

# *Tākaro – Investing in play*

## Analysis of consultation feedback

February 2018



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## Executive summary

Auckland Council is developing a plan for how it invests in play: *Tākaro – Investing in play*. The plan will clarify the council's vision for play, and will provide decision-making and evaluation tools to help the council to invest in ways which best meet the future play needs of Auckland's diverse communities.

A discussion document setting out key issues was released for public feedback in May 2017. We received 82 public submissions, in addition to feedback from mana whenua representatives, 21 local boards, and five council advisory panels.

Members of the council's People's Panel were also surveyed about their views on play; attracting 2,675 responses.

The council would like to thank everyone who took the time to provide feedback.

### Overview of your feedback

Overall, you supported the proposal to create an investment plan for play. You welcomed the council taking a fresh look at why and how it invests. Many of you supported the development of investment criteria to help prioritise what we collectively value when weighing investment options.

You also supported monitoring and evaluation to help us understand whether our investments are meeting community needs.

You welcomed the council working with a range of partners, including schools, iwi and the private sector, to expand the public play network and better realise community aspirations.

### ***You want play everyone to have a chance to play***

You told us that everybody has the right to play. You asked that council continue to invest in play for young children, but to also to provide more play opportunities for other ages and abilities, including girls, older children, youth and the elderly.

You highlighted that modern lifestyles do not always make it easy to travel far to access play opportunities. You described that you are seeking more flexibility in how and where you access play, and that you value the chance to play close to home.

Many of you supported the council addressing regional inequity by prioritising investment in low socio-economic communities. However, you also emphasised the need to respond to population growth and intensification, and to meet the different play needs of urban and rural communities.

### ***The council should develop a more sophisticated understanding of risk***

You highlighted that children learn best when they are challenged to navigate risk and complexity, but that the design of public play spaces can be too formulaic, and lacking any sense of risk, excitement or challenge.

You asked that council get better at distinguishing between positive and negative risk. You asked that the council permit children and parents to take greater personal responsibility for choosing to engage in play activities with an element of known risk. However, you also saw a clear role for council in protecting the public from hidden hazards through good maintenance, and prudent investment in shade, signage and fencing.

### ***You want to build on existing successes***

You gave many examples of what you already love about our public play spaces. Some of you saw the potential for *Tākaro – Investing in play* to spread best practices across the region in a way which complements and strengthens local board's existing open space network planning.

### ***You want access to a more diverse play options***

You asked that council provide a diverse range of differently-sized and equipped play spaces within communities.

You also proposed that council expand its investment in promoting flexible, challenging and creative modes of play; including nature play, adventure play, as well as play events, services, and temporary open space activations. You described how these types of play could fill gaps in provision, and meet unmet demand.

### ***Investment must be responsive to local needs***

You identified play spaces as being a source of identity and pride to your communities. You highlighted that communities have a strong stake in the design, delivery and maintenance of local play areas, and that decisions for how, where, and what to invest in, are best made locally.

You emphasised that individual communities have different play needs. You warned against creating a regional policy which might impose a 'cookie-cutter' or 'one-size-fits-all' approach across all play spaces. You urged council to create an investment approach which sensitive to local demography and environments, and which allows delivery approaches to differ between local board areas.

### ***What we suggest as the way forward***

Based on your feedback, we will now develop a draft of *Tākaro – Investing in play*. We propose that it will have three main components:

- **A formal policy statement** setting out the vision, aims and scope of investment, hierarchy of provision, investment principles, position on safety and risk, and approach to partnerships.
- **A decision-making framework**, setting out a menu of different types of play, assessing the capacity of each to support different local outcomes, and facilitating comparison of the relative strengths and weaknesses of investing in different modes of play.
- **A monitoring and evaluation framework** measuring the sufficiency of play provision across Auckland, and assessing the beneficial impact of new investments.

We will seek public feedback on the draft in 2018 before it is put to the governing body for adoption.

## 1. About *Tākaro – Investing in play*

As a council, one of our key responsibilities is to provide Aucklanders with opportunities to play. Traditionally, we have done this by installing play equipment in public parks.

However, Auckland is currently undergoing a period of unprecedented growth. Our population is changing more rapidly than ever before. Public attitudes and expectations towards play are also changing rapidly.

In this context, it is important that the council should have the right tools to enable it to decide how and where to invest in play over the next 20 years, so as to deliver improved outcomes to as many Aucklanders as possible. Our answer is to develop a strategic investment plan, *Tākaro – Investing in play*, which will set out the council's investment approach and priorities for play.

In July 2017, the council released a discussion document as the first step in developing *Tākaro – Investing in play*. A copy document can be found on *Shape Auckland* <http://shapeauckland.co.nz>.

The purpose of the discussion document was to share information on the challenges and opportunities associated with meeting the future demand for play, and to test ideas and to gauge opinions on a range of alternative investment possibilities.

The key messages in the document were that:

- the council invests in play because it delivers a range of health, social, environmental and economic outcomes
- current provision of play is not meeting the needs of all Aucklanders
- creating an investment plan for play would help the council to assess alternative investments to deliver better value to Aucklanders
- there are opportunities to support a wider, more flexible, more exciting range of play experiences than we currently do

This report summarises the feedback received in the first round of consultation. All feedback will inform the development of a draft *Tākaro – Investing in play*.

## 2. Getting your views

Engagement on the discussion document took place between 29 May and 23 September 2017. A range of engagement activities were undertaken to encourage the public and organisations to get involved and have their say.

- **Email and online submissions:** public views were collected through the council's *Shape Auckland* website.
- **Local board engagement:** Staff held workshops on the discussion document with local board clusters. Six boards sought individual follow-up workshops. All 21 boards provided formal feedback by way of resolution.
- **Mana whenua engagement:** Mana whenua views were collected at a regional hui on parks and open space.
- **Advisory panel workshops:** Workshops were presented to the council's Young People's, Disability, Seniors, Ethnic, and Pacific People's Advisory Panels.
- **Online survey:** Members of the council's People's Panel were invited to complete a survey on future investment in play.

Table 1 below provides a list of workshops and meetings that council staff attended.

