

Budget Submission

To: Andrew Barr MLA, ACT Chief Minister and Treasurer

Date: October 2018

Subject: 2019/20 Budget Consultation – **An upgrade for Torrens Place Playground**

Key points

1. Torrens Place playground (the playground behind the shops at Torrens Place at Block 16, Section 22, Torrens) requires an upgrade and additional equipment, as the playground is extremely outdated and limited. In early 2017, some of the equipment from this playground was removed. More generally, all of the playgrounds in Torrens are lagging behind, both in size and quality when compared to other suburbs in Woden and Canberra. Further, there is no public access to the local school playground due to fencing.
2. In late 2017, a petition was arranged calling on the ACT Government to upgrade the playground at Torrens shops. This playground, if upgraded, presents an opportunity to work with an existing play space surrounded by nature, alongside a thriving local shop. Within several weeks, over 700 community members signed the petition to upgrade the playground. The petition was tabled at the ACT Legislative Assembly in November 2017.
3. Following the petition process, a survey was distributed to start a preliminary conversation about what the community would like to see upgraded at the playground. The survey was distributed to Torrens residents through a letterbox drop, shared by local school P&C facebook pages, shared by the Woden Valley Community Council facebook page and left to collect with one of the local cafes. Almost 90 community members provided their response to the survey.
4. In August 2018, a representative from the local community was invited by the ACT Government to present at the Better Suburbs ‘Play space forum’ (<https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/BetterSuburbs>) about the need for rejuvenated play equipment in Torrens. The community is now awaiting news of the outcome of the Play space forum.

Background

5. The playgrounds across Torrens (3 in total) are not in-line with the *ACT Design standards for Urban Infrastructure*. For example, the existing playgrounds
 - contain dated equipment
 - are not shaded
 - contain damaged equipment and or/are affected by vandalism
 - do not contain equipment for older children

- some do not contain a basic stainless steel slide or swings, both being elements recommended by the *local neighbourhood* standards.¹
 - None of the playgrounds contain a minimum of seven activities, as recommended by the *local neighbourhood* standards²
6. 19.7% of the population in Torrens is made up of children aged 0-14 years.³ Currently due to the substandard nature of the existing playgrounds, there is no inviting local community space for all of these children to meet outside and play.
7. Playgrounds should encourage physical activity, social interaction and creativity.⁴ In turn, the provision of open spaces and parks and the ‘design quality’ of the built environment has been found to positively influence physical activity levels and mental health outcomes.⁵ However, it is argued that playgrounds need to be highly accessible, contain pleasing aesthetics and cater to a range of different ages and demographics to promote usability.⁶ Unfortunately the playground at Torrens Place is not easily accessible, nor does it cater to multiple demographics due to the limited amount of activities (the playground contains one set of swings and one small plastic slide). In fact, none of the playgrounds across Torrens promote usability given their age and deteriorated condition.
8. In response to the issues above, a petition was arranged and tabled (with over 700 signatures) at the ACT Legislative Assembly in November 2017.
9. A survey was then arranged by local MLA (now Minister for City Services, Chris Steel) to start a preliminary consultation with the community about Torrens playground. A consistent theme raised through the survey by community members is the neglect the playground has suffered for decades and the rejuvenation required. It is clear from the comments that there are simply no quality playgrounds within walking distance and that an upgrade would bring the community together at a local hub.
10. In summary, a modern play and meeting space would provide an opportunity not just for younger children, but also for older children/teenagers and adults to meet, sit

¹ Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS), ‘Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure: 15 Playgrounds and Playground Equipment’, viewed on 17/10/2017,

https://www.tccs.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/396876/ds15_playgrounds.pdf, p.7

² Ibid

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘2016 Census Quick Stats’, viewed on 17/10/2017,
http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/SSC80122?opendocument

⁴ Wood L. and Martin, K. 2010, ‘What makes a good play area for children?’ Centre for the Built Environment and Health, The University of Western Australia, viewed on 17/10/2017,
http://www.web.uwa.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1857467/What-makes-a-good-play-area-literature-summaryfeb2011.pdf

⁵ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, ‘Information Paper December 2016: Incorporating Active Living Principles into the Territory Plan: Draft Variation Number 348’, viewed on 17/10/2017,

<https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/application/files/3214/8123/2456/20161114-Incorporating-Active-Living-principles-WebAccessible.pdf>, p.18

⁶ Wood L. and Martin, op. cit.

down at a picnic table, grab a bite from the local takeaway and spend time in the beautiful surrounds of nature that Torrens provides.

Recommendations

1. Equipment (both play and recreational), at the Torrens Place playground needs to be rejuvenated and increased. Examples of possible enhancements and additions include new nature play based and traditional play equipment, shade sails, benches and seats, access paths, bbq, water bubbler, landscaping and better integration with the shops. This will provide the local community with a playground/green space within walking distance that is up to speed with other suburbs in Woden and Canberra. The addition of more modern equipment will rejuvenate the park, bring more families into the local shopping village and increase community vibrancy. Improving equipment in this playground is in line with the ACT Government's 'Active Living' principles of providing high quality open spaces, parks and places.⁷

Note - The president of the Woden Valley Community Council has been consulted in drafting this submission

⁷ Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, 'Information Paper December 2016: Incorporating Active Living Principles into the Territory Plan: Draft Variation Number 348', viewed on 17/10/2017, <https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/application/files/3214/8123/2456/20161114-Incorporating-Active-Living-principles-WebAccessible.pdf>, p.5