Changes to Final Report
	<p>and seating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerned that \$150,000 nominated for the 'youth precinct', inclusive of the skate park is insufficient to build a new quality facility.</li> <li>James is willing to assist with facility design and development.</li> </ul>	<p>final report will continue to identify design as a high priority (i.e. within 12 months, to be used to confirm funding requirements and assist external funding applications), however the report will be altered to identify construction as a medium priority within a maximum of 2-3 years. The design process may identify requirements for possible future work to complete the youth precinct beyond this five year plan.</p>
Resident – Bernadette Ross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bernadette is the mother of James Ross (above) and wrote in support of her sons submissions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes as identified above.</li> </ul>
Byaduk Progress Association - Shirley Gibson, Secretary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complimented the report and Council officers for their assistance and information.</li> <li>Would like Council to consider the installation of a 'few pieces' of play equipment in Byaduk. Council support would be required to facilitate this.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft report identified that Council priorities should concentrate on the maintenance and upgrade of existing playgrounds and that new facilities (venues), including Byaduk, should only be considered if there is substantial community support and involvement, including capital contribution. No change to this direction is recommended for the Final Report.</li> </ul>

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a lush green lawn. The grass blades are vibrant green and densely packed, creating a textured, slightly uneven surface. The lighting is bright, highlighting the individual blades and their natural growth patterns.

# 4

## Key Issues & Opportunities

## 4. Key Issues & Opportunities

The following section summarises the key issues and opportunities identified through the background research, consultation and audit results.

### Planning:

1. Ongoing population growth may drive demand for the development of new playground sites, including within smaller rural settlements, e.g. Tarrington.
2. The Shire should review management and development requirements for other playgrounds that it manages, e.g. kindergartens, playgroup venues and other Council owned buildings with playgrounds.
3. Council may need to assist Reserve Committees by advocating to DSE to undertake a similar playground assessment for DSE controlled facilities.

### Management:

4. There are opportunities to improve Council's management practices and monitoring of playgrounds, particularly 'closing the loop'. Development of a "Playground Safety Management System" is suggested inclusive of:
  - Playground inventory (i.e. Audit contained with this report),
  - Inspection procedures (existing procedures and responsibilities to be further defined),
  - Corrective action and maintenance procedures (to be developed),
  - Incident report procedures (to be developed), and
  - Playground development guide (this strategy).It may be helpful to develop a simple flowchart that explains the proposed reporting requirements, steps, decision making and sign-off for playground monitoring.
5. There is a need to improve the training and education of outdoor staff in assessing and identifying potential playground hazards and reporting procedures.

### Development:

6. Many small playgrounds, particularly in Hamilton are in poor condition, lack appeal and receive minimal usage.
7. There are opportunities to rationalise a number of smaller playgrounds and/or playground equipment in Hamilton (e.g. Apex Park, Kokoda Avenue) in preference for the development of more suitable playgrounds.
8. The majority of existing playground equipment and/or sites do not comply with required Australian Standards.
9. Existing playgrounds lack diversity in terms of play settings, variety of equipment, themes or use of natural elements.
10. Existing playgrounds in the larger rural townships are highly valued by the community and should be retained and improved.
11. Some members of the community would like to have access to a number of fenced playgrounds (expressed by parents of children with autism).
12. Playgrounds need to include adequate support elements, particularly seating for parents/carers and natural shade (trees).
13. The Shire lacks a regional standard (all abilities) playground.
14. Hamilton lacks an appropriate Youth precinct – e.g. contemporary skate park and age appropriate playground.

### Resource Allocation:

15. There is an opportunity to maximise the scope and financial contribution to a possible regional playground through collaboration with Vic Urban. Possibly

combine with a community fundraising campaign.

16. There may be an opportunity to improve collaborations with local service clubs to assist with the maintenance and improvement of existing service club reserve sites.
17. Existing budgets allocated to playground maintenance and renewal will need to be reviewed in order to address compliance and development requirements. That is, additional funds may be required.