**Table 1: List of workshops**

Engagement	Date	Engagement	Date
<b>Local board cluster workshops</b>		<b>Advisory panel workshops</b>	
Central	19 June	Young People's Panel	07 Aug.
South	19 June	Disability Panel	08 Aug.
North	26 June	Seniors Panel	16 Aug.
<b>Follow up workshops (by request)</b>		Ethnic People's Panel	11 Sept.
Waitematā	18 July	Pacific People's Panel	27 Sept.
Rodney	20 July	<b>Mana whenua hui</b>	
Howick	26 July	Regional hui	20 Sept.
Hibiscus and Bays	03 Aug.		
Henderson-Massey	08 Aug.		
Whau	16 Aug.		

### 3. Who provided feedback

#### Public submissions on matters raised in the discussion document

The council received the following public feedback on the topics raised in the discussion document:

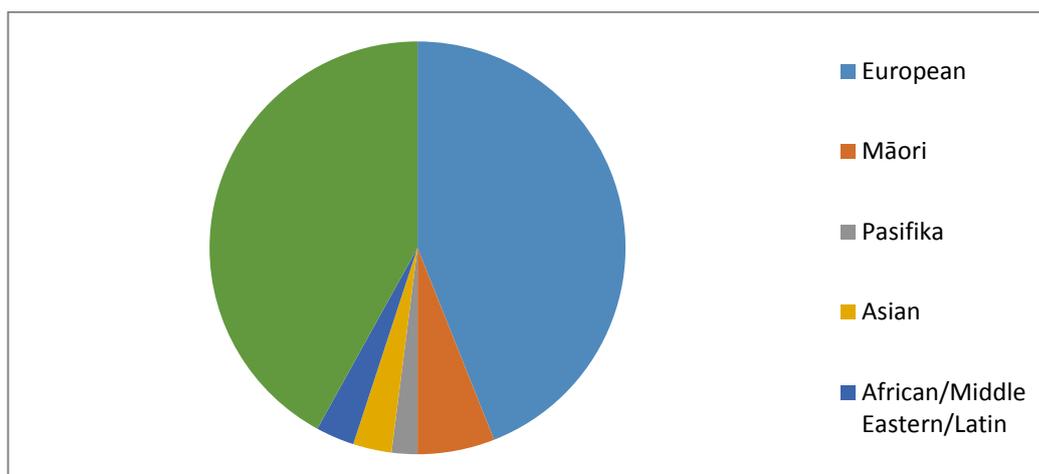
- 82 online or email submissions from members of the public
- 21 resolutions from local boards
- 1 workshop with mana whenua
- 5 workshops with council advisory panels.

Of the 82 online submissions, 63 were from individuals and 19 came from groups or organisations.

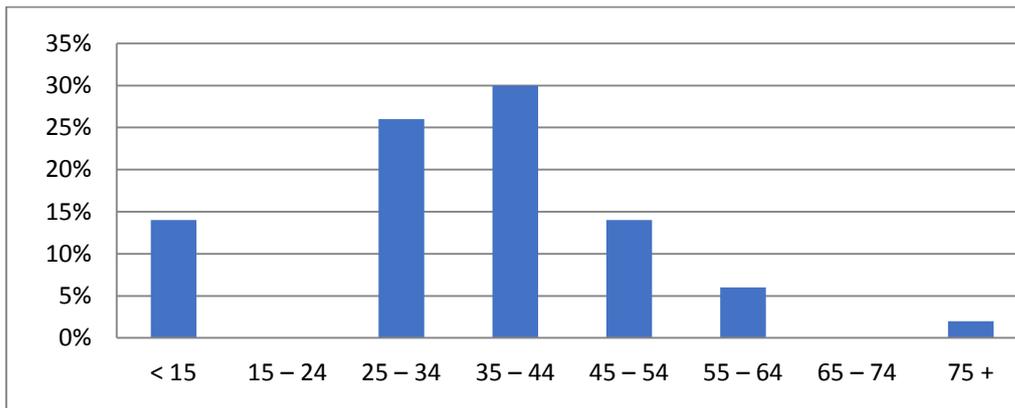
Of individual submitters that provided demographic information (73%):

- 80% were female, 18% male, and 2% gender diverse
- 22% were over 45 years of age, 30% were 35-44 years of age, 26% were 25-34 years of age and 14% were less than 15 years of age
- 44% identified themselves as European, 6% as Māori, 2% as Pasifika, 3% as Asian, 3% as African/Middle Eastern/Latin, and 42% as 'Other'.
- 18% were from the southern local board areas, 39% were from central, 30% were from north and 14% were from the west.

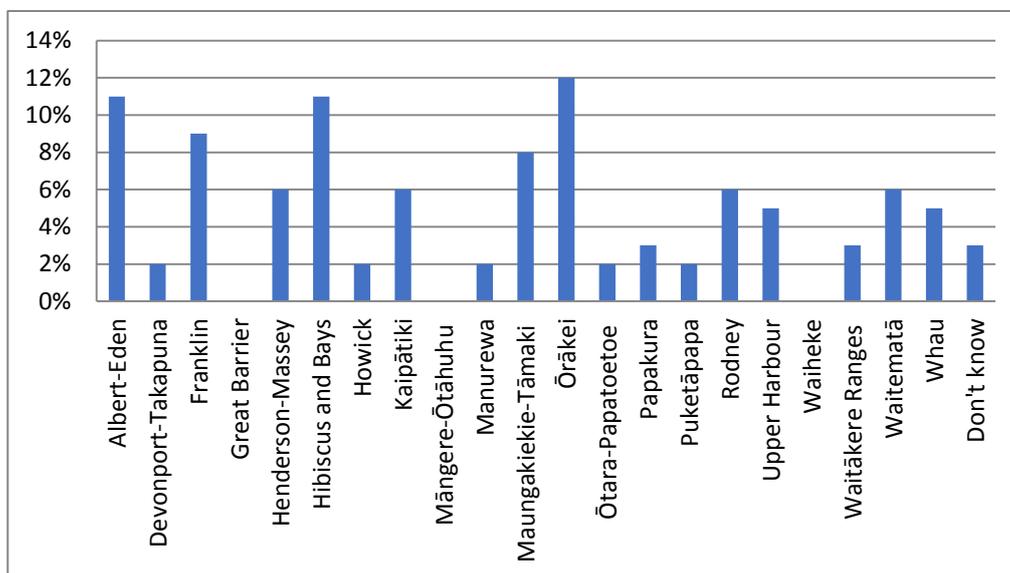
**Figure 1: Breakdown of submissions by ethnicity of submitter**



**Figure 2: Breakdown of submissions by age of submitter**



**Figure 3: Submissions by local board area**



### The People’s Panel survey

Alongside the discussion document, the council also invited members of its People’s Panel to complete a public survey gauging attitudes to play.

The People’s Panel is an 'electronic panel' made up of members of the public who voluntarily share their views with council through online surveys.

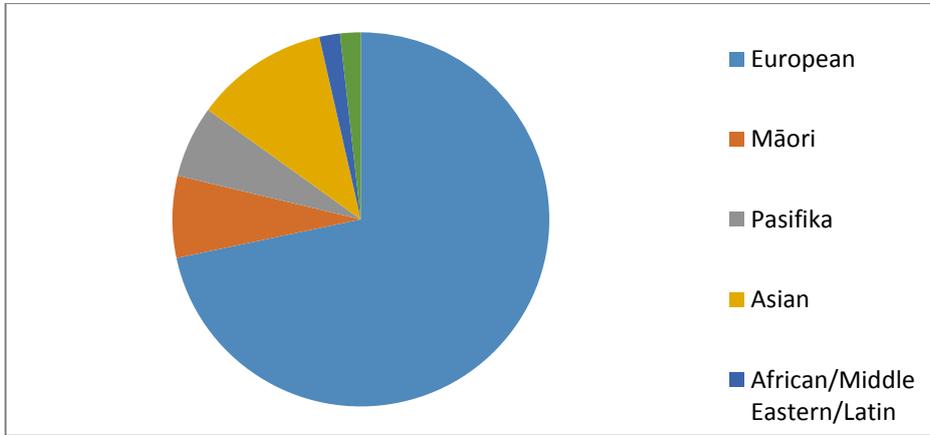
A survey on play was distributed to 19,689 panellist members between 7 August 2017 and 17 August 2017. The survey was completed by 2675 panellists, a 13.5% return rate.

Of individual submitters that completed the survey:

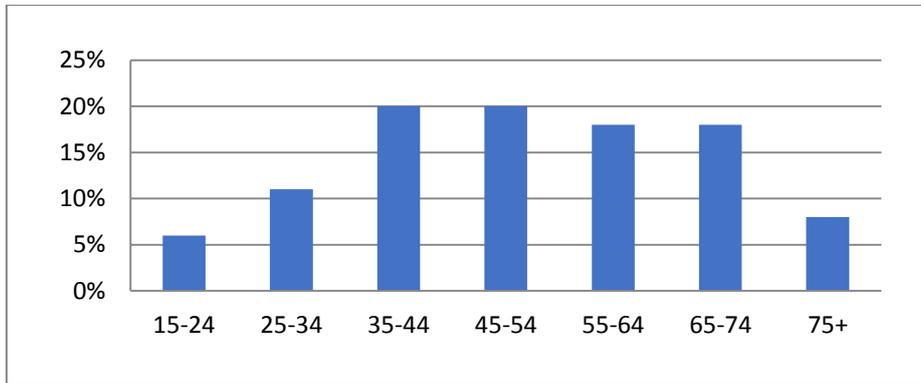
- 64% were female and 36% male
- 55% were from households with children
- 6% were 15-24 years of age, 11% were 25-34 years of age, 20% were 35-44 years of age and 64% were over 45 years of age

- 81% identified themselves as European, 13% as Asian, 8% as Māori, 7% as Pasifika, 2% as African/Middle Eastern/Latin, and 2% as 'Other'<sup>1</sup>.

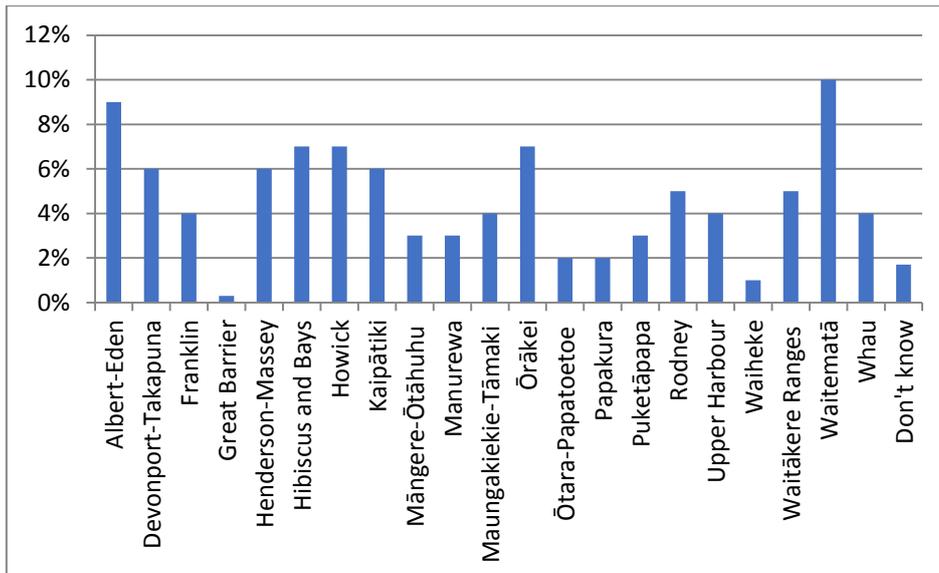
**Figure 4: Breakdown of survey responses by ethnicity of respondent**



**Figure 5: Breakdown of survey responses by age of respondent**



**Figure 6: Breakdown of survey responses by local board area**



<sup>1</sup> Some respondents identified with multiple ethnicities.

## 4. What you told us

Your responses provided us with a wide range of views and insights. Overall it showed general support for *Tākaro – Investing in play*. As we analysed the feedback, the following key themes emerged.

### **Investment in play can help support a range of outcomes**

Feedback recognised that investment in play can be used to support a wide range of outcomes. Submitters consistently emphasised the personal health and wellbeing benefits of play most strongly. However, they also highlighted capacity of play spaces to foster community identity and social cohesion. Submitters also recognised that play investment could be aligned with achieving environmental or economic outcomes, by attracting people to visit areas of natural or commercial significance.

### **Play is for all ages and abilities, together**

Feedback emphasised that there is a growing population who would like the opportunity to play, but whose needs are not currently being met. Submitters suggested that council needs broaden the scope of its investment beyond children under eight years of age. Submitters called for greater investment in older children, youth, adults, seniors, and those with disabilities.

In addition to meeting the individual play needs of a wider range of ages and abilities, feedback emphasised a desire for play spaces which caters to different family structures and mixed-age groups, and which supports play between different generations.