**5**

**Recommendations**

## 5. Township Recommendations

There are four key drivers of current and likely future demand for playground provision relevant to the Southern Grampians Shire, these are:

- The demographic profile and distribution of the community, in particular the proportion and number of people aged 0-14 years (primary user groups),
- Average birth rates,
- Population growth, and
- Gaps in the current provision, distribution and accessibility of playgrounds.

Furthermore, indicative benchmarks are commonly applied in the industry to guide playground demand assessment, specifically provision of one playground for every 250 children aged under 12 years old and/or to provide one playground within a catchment of approximately 500 metres (acceptable walking distance) within main urban areas. However these benchmarks do not necessarily apply effectively in rural municipalities due to population disbursement (density), demographic and geographic characteristics.

For example, in the Southern Grampians Shire only Hamilton has more than 250 children aged 0-14 years. Therefore, strict adherence to this benchmark suggests that there should be approximately 7 playgrounds in Hamilton (currently 16) and none in any of the other townships.

Furthermore, application of a catchment based model, i.e. within 500m of residents in main urban areas, may result in a higher assessment of playground needs due to the relatively large geographic area and low urban density.

Therefore, for the purposes of this project we have given consideration to each of the key drivers identified above as well as the consultation results and Council's provision principles (outlined in Council's Playground Policy – as presented in Section 2.3.1) to help inform the following demand assessment and recommendations.

The following section summaries the demand assessment results for each of the main townships in the Southern Grampians Shire<sup>6</sup> and provides an overview of the strategic direction for playgrounds in each respective township. Please note that all recommendations should be read in conjunction with the detailed compliance audit results which present a detailed scope of works for each playground. This information is presented in Appendix 1.

### 5.1 BALMORAL

#### Current Playground Provision:

- There is currently one *Township* playground located at Balmoral Reserve. The playground reputedly receives a *medium* level of use. The playground does not currently meet all Australian Standards and has an overall rating of *average*. It is estimated that the playground requires approximately \$4,000 worth of maintenance improvement works.

#### Demographic Characteristics:

- In 2006 there were 46 people aged 0-19 years in Balmoral. This equates to 24.4% of the town population, which is marginally higher than the Shire

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<sup>6</sup> 2006 Census data has been used.

average (24.1%). The 49 children comprised the following ages:

- 0 children aged 0-4 years, (lower than the average 5.1%),
- 18 children aged 5-9 years (9.5%, higher than the average 5.9%),
- 15 aged 10-14 years (7.9%, higher than the average 6.8%), and
- 13 aged 15-19 years (6.9%, higher than the average 6.0%).

- • • • Birth rates average 10 per year (or approximately 5% of the Shire annual average total), which appears to contradict the 2006 preliminary Census results which suggest that there are no children aged 0-4 years old, whereas Council's Birth Notification data suggests there were 7 children born in 2006/07.
- • • • The township has declined from 203 people in 2001 to 188 in 2006, a decline of 15 people (or approximately 7%).

**Evidence of Demand:**

- • • • Balmoral has a higher than average proportion of children aged 5-19 years, combined with consistent birth rates (4<sup>th</sup> highest in the region), suggests that demand for play experiences is likely to be remain high.
- • • • The existing playground primarily caters for 4-7 and 8-12 year olds. The overall *play value rating* (29) is very low.

**Recommendations:**

1. Retain and upgrade playground, undertaking recommended maintenance improvement works in accordance with the audit results (refer to Appendix 1).
2. Consider installation of additional equipment to service younger children (e.g. swing set and/or junior combo unit) and play elements utilising natural features/attractions (e.g. water, sensory elements, sand) as a medium priority.

## 5.2 BRANXHOLME

**Current Playground Provision:**

- • • • There is currently one playground at the Recreation Reserve on DSE controlled land. An audit of this facility was not included in this project.