### **Bring play closer to where people work and live**

Difficulty in accessing relevant play opportunities was a major theme. Lack of relevant local provision, inability to travel and lack of knowledge of existing regional provision were seen as major barriers.

Feedback called for the council to:

- address instances of under provision
- improve public awareness of regional play opportunities
- provide more play close to where people live and work by:
  - creating more neighbourhood and doorstep play spaces
  - improving access routes to play spaces
  - integrating play provision into the wider public realm
  - giving the public licence to improvise their own play in streets and public spaces.

### **Provide a mix of different-sized play spaces**

Feedback agreed that it is not desirable or practical for every play space to be the same size, or offer the same experience. Feedback supported the council using a hierarchy model to deliver a diversified network of play, with a mix of destination, neighbourhood and doorstep play spaces serving each local area.

### **Make play spaces safe, welcoming and socially inclusive**

Feedback emphasised the importance of play spaces as community hubs, capable of strengthening local identity and social inclusion. In order to fulfil this potential, submitters emphasised that the design of play spaces must support physical accessibility, and celebrate the unique stories and culture of the local area.

Play spaces also need to be equipped with the right mix of ancillary facilities to meet local demographic needs, including toilets, fences and shade as appropriate.

### **Make play more varied and more challenging**

Feedback suggested that existing play provision is too structured, generic, and sanitised, and that the council should address this by investing a greater variety of play.

In particular, feedback emphasised strong unmet demand for unstructured, challenging modes of play including nature play and adventure play. Feedback showed a strong belief that these modes of play can be implemented in ways which are low cost, inclusive, adaptive to change and providing healthy exposure to challenge and risk.

### **Align investment with local needs**

Feedback emphasised that the council should not seek to introduce a single 'cookie-cutter' approach to play provision across the entire region.

Submitters pointed out that demand for play and associated ancillary facilities will necessarily vary from community to community, depending on population composition, geography and existing play access. Feedback from rural areas tended to put greater emphasis on the value of structured play spaces, while urban submitters choose to emphasize nature play.

Communities with rapidly changing populations and low social cohesion may benefit from the versatility, and interactivity of temporary play activations.

Submitters emphasised that empowering local communities to have greater voice in the design, delivery, maintenance and renewal of play spaces would make investment more responsive.

### **Support regional equity and fairness**

Feedback showed strong desire for investment to support fair and equitable access to play at a regional level. However, there were mixed views as to how this should be

achieved. Some supported allocating investment based on population basis, while others suggested prioritising low-income communities and addressing legacy provision gaps.

The underlying desire to deliver a universal standard of play provision exists in tension with desire to enable different investment approaches in different local board areas.

### **Investment needs to be financially sustainable**

Feedback recognised the need for the council to improve the efficiency of its investment in response to future demand. Submitters emphasised that the council should prioritise modes of play which are future-focused and adaptable, have low all of life costs, and offer popular replay value. Suggestions included emphasising the value of smaller play spaces, and increased investment in unstructured play and play activations and programmes.

### **Equip investment decision-makers with relevant tools and data**

Feedback noted that the design, delivery and renewal of play spaces sit within the remit of local boards. Local boards emphasised the need for care in the development of a regional plan, to allow flexibility in local implementation.

Feedback supported the council equipping local boards with new tools and frameworks to allow them to understand the trade-offs between competing investment options, and to optimise community outcomes at any level of funding. This should include trade-offs between investment in core play, and investment in theming or ancillary facilities such as shade sails.

Feedback suggested the council should monitor and evaluate the performance of its investments. This should involve collecting data on the utilisation of play spaces, the sufficiency of provision, and the performance of recent investments. This data should inform future investment decisions.

### **Make use of partnerships to leverage opportunities and resources**

Feedback agreed that the council should make greater use of partnerships to leverage funding and to unlock private play facilities for public use. The most common suggestion was for the council to partner with schools to provide play areas which serve both students and the wider community. However, public-private and philanthropic ventures were also welcomed.

## 5. Your feedback on individual questions

This section analyses feedback on each of the specific issues contained in the discussion document.

In some instances, the discussion document asked several questions on a single topic. These questions have been grouped together for analysis purposes as the feedback tends to overlap.

Responses to questions were grouped together:

- 1) feedback from the public (including online and email submissions, and the results of the People's Panel survey)
- 2) feedback from local boards resolutions
- 3) feedback from hui with mana whenua
- 4) feedback from workshops with council advisory panels.

Not all submitters provided feedback on every question. Discussion at hui and workshops often focused on a more targeted list of questions that reflected the interest of the audience. Appendix 1 provides a list of the additional questions discussed in workshops.

### 5.1 The value of play

Related question:

*Q1. Which benefits of play are the most important?*

*"We believe that promoting health and well-being as well as community engagement and social cohesion are all great value benefits of outdoor play. Social and community benefit and physical and mental health benefits are equally important and very closely related. Benefit for individuals improves benefit for the community and vice versa."*

*Local board submission*

All groups recognised that investment in play can deliver health, social, environmental and economic benefits.

All groups saw fostering individual health and wellbeing as the most important benefit of outdoor play. Feedback emphasised the ability of play to inspire physical activity, relieve stress and stimulate creativity.

All groups saw social interaction and community-building as the second most important benefit of play. Feedback highlighted the capacity of play spaces to bring people together, and to shape local identity and physical sense of place.

Awareness of other potential environmental and economic benefits of play was more limited. Feedback from mana whenua, advisory panels and local boards recognised the capacity of play to foster respect for the natural environment and to attract customers to nearby businesses.

## 5.2 Investment approach

Related questions:

*Q2. Should council investment target a particular demographic group, such as young children, or should it seek to cater to all ages, abilities and backgrounds equally?*

*Q3. Should the council prioritise investment in areas of high socio-economic deprivation over other areas?*

*“Make playgrounds for all ages and abilities.”*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

*“There should be a range of spaces catering to the diverse needs of the community. They should be within easy reach in local neighbourhoods.”*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

*“Children from low socio-economic households need all the opportunities they can get to grow into happy, healthy, responsible, hard-working and well-adjusted adults. Coming from a disadvantaged background they lack many opportunities to grow and develop.”*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

Overall, feedback supported expanding the scope of investment to cater to all ages and abilities, and prioritising investment in communities with higher socio-economic deprivation.

### Scope of investment

Feedback from all groups indicated that the council’s focus on play for children below eight years of age is too narrow.

Submitters suggested that the council should broaden its scope of investment to cater to all ages and abilities, including children above eight years of age, youth, ethnic minorities, the elderly, and persons with mobility, intellectual, developmental and neurological disabilities.