**Demographic Characteristics:**

- • • • In 2006 there were 76 people aged 0-19 years in Branxholme. This equates to 32.4% of the town population, which is higher than the Shire average (24.1%). The 76 children comprised the following ages:
  - 20 children aged 0-4 years (8.5% of the total population, higher than the average of 5.1%),
  - 18 children aged 5-9 years (7.6%, higher than the average 5.9%),
  - 26 aged 10-14 years (11.1%, higher than the average 6.8%), and
  - 12 aged 15-19 years (5.1%, lower than the average 6.0%).
- • • • Birth rates average 5 per year (or approximately 2% of the Shire annual average total).
- • • • The township has grown from 110 people in 2001 to 234 in 2006, an increase of 124 people (or approximately 113%). (NB: The Census Collector district for Branxholme changed from 2001 to 2006, which accounts for a large portion of the population change).

#### Evidence of Demand:

- The higher than average proportion of children aged 0-14 years suggests that demand for play experiences is likely to be relatively high, although the total number of children (0-19 years) is modest (76).
- There is no evidence of demand for additional playground locations.

#### Recommendations:

3. Encourage the Recreation Reserve Committee or DSE to undertake a comprehensive compliance audit of the existing facility and upgrade as required (by DSE or Reserve Committee). Explore opportunities to improve the range of play experiences (possibly using natural features and/or additional equipment) as part of any possible future upgrade.
4. Review the *Leisure Strategy* recommendation for the possible development of a new local play space at the former Bowling Club site in Branxholme. Development of these facilities should only proceed with considerable support from the local community, including contributions to capital (and/or external grant funding) and operational management assistance (e.g. service club).

### 5.3 CAVENDISH

#### Current Playground Provision:

- There is currently one *Township* playground located at Cavendish Reserve. The playground reputedly receives a *medium* level of use. The playground does not currently meet all Australian Standards and has an overall rating of *average*. It is estimated that the playground requires approximately \$3,500 worth of maintenance improvement works.

#### Demographic Characteristics:

- In 2006 there were 37 people aged 0-19 years in Cavendish. This equates to 25.6% of the town population, which is marginally higher than the Shire average (24.1%). The 37 children comprised the following ages:
  - 7 children aged 0-4 years (4.8% of the total population, lower than the average of 5.1%),
  - 10 children aged 5-9 years (6.9%, higher than the average 5.9%),
  - 9 aged 10-14 years (6.2%, marginally lower than the average 6.8%), and
  - 11 aged 15-19 years (7.6%, higher than the average 6.0%).
- Birth rates average 6 per year (or approximately 3% of the Shire annual average total).
- The township has experienced growth, from 116 people in 2001 to 144 in 2006, an increase of 28 people (aside from Branxholme, this is second only to Hamilton in terms of total increase in persons).

#### Evidence of Demand:

- The profile of Cavendish (in terms of 0-19 year olds) is similar to the Shire as a whole.
- There is no evidence of demand for additional playground locations.
- The existing facility only receives a *medium* level of usage, which could reflect the overall age and poor quality of existing equipment.
- The existing playground primarily caters for <4 and 4-7 year olds. The overall *play value rating* (60) is high.

#### Recommendations:

5. Although the play value rating is high, the equipment is old and largely non-compliant. It is recommended that the playground be removed and replaced with a new Township playground in the same location.

### 5.4 COLERAINE

#### Current Playground Provision:

- There are currently two playgrounds in Coleraine, one *Local* (swing set only) which receives a *low* level of use, and one *Township* which receives a *high* level of use although it does not currently meet required standards. Both playgrounds are rated as *good*. The Coleraine Visitor Centre Playground (swings) requires approximately \$500 worth of maintenance works and the Coleraine Reserve playground requires approximately \$5,300.