Feedback from some local boards and public submissions suggested retaining some priority for investment in children's play, because of the large public benefits that can accrue from investing in the first three years of life.

Feedback from advisory panels noted that any increase in play provision for youth and adults would need to be supported by public education and outreach.

### **Scale of investment**

Feedback from all groups emphasised that the council should provide a mix of differently-sized play spaces across neighbourhoods.

Feedback from mana whenua, advisory panels and local boards tended to support the introduction of the hierarchy of play provision described in the discussion document. This would classify play spaces into three categories: doorstep, neighbourhood and destination play spaces, based on size, sophistication, and user catchment area.

Within the hierarchy model, feedback from mana whenua, advisory panels and local board particularly emphasised the importance of neighbourhood and doorstep play. These were seen as better at delivering the health and wellbeing benefits of play directly to where people live. They were seen as being more cost-effective than destination play spaces, and providing opportunities to improve the utility of pocket parks.

By contrast, public submissions tended to emphasise the importance of destination play spaces as being the most inclusive of all ages and abilities, while acknowledging that it is not possible for all play spaces to be destination play spaces.

Some local boards questioned the how the hierarchy model would impact on their existing planning documents.

### **Distribution of investment**

Feedback from submitters generally recognised that the current distribution of play spaces across the region is uneven, and that future play investment should be fair and equitable. However, submitters disagreed on whether either equity of outcome or equity of access should be prioritised.

#### *Equity of outcome*

Submitters from all groups, including approximately 30 per cent of local boards, and 46 per cent of public submitters, recognised that prioritising investment in lower socio-economic communities would benefit the region.

Submitters noted that low household incomes limit children's access free or commercial play opportunities across the wider Auckland region. This restricts their ability learn and develop in the ways that children in higher socio-economic do.

Ensuring free, local public play spaces in these communities would help redress disparities in development outcomes.

Submitters noted that socio-economic deprivation is concentrated in local board areas with large youth populations, and that these areas are also under-provisioned for play.

Many local boards supported greater investment in areas of high socio-economic deprivation over other areas, provided it did not result in reallocation of existing budgets or play space renewal funding. Instead, new funding should be allocated to support any new investment priorities.

#### *Equity of opportunity*

Approximately 30 per cent of local boards and 28 per cent public submitters argued against prioritisation based on socio-economic measures. These submitters suggested that future investment should be prioritised based on population density and demography. This would ensure the council makes proportionate investments in response to legacy inequities, intensifying urban neighbourhoods, greenfield development and rural areas, based on projected user demand.

Some local boards noted that differences in local budgeting priorities between local board areas are likely to perpetuate differences in play provision, but that this is not necessarily a reason for concern.

#### ***People's Panel***

Panellists were asked 'in the future, who should the council build play spaces for?'

Of the 2675 respondents, the 71% selected 'for everybody', 54% favoured 'older kids' (8-14 years), 50% choose 'younger kids' (2-7 years), 34% choose 'those with disabilities' (34%), 32% chose 'young adults' (15-24 years), 27% 'adults' (25-64 years), and 12% 'catering to particular cultures'.

### 5.3 Safety and risk

Relevant questions:

Q4. *What is an acceptable level of risk in play?*

Q5. *Where does the council's responsibility to manage risk end and personal responsibility begin?*

Q6. *What happens if something goes wrong? How should the council respond?*

*"It is too conceptually safe. You've got to let the people who are playing take some ownership of their environment and the parameters of their play. Swings and slides don't cut the mustard."*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

*"If you are building playgrounds you are building facilities to attract children. You have a duty of care to keep them from the traffic."*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

#### **The importance of risk**

Overall, feedback from advisory panels, local boards and public submissions agreed that exposure to risk and challenge is a healthy and necessary part of play, but that council risk-aversion has resulted in a shortage of challenging play spaces.

Feedback tended to agree that:

- the presence of some risk is integral to fun, satisfying play experiences
- children seek out risk at a young age in order to test their limits and gain confidence and independence
- learning about risk through play equipping children to better manage risk in throughout their adult lives
- minor play-related injuries are a normal part of childhood.

Submitters noted that urban intensification is encroaching on children's ability to engage in challenging or risky outdoor play at home. This means that there is a growing need for council to provide this type of play in public.

#### **The role and responsibility of council**

Submitters drew a distinction between two different types of risk:

- *Benign risk*: the presence of risk is obvious to the child, allowing them to judge whether or not to proceed.
- *Hazardous risk*: the presence of risk is not obvious to a child.

Most submitters affirmed council's responsibility to protect the public from hidden hazards, but suggested that the council should adopt a more permissive stance toward benign risks.

With regard to benign risk, submitters suggested that the council should:

- design play spaces to be as safe as necessary, not as safe as possible
- not attempt to eliminate benign risks by 'dumbing down' the design of play spaces
- permit children and parents to take greater personal responsibility for choosing to engage in play activities with an element of known risk (for example, climbing a tree)
- increase investment in types of play which provide opportunities for children to learn how to navigate risk in a safe environment, such as facilitated adventure play and nature play
- provide guidance on appropriate use of play equipment (for example, by posting age-limits on some equipment), but recognise the importance of active parental supervision in avoiding incidents.

With regard to hazardous risk, submitters emphasised that the council has a duty to minimise these. This should include ensuring that play equipment meets national safety standards, that play spaces are kept clean and free from contamination, and that there are appropriate barriers between playgrounds and adjacent environmental hazards such as busy roads.

Feedback from local boards also emphasised the need for the council to take care in distinguishing between its responsibilities in respect of benign and hazardous risk and to be transparent about any changes to risk management policies.

### **Responding to incidents**

When responding to incidents, most feedback urged the council to avoid blanket or kneejerk responses. Each incident should be investigated separately to determine its specific cause, before determining a proportionate response.

#### ***People's Panel***

Submitters were asked – should we change how much risky/challenging play we allow for? 75% agreed that council should provide more opportunities for risky play.

## 5.4 Inclusiveness

Relevant question:

Q7. *How can council provide a play network that welcomes and accommodates all ages, abilities, and cultures?*

*“Gaining independence through play is a crucial benefit for those with disabilities”*

*Advisory panel submission*

Feedback provided a wide variety of suggestions for how public play spaces could be made more welcoming and inclusive.

### **1) Make it easier for the public to identify relevant play spaces**

Feedback from public submissions highlighted the difficulties some families experience in identifying play spaces, events or programmes which met their specific needs. Better promotion and marketing of play spaces and events would fix this.

Some submitters proposed the creation of a smartphone application or online directory. This could allow the public search for play spaces using a range of criteria, including location, diversity of play facilities, age appropriateness, accessibility or the presence of specific ancillary facilities such as toilets, shade or fences.

### **2) Improve maintenance standards**

Feedback from advisory panels and public submissions cited poor maintenance as a major barrier to enjoyment of existing play spaces.

### **3) Discourage anti-social behaviour**

Feedback from advisory panels, local boards and public submissions noted the importance of discouraging anti-social behaviour around play spaces. There was broad agreement that ‘*Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design*’ (CPTED) principles should be consistently applied in the development of new play spaces.

### **4) Address gaps in the regional play network**

Feedback from some public submissions, advisory panels and local boards reiterated the need for new destination play spaces and splash pads in the southern and western local board areas to match provision levels in other parts of the region.

### **5) Increase the variety of play experiences**

Feedback from mana whenua, advisory panels, local boards and public submissions strongly suggested the council should increase the variety of play experiences it provides.

The most popular suggestions for were to invest more in adventure play, nature play and pop-up play activations.

In addition, feedback also suggested a large number of specific play investments targeting particular demographic groups:

- for young families: adjustable or twin-seat equipment which enables parents and infants to play together
- for young children: more learn- to-ride facilities; more opportunities for getting wet, dirty and noisy, and for enjoying street play events
- for older children: investment in technology-enabled play experiences
- for youth: more skate parks and bike tracks, more pop-up engagement activities, investment in female-friendly social hang-out spaces adjacent to active youth play spaces
- for adults and seniors: more outdoor exercise equipment, larger more challenging play structures, integration of play into the public realm
- for those with disabilities: greater investment in play equipment recognising different types of mobility, intellectual, developmental and neurological disabilities.

Feedback also identified nature play, sensory play, and facilitated pop-up play as being more inclusive of different ages and abilities, and good at supporting intergenerational interaction.

## **6) Cluster investment together**

Some feedback from advisory panels, local boards and public submissions advocated for the clustering together of play opportunities in close proximity to each other connected by transport links or greenways. This would create micro networks or trails of play spaces, providing a diverse range of play for mixed-age family groups, while improving the utilisation of all play spaces within the cluster.

Feedback also suggested the co-location of play near other popular community facilities, such as sports fields or courts, walking tracks and exercise areas.

## **7) Provide some age-specific play spaces**

A few public submissions suggested that the council invest in some niche play spaces specifically targeted to deliver high quality play experiences to a single age-group. Supporters of this approach argued that making all play spaces equally inclusive would be difficult and expensive, and risked diminishing the quality of play by spreading resources too thinly.

## **8) Identity and place**

Feedback from advisory panels, local boards, and public submitters called for the design of play spaces to reflect the history, identity and natural environment of the local community. This would strengthen communities' sense of ownership of their local play spaces, improving utilisation.

It was suggested that this could be done through the bespoke theming of play equipment, games and art, use of multi-lingual signage, planting and landscaping.

Many submitters particularly emphasised the importance of mana whenua participation in play space development. Use of Māori design principles, Māori place names, signage and theming can help protect cultural knowledge, and promote intergenerational and cross-cultural learning for Māori and non-Māori.

Some submitters noted that investment in bespoke theming of play equipment would consume resources which could otherwise be spent enhancing the core play experience. These submitters suggested that theming of play spaces should focus on landscaping, planting, colour choices, panelling and signage, rather than modifying playground equipment.

### **9) Accessibility**

Feedback emphasised that paths, access ways and parking areas within play spaces need to be physically accessible to those with limited mobility, including prams and wheelchairs.

Feedback suggested that the council's universal design principles should be consistently applied in the development of play spaces.

### **10) Improve connections between play spaces**

Feedback from all groups emphasised investment in greenways and transport links to connect communities to local play spaces, and to link neighbouring play spaces together.

### **11) Invest in supporting facilities**

Feedback from all groups emphasised the importance of ancillary facilities in making play spaces comfortable and inviting. Suggestions included sheltered resting spaces, fencing to protect young children, covered gathering areas, toilet facilities, changing rooms, barbeque and picnic areas, shade, drinking fountains and accessible signage paths and parking.

### **12) Embed play in the public realm**

Public feedback supported the council bringing play out of parks and into the wider public realm, through the use of playful urban design in greenways, streets and plazas. This would make play accessible to people who did not have time to visit a dedicated play space in a park. Suggestions focused on the use of landscaping, public art, and fixed or moveable furniture and street games.

## 5.5 Partnerships

Related question:

*Q8. What opportunities do you see for partnerships between council and private providers of play?*

Feedback from all groups supported the council taking a partnership approach to extend the play network.

Submitters identified a wide range of entities the council could potentially partner with. Of these, education organisations, including early childhood education centres and schools, enjoyed the strongest level of support. Partnerships with existing community groups were also strongly favoured. Other potential partners included transport and utility operators, church groups, and aged-care facilities.

Submitters envisaged that partnerships could encompass access to land, capital investment, operational funding or support. These included:

- extending public access to private land
- philanthropic funding of play equipment
- community funding and maintenance of play spaces
- corporate sponsorship of play spaces or programmes
- cost sharing arrangements (including capital investment, maintenance, advertising, staffing)
- leasing public land to private operators (for example, to build and operate a adventure play park, or destination play spaces)
- contracting private providers to employ and train play workers.

Many public submitters saw communities playing a role in approving the development of local partnership projects.

Feedback from mana whenua emphasised the importance of recognising mana whenua as existing partners, and of expanding the opportunities participation of mana whenua in space play development.

Feedback showed that some local boards are already partnering with local community groups to develop and maintain play spaces. These local boards see opportunities to partner with other organisations, including schools, sports clubs, businesses, philanthropic organisations.

Many local boards expressed a desire for greater clarity on how to optimise the design of partnerships, as well as on the division of roles, responsibilities and resources between partners. Some questioned whether council procurement policies

might act as barriers to local partnerships. Some expressed particular interest in using partnerships with developers to improve provision of play in greenfield areas.

Some local boards noted that the council is already reviewing its approach to delivering community facilities through partnerships, and that this work be taken into account.

Some also questioned whether use of partnerships could lead to commercialisation or privatisation of public spaces. Providing for community oversight in the approval of local partnerships was suggested as the best way to mitigate such risks.