#### Demographic Characteristics:

- In 2006 there were 195 people aged 0-19 years in Coleraine. This equates to 19.6% of the town population, which is lower than the Shire average (24.1%). The 195 children comprised the following ages:
  - 32 children aged 0-4 years (3.2% of the total population, lower than the average of 5.1%),
  - 49 children aged 5-9 years (4.9%, lower than the average 5.9%),
  - 57 aged 10-14 years (5.7%, lower than the average 6.8%), and
  - 57 aged 15-19 years (5.7%, lower than the average 6.0%).
- Birth rates average 15 per year (or approximately 7.8% of the Shire annual average total, second only to Hamilton).
- The township has declined from 1,013 people in 2001 to 992 in 2006, a decline of 21 people.

#### Evidence of Demand:

- The Coleraine Reserve and Skate Park Committee has recently been successful in obtaining a State Government grant (\$100,000) for the development of additional skate park and playground equipment.
- The existing playgrounds cater for <4, 4-7 and 8-12 year olds. The overall *play value rating* (42 and 24) is quite low.

#### Recommendations:

6. Retain and upgrade existing playgrounds, undertaking recommended maintenance improvement works in accordance with the audit results (refer to Appendix 1).
7. Where appropriate assist the Reserve Committee and local community to maximise the improvement opportunities presented by the recent State Government Grant.

### 5.5 DUNKELD

#### Current Playground Provision:

- There is currently one playground at the Memorial Park on DSE controlled land. An audit of this facility was not included in this project.

#### Demographic Characteristics:

- In 2006 there were 80 people aged 0-19 years in Dunkeld. This equates to 20.1% of the town population, which is lower than the Shire average (24.1%). The 80 children comprised the following ages:
  - 23 children aged 0-4 years (5.7% of the total population, slightly higher than the average of 5.1%),
  - 19 children aged 5-9 years (4.7%, lower than the average 5.9%),
  - 16 aged 10-14 years (4.0%, lower than the average 6.8%), and
  - 22 aged 15-19 years (5.5%, lower than the average 6.0%).
- Birth rates average 7 per year (or approximately 3.6% of the Shire annual average total).
- The township has grown from 370 people in 2001 to 397 in 2006, an increase of 27 people.

**Evidence of Demand:**

- There is no evidence of demand for additional playground facilities or locations.

**Recommendations:**

8. Encourage the Reserve Committee or DSE to undertake a comprehensive compliance audit of the existing facility and upgrade as required (by DSE or Reserve Committee).

## 5.6 GLENTHOMPSON

**Current Playground Provision:**

- There are currently two public playgrounds in Glenthompson. One is managed/controlled by Council (Lions Park) the other by DSE (Recreation Reserve). The Recreation Reserve playground did not form part of this audit, however the Lions Club playground is a *Township* level facility which receives a *high* level of use and has an overall rating of *good*. Required maintenance improvement works have been estimated at \$2,700 with possible future upgrade (additional cost).

**Demographic Characteristics:**

- In 2006 there were 22 people aged 0-19 years in Glenthompson. This equates to 15.7% of the town population, which is significantly lower than the Shire average (24.1%). The 22 children comprised the following ages:
  - 13 children aged 0-4 years (9.2% of the total population, higher than the average of 5.1%),
  - 4 children aged 5-9 years (2.8%, lower than the average 5.9%),
  - 5 aged 10-14 years (3.5%, lower than the average 6.8%), and
  - 0 aged 15-19 years (lower than the average 6.0%).
- Birth rates average 4 per year (or approximately 2% of the Shire annual average total).
- The township has declined from 151 people in 2001 to 140 in 2006, a decline of 11 people.

**Evidence of Demand:**

- The Lions Club playground caters for <4, 4-7 and 8-12 year olds. The overall *play value rating* (68) is high, however the majority of the playground is quite old and many elements are non-compliant.

- The playground is ideally sited within the town as a designated rest stop for passing traffic.
- Community consultation identified community aspirations for improved play equipment (including at the local playgroup facility – Council building).
- There is no evidence of demand for additional playground locations, rather requests for improvement to existing facilities (Lions Park, playgroup/Council building and DSE).

**Recommendations:**

9. Retain and upgrade the Lions Park playground, undertaking recommended maintenance improvement works in accordance with the audit results (refer to Appendix 1).
10. Schedule replacement of the aging climbing frame/combination unit in the short term with more contemporary equipment.

## 5.7 HAMILTON

**Current Playground Provision:**

- Hamilton has a total of 16 Council playgrounds, including 12 *Local* playgrounds, 3 *Neighbourhood* and 1 *Regional* (skate park).
- Eight of the 16 playgrounds rated as *average* or below in terms of overall quality.
- Two playgrounds (Apex Park and Coleraine Road Reserve) reputedly receive a *low* level of use, a further 8 receive *medium* level usage with the remaining 8 receiving *high* use.
- Collectively, the playgrounds appear to cater for all age groups, however aside from the skate park, there is limited provision for older age groups and teenagers.
- Existing playgrounds provide *play value ratings* from low to quite high.

**Demographic Characteristics:**

- In 2006 there were 2,406 people aged 0-19 years in Hamilton. This equates to 26.3% of the town population, which is marginally higher than the Shire average (24.1%). The 2,406 children comprised the following ages:
  - 510 children aged 0-4 years (5.5% of the total population, slightly higher than the average of 5.1%),
  - 542 children aged 5-9 years (5.9%, equal to the average),
  - 637 aged 10-14 years (6.9%, slightly lower than the average 6.8%), and
  - 717 aged 15-19 years (7.8%, higher than the average 6.0%).
- Birth rates average 133 per year (or approximately 69% of the Shire annual average total).
- Hamilton has experienced slight population growth from 9,034 people in 2001 to 9,114 people in 2006, an increase of 80 people.

**Evidence of Demand:**

- Despite positive economic activity, limited overall population growth is not expected to drive significant demand for additional playground locations. However demand for greater use of existing facilities may become evident.
- There is likely to be demand for playgrounds and activities to cater for older age groups (e.g. 8-15+ years).

- Consultation results indicated demand for general playground improvements and upgrades rather than development of new venues. Consultation supported the notion of rationalising the number of small local playgrounds in preference for larger (although fewer) neighbourhood sites.
- A review of the population and playground distribution maps (refer to Section 2.4) suggests that the highest proportion of 0-9 year olds are located in the housing estate adjacent to Lake Hamilton (between Rippon Road and Hiller Lane) and in the north west wedge of Hamilton bound by Coleraine Road and North Boundary Road.
- Conversely, there appears to be higher concentration of older age groups (e.g. 10-19 years) on the western side of Hamilton (bordered by the Henty Highway and Coleraine Road).
- Playgrounds are generally well distributed throughout Hamilton, however there may be a deficiency on the western side of town, south of Coleraine Road, north of the Henty Highway, however as previously mentioned, the proportion of children in younger age groups (0-9 years) is lower in this area of Hamilton compared to the aforementioned areas.

**Recommendations:**

Refer to Section 5.7.1 for recommendations in relation to a Regional Playground and Youth Precinct.