## 5.6 Investment criteria

Related question:

*Q9. What criteria should underpin Auckland's investment in play?*

Feedback from all groups tended to support the criteria outlined in the discussion document.

Among public submitters, 'inclusivity' and 'diversity' received the greatest levels of support, followed by 'fairness' and 'equity'.

Feedback from advisory panels emphasised 'diversity', followed by 'fairness', 'inclusivity', 'equity' 'community-centric' and 'integrated'.

Feedback from local boards highlighted 'equity', 'diversity', 'community-centric', and 'evidence-based'.

Feedback from mana whenua emphasised 'equity', 'inclusivity', 'diversity' and 'evidence-based'.

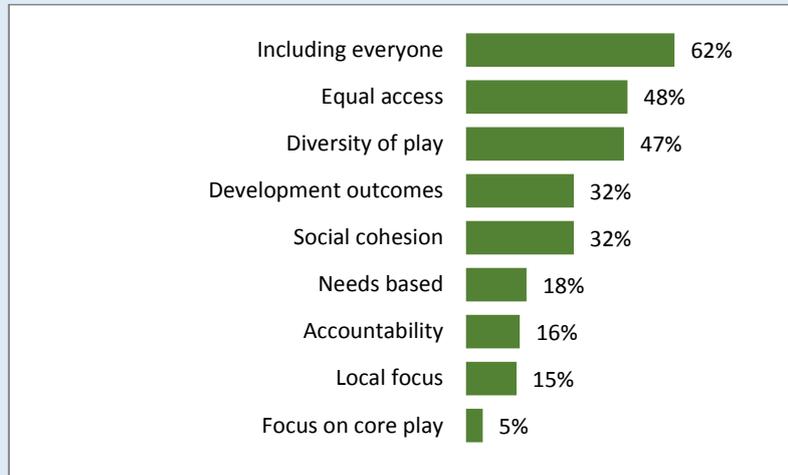
In addition submitters also suggested a number of additional possible criteria:

- **outcomes-based:** Investment prioritises play provision options which can make the greatest contribution towards the intended outcome
- **rights-based:** Investment protects children's right and ability to play in public, including by involving children in design, delivery and maintenance of play spaces
- **quality of play:** Investment prioritises options which deliver strong replay value over novelty
- **future-focused:** Investment prioritises flexible provision options, which are adaptable to changing population needs
- **sustainable:** Investment prioritises play options which are environmentally sustainable

- **value for money:** Investment prioritises play options which have a low whole of life cost including maintenance, staff, parts, warranties.

### People's Panel

Submitters were asked what three values the council should prioritise when investing in play:



## 5.7 Nature play

Related questions:

Q.10 Should we encourage and provide for nature play?

Q.11 Where should we provide for nature play?

Q12. How accepting do you think the wider community would be to lowering maintenance standards to provide for nature play in some parks?

*"[We need] nature-based play utilising our reserves and beautiful non-manicured outdoor spaces. Kids, especially city kids, have the right to play as their parents used to do, climbing trees and building huts!"*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

A majority of feedback from mana whenua, advisory panels, local boards and public submissions supported greater investment in nature play. Reasons for doing so included:

- a belief that nature play delivers greater educational and entertainment value than other forms of play
- a wish to celebrate Auckland's existing natural environment
- a desire for urban dwellers to re-connect with nature

- the desire for ‘unfussy’ public places which permit climbing, exploring, digging, and hut building and messy play
- a desire to see more sustainable materials used in the manufacture of play spaces
- a desire for access to seasonal experiences with leaves, seeds, nuts, blossoms.

Feedback from advisory panels supported the capacity of nature play to cater to all ages and abilities. Local boards value nature play as a tool for providing environmental education to the community and the importance of integrating play spaces with ecological connections.

Despite strong support across all groups, feedback found differing expectations as to what should comprise. Collectively, submitters identified a spectrum of opportunities, including:

- inviting public exploration of existing natural wilderness
- naturalising the look and feel of existing parks through landscaping and maintenance changes
- creating permanent play structures out of natural materials
- other structured spaces with a connection to nature, such as community gardens.

Those submitters promoting play in existing nature areas saw this as a way to offer authentic experiences at a low cost. Those favouring a park-based approach emphasised the importance of delivering nature play to urban areas with limited access to nature.

There was little feedback on where or how nature play areas should be established. Collectively, submitters identified a spectrum of possible options:

- anywhere in any public park or open space
- only enclosed parts of public parks
- only in urban or suburban areas with poor access to nature
- only in pre-existing nature areas, such as in regional parks
- only in enclosed parts of pre-existing nature areas.

There was no clear consensus between submitters over which of these options the council should prioritise. Enclosed environments were seen as offering less authentic nature experiences, but valued for their ability to be cleaned, maintained and inspected for hazards, and to prevent damage to natural eco-systems.

The greatest single concern regarding nature play was that it could degrade the appearance of parks. 59 per cent of public submissions opposed any lowering of maintenance standards to facilitate nature play.

Many did not see maintenance standards as related to nature play provision. Some expressed concern that maintenance reductions to facilitate nature play might lead to overall reductions in park maintenance.

Feedback from local boards and advisory panels reiterated public submitters concerns. Both emphasised the importance of educating the public about nature play and related changes to maintenance practices. Local board feedback suggested that maintaining a clear distinction between wild and manicured areas would assist public acceptance.

Feedback from both local boards and advisory panels noted that some modes of nature play may generate additional maintenance and health and safety requirements. For example, additional monitoring of water quality standards in streams and rivers, and providing for drainage of winter-use nature spaces.

#### ***People's Panel***

65% of respondents would like the council to invest more into nature play. 83% were accepting of allowing the creation of organic natural play spaces in some parks.

## **5.8 Water play**

Related question:

Q13. Should we encourage and provide more opportunities for water play? If so, in what form?

There was limited feedback on the topic of water play. Public submissions from play experts suggested the council should prioritise investment in simple, natural forms of water play, such as sand trays, pumps and sluices. These were seen as having several advantages over investment in splash pads, including being educational, inclusive of different ages and abilities, relatively inexpensive to operate, and being accessible year round.

There was limited feedback on where water play should be provided. Some submitters raised equity concerns about the relative shortage of water play areas in southern local board areas. Others suggested that that water play should be prioritised for areas with poor access to natural water ways or beaches, or aligned with environmental education programmes.