11. Monitor the level of demand for playground facilities in the western part of the town, consider opportunities to install a new Neighbourhood playground in this area (should local demand support it) in the medium-long term, potentially to be located between Henty Highway and the Dartmoor-Hamilton Road.
12. Facilitate the development of a shared path/trail connection along the length of the Grange Burn between the Wetlands and Lake Hamilton, to the existing skate park and proposed Youth Precinct site, in order to encourage access for teenagers that reside on the western side of town.
13. Remove the playground facilities behind the train in Apex Park as an urgent priority and engage in discussions with the Apex Club to determine an appropriate future for the existing train. If the facility is to be retained significant maintenance and remedial works will be required to ensure ongoing public safety.
14. Install additional seating adjacent to the Botanic Gardens Playground, install a climbing wall and slide for older age groups as a high priority.
15. Upgrade facilities at Bromley Park and relocate existing Helen's Park play equipment to this site. Install park seating and improve path connections, consider a line of barrier fencing or suitable landscaping between the playground and train tracks.
16. Install additional play equipment at Coleraine Road Reserve, for example a junior combo-unit and install park seating as a medium priority.
17. Remove the existing tyre structure from Kokoda Avenue playground, install soft fall to the existing swings. Improve reserve landscaping and install park seating.
18. Remove the existing treated pine play facilities at Lake Hamilton Beach (see Regional Playground section below). It is also recommended that Council install appropriate information signage at this site when the existing playground is removed advising the community that this site has been selected for the future development of Regional Playground.
19. Upgrade facilities at the Lake Hamilton Skate Park to establish an active Youth

Precinct (see below).

20. Upgrade and relocate facilities at Melville Oval in accordance with the adopted Master Plan for the site.
21. Upgrade facilities at Mitchell Park and Patterson Park as high priorities.
22. Retain all other playgrounds in Hamilton and undertake required maintenance improvements works at all sites in accordance with the compliance audit recommendations (refer to Appendix 1 for details).

### 5.7.1 Regional Playground & Youth Precinct

The Leisure Strategy recommended the development of an “all abilities” regional playground to be developed in Hamilton, with possible site options suggested as Hughan Park, Patterson Park and the aquatic precinct at Lake Hamilton.

In addition, development of a “youth precinct” was also recommended. Site options identified included Hughan Park, Patterson Park and the aquatic precinct at Lake Hamilton.

An all abilities playground and youth precinct are two separate facilities and should be provided at two individual sites to avoid potential user conflicts. The size, scale and scope of these facilities will only be limited by budget capabilities. Detailed Concept Plans will be required for each facility in line with budget parameters when these are known. The potential sites identified in the Leisure Strategy have been reviewed, the following comments are made.

#### Youth Precinct

- The current skate park (Lake Hamilton) requires significant upgrade and improvement if it is to be appealing for ongoing and long-term use.
- The current site size may constrain possible future development.
- The current site is not ideally located in terms of proximity to the centre of town (shopping area) which is a preferred destination for teenagers.
- However the existing site is located in a high use area and has suitable support infrastructure.
- Development of a shared trail along the Grange Burn provides an opportunity to effectively connect the Lake Hamilton Skate Park to other areas of town.
- Hughan Park offers a potential site in close proximity to the CBD, however the site has other limitations, including proximity to residents. Designs could consider re-use of the Olympic pool, pending a review of the ongoing sustainability of this facility.

#### Regional Playground

- The need for the development of a new regional standard access for all abilities playground in Hamilton is supported. Such a playground should incorporate a combination of equipment and use of the natural elements to maximise appeal and play value.
- Following a review of initial sites suggested in the Leisure Strategy (i.e. Hughan Park, Patterson Park and the aquatic precinct at Lake Hamilton), two possible sites are preferred.
  - Lake Hamilton Beach – development of a regional playground at this location could provide the impetus to revitalise this area and promote substantial community use. This location is also well placed to service the proposed future urban expansion. This site has the benefit of existing

infrastructure (BBQ, kiosk, change rooms, car park etc) which would support the use of this site. The kiosk could possibly operate over the summer months for users of the playground. The existing playground should be removed.

- Existing skate park location. Should the existing skate park equipment be decommissioned and/or relocated to Hughan Park as part of a broader Youth Precinct, this area could be used to develop a large regional playground.

#### Recommendations:

23. Youth Precinct: The existing Lake Hamilton Skate Park site is preferred for the development of a broader youth precinct. This will require the relocation of the existing Helen's Park playground equipment to Bromley Park (Lake Hamilton Aquatic area). The area currently occupied by the Helen's Park playground could be used to establish additional youth orientated facilities, such as a basketball half court and robust adventure (teenage) play equipment. Existing skate facilities are to be retained (where they continue to be serviceable) and incorporated into a new skate facility design. The expanded skate facility should incorporate a beginner area and street skating elements. A detailed Concept Design (from a specialist skate park designer) is needed for the Youth Precinct.
24. Regional Playground: Lake Hamilton Beach is the preferred site for the development of a new regional playground in Hamilton. The playground should facilitate access for all abilities and incorporate contemporary playground design elements, including use of natural features, sensory activities and landscape components. The existing wooden playground should be removed. A detailed Concept Plan is required for the development of a Regional Playground in this location, including consideration of access, parking and ancillary park furniture as well as a review of existing infrastructure to determine if any improvement works are required to these facilities (e.g. toilets, change rooms and kiosk).

## 5.8 PENSHURST

### Current Playground Provision:

- • • • There is currently one *Township* playground located at Botanic Gardens. The playground reputedly receives a *high* level of use. The playground does not currently meet all Australian Standards although it has an overall rating of *excellent*. It is estimated that the playground requires approximately \$1,700 worth of maintenance improvement works.

### Demographic Characteristics:

- • • • In 2006 there were 110 people aged 0-19 years in Peshurst. This equates to 23.9% of the town population, which is marginally lower than the Shire average (24.1%). The 110 children comprised the following ages:
  - 22 children aged 0-4 years (4.7% of the total population, lower than the average of 5.1%),
  - 27 children aged 5-9 years (5.8%, marginally lower than the average 5.9%),
  - 30 aged 10-14 years (6.5%, marginally lower than the average 6.8%), and

- 31 aged 15-19 years (6.7%, higher than the average 6.0%).
- Birth rates average 12 per year (or approximately 6% of the Shire annual average total).
- Penshurst has experienced population decline from 484 people in 2001 to 460 people in 2006, a decline of 24 people.

**Evidence of Demand:**

- There is no evidence of demand for additional playground locations.
- The existing playground primarily caters for <4, 4-7 and 8-12 year olds. The overall *play value rating* (80) is very high.

**Recommendations:**

25. Retain and upgrade playground, undertaking recommended maintenance improvement works in accordance with the audit results (refer to Appendix 1), in addition, consider opportunities to install natural vegetation elements (i.e. small hedge) to act as a barrier to deter playground users inappropriately accessing the open water.
26. Review the *Leisure Strategy* recommendation for the possible development of a new playground in Penshurst and Byaduk, development of these facilities should only proceed with considerable support from the local community, including contributions to capital (and/or external grant funding) and operational management assistance (e.g. service club).

## 5.9 RURAL BALANCE

The *Rural Balance* includes other townships and settlements such as Wurrayure, Tabor, Byaduk, Tarrington and Wannon.

**Current Playground Provision:**

- There are currently no Council playgrounds in any of the smaller rural settlements.

**Demographic Characteristics (2001 Census data):**

- There were 354 children aged 0-4 years (approximately 7% of the total population) and 1,150 children aged 5-17 years (23%) in 2001. The Rural Balance population has declined slightly from 2001 (5,003 people) to 2006 (4,970 people), a decline of 33 people.
- In 2001, 56% of the total population were aged over 35 years old, 15% (or approximately 750 people, males and females) were aged 18-35 years.
- It is anticipated that the total population of the Rural Balance will continue to decline or at best stabilise over the next few years.

**Evidence of Demand:**

- Although consultation results expressed a desire for a playground in all rural townships, there is little evidence of justifiable demand for installation of new playground locations across the Shire.

**Recommendations:**

27. Concentrate Council priorities on maintaining, improving, upgrading and gradual replacement of existing playground sites.
28. Review the *Leisure Strategy* recommendation for the possible development of a new playground in Penshurst and Byaduk, development of these facilities should

only proceed with considerable support from the local community, including contributions to capital (and/or external grant funding) and operational management assistance (e.g. service club).

## 6. Management Recommendations

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The following recommendations have been developed in response to the key issues and opportunities presented in Section 4. These recommendations do not appear in the *Implementation Plan* as they relate to internal Council processes and management practices. Council will need to review officer work priorities and delegate implementation responsibilities accordingly.

Implementation of the *Playground Safety Management System* (29) and associated training and education (30) should be considered an urgent priority (to be implemented within 6 months from adoption of this report).

### Planning Recommendations:

29. **Impacts from population growth:** The individual playground development recommendations outlined in this report should address the foreseeable demand for playgrounds in each respective township, however Council should monitor the impact from recent population growth (i.e. 2001-2006), particularly in the rural settlements, through consultation with the local communities and ongoing review of the level of use of existing play facilities, to determine if additional playground sites and/or facilities are needed in the long-term.
30. **Council non-public playgrounds:** Council should undertake a detailed compliance audit for the remaining playgrounds that it manages and determine appropriate development recommendations in consultation with primary user groups.
31. **Reserve Committees and DSE:** Council should write to DSE (with copies to appropriate Reserve Committees) encouraging DSE to undertake a detailed compliance audit for all DSE playgrounds and upgrade as required.

### Management Recommendations:

32. **Playground Safety Management System:** Council should adopt the recommendations contained in this report, including the proposed Playground Safety Management System outlined in Appendix 2.
33. **Training and Education:** Council needs to develop a training system to ensure all outdoor parks maintenance staff are trained and educated in the use of the new Playground Safety Management System, including hazard identification and reporting. Furthermore, it is recommended that key outdoor staff (e.g. supervisors, team leaders and/or coordinators) undertake formal playground assessment training and attend other relevant industry workshops and training as opportunities arise. (The Parks and Gardens Coordinator should be provided with a copy of the recent SRV publication "The Good Play Space Guide" as a valuable reference tool).

### Development Recommendations:

Refer to Section 5 and the detailed audit recommendations (Appendix 1).

### Resource Allocation:

34. **Developer Contributions:** Council should pursue cash contributions from developers to be used to improve existing parks and playgrounds for broader community use. A specific partnership should be pursued with Vic Urban for a

substantial contribution to the proposed new Regional Playground.

35. **Local Service Clubs:** There are a number of playgrounds located within 'service club' parks (e.g. Lions Park, Apex Park etc). Council should facilitate a meeting with individual service clubs to explore opportunities for greater involvement of the local clubs in the ongoing maintenance and development of the respective reserves. This may involve the coordination of an annual working bee (e.g. painting equipment, mulch, installation of park furniture etc), community event or similar for each respective site, however Council must retain control and responsibility for all playground compliance issues.
36. **Existing Council Budgets:** The existing annual allocation of \$30,000 appears adequate to address the ongoing maintenance and minor improvement requirements (including installation of park furniture) as identified in the audit results, however this allocation provides minimal scope for substantial playground upgrade requirements. Therefore it is recommended that Council consider additional capital allocations to address the upgrade requirements as identified in this plan (see Section 7: *Implementation Plan*). Furthermore, it is recommended that Council establish a capital reserve fund with an appropriate annual allocation (e.g. \$30,000 p.a.) that will accumulate for the future development of the Regional Playground and Youth Precinct (establishment of the reserve fund may assist Council in attracting external support funding for such projects on a matching contribution basis).

**Council's Leisure Strategy:**

37. **Existing Recommendations:** The recently adopted (Nov. 2006) *Leisure Services Strategic Plan* includes a number of recommendations for reserve improvements, including playground provision. These are outlined in Section 2.3.2. These recommendations should be implemented by Council as funds become available (noting that recommendations for new playgrounds in Penshurst, Branxholme and Byaduk should only proceed as low priorities and with considerable community support – see comments related to each Township above).