Feedback also identified restoration of natural waterways and improving access to public swimming pools as alternatives to investing in additional water play spaces.

## 5.9 Temporary play activations

Related questions:

Q14. In what situations should the council prioritise play activations?

Q15. What priority should be given to investment provision of temporary play experiences over permanent play assets?

*“Permanent play equipment can be expensive, if temporary play experiences are more affordable they may allow more areas, more people to experience them”*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

*“Whilst it's good to see variety through pop-up play areas, you want to be able to provide the basics on a permanent basis. Temporary play equipment should be used to introduce new experiences into areas where people might not normally get to experience certain things.”*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

Feedback generally supported the use of activations to deliver play, but was divided over whether it should be prioritised over investment in permanent play assets.

Amongst public submissions, 46 per cent supported investment in temporary play activations being given equal or greater priority than investment in permanent play assets, while 51 per cent supported prioritisation of investment in permanent play assets.

The most common reason to favour increased investment in temporary play was its ability to move and change in response to changing community demand. It was also perceived as being:

- cheap to implement
- better able to deliver novel play experiences
- flexible and responsive to the needs of specific demographic groups
- able to deliver play close to where people live
- better at supporting imaginative, open-ended, intergenerational play.

Those who prioritised permanent play valued the certainty of access which it provides, and its ability to provide specific types play experience, such as climbing or swinging, which would be difficult to replicate in a temporary format.

Feedback from advisory panels tended to support increased investment play activations on the basis that they can be customised to cater to different demographics.

Feedback from mana whenua emphasised the possibility of empowering communities to develop and deliver their own spontaneous play initiatives. This should involve improving access to resources and removing compliance barriers.

Feedback from local boards generally supported greater use of play activations, but did not envisage activations surpassing permanent play as the primary mode of provision. Local boards who favoured temporary play valued it as a means of connecting with marginalised populations.

There was no clear consensus over the best situations in which the council should use play activations. Suggestions included:

- to test new play experiences
- to fill gaps in existing play provision
- to add to the diversity of play available in Auckland
- to bring play closer to where people live
- to improve utilisation of existing play spaces, parks and public spaces
- to deliver play in areas where permanent play spaces cannot be established
- to encourage play in different seasons and weathers
- to build public capacity to plan and operate community-led neighbourhood play events
- to connect with marginalised communities
- to support local festivals and events
- to support local economic activity by drawing people into town centres, or by creating employment opportunities for professional play workers

While generally supportive of investing more in play activations, local boards signalled that current budgets may be insufficient to increase temporary play. Temporary play activations are currently funded from local board operational budgets, whereas permanent play spaces are funded from capital budgets.

Submitters noted that some types of temporary play activations benefit from access to permanent ancillary facilities, such access to electricity, drinking fountains, toilets, changing rooms and seating. This may limit where they can be deployed.

#### ***People's Panel***

54% support the provision of mostly permanent and a little temporary play equipment. 24% believe that the council should invest in equal permanent and temporary play equipment and only 11% want only permanent equipment.

## 5.10 Adventure play

*Related question:*

*Q16: Does Auckland need an adventure playground?*

*“[The key to adventure play] is mostly just letting kids have some actual autonomy, some creative voice in the process of their own play. It just feels different because it's in the midst of a bunch of junk and old mattresses and a tree swing over a stream instead of some nicely painted monkey bars and a slide and a basket swing on a patch of mown grass.”*

*Public submission via Shape Auckland*

Feedback from all groups showed strong support for investment in adventure play.

42% of public submitters thought that council should encourage more adventure play. Feedback identified adventure playgrounds as learning environments for valuable life skills, such as creative problem solving and risk management.

Feedback generally suggested that adventure playgrounds should cater to all ages, some responses commented that these play spaces should be targeted to where the predominant youth population is situated.

Feedback from mana whenua, advisory panels and local boards which supported adventure playgrounds did so because they perceived them as being socially inclusive, and mentally and physically challenging.

Despite broad support for the benefits of adventure playgrounds, there was no consensus as to how they should be implemented.

As with public submitters, feedback was divided between those that favoured the model of supervised, enclosed play areas proposed in the discussion document, where children are permitted high autonomy use hand tools and loose parts to create, modify their play environment. These submitters valued adventure playgrounds as spaces where children have free reign to explore creativity and risk in a controlled environment.

Others associated adventure play with any form of play involving risk or challenge, sometimes conflated with nature play, or with large climbing structures found in destination playgrounds. Some submitters tended to advocate for a looser idea of ‘adventurousness’, not dependent on a designated location. These submitters associated adventure play with imagination, challenge and risk, as well as permission for the public to improvise their own play in public spaces (for example, hut building or tree swings).

### ***People’s Panel***

60% of respondents indicated they would like the council to invest in adventure play.

## 5.11 Supporting infrastructure

Q17. Which are the most important supporting facilities which council should provide at play spaces?

*“At a fenced playground [children] are free to run around and enjoy themselves because their parents do not have to shadow their every move.”*

*Public submission via email*

*“Tap water should be accessible, appealing and available in all play areas...improving the availability of water, particularly for children and young people living in areas of high socio-economic deprivation could displace sugar-sweetened beverage consumption.”*

*Public submission via email*

Feedback from the advisory panels, local boards, and public submissions emphasised the importance of supporting infrastructure in making play spaces safe, accessible and inclusive.

Public submissions identified accessible toilets (33%) as the single most important piece of supporting infrastructure, followed by fencing (18%), shade (16%), and barbeque or picnic facilities (14%).

Submitters also identified a large number of other supporting facilities including:

- adult and baby changing facilities
- seating
- drinking fountains
- covered areas for activities such as tai chi
- CCTV cameras
- lighting
- bike track facilities
- parking, including accessible parking to allow for wheelchairs, prams
- electrical outlets
- wireless internet
- accessible pathways, wheelchair-friendly play surfaces
- outdoor games.

### Fencing

Submitters who supported fencing did so on the grounds that it is needed to separate young children from hazards such as nearby roads. Proponents argued that fencing enables children to exercise independence within a bounded area.

Proponents of fencing disagreed that strategic landscaping or planting represented a viable alternative to fencing. Submitters also disputed the cost of fencing, and the council's preference for fencing entire parks over single play spaces.

Some submitters suggested that fencing should be targeted towards communities with large numbers of very young children. The use of investment criteria could help identify instances where fencing is most needed.

A small number of submitters opposed fencing play spaces. These submitters raised concern that fencing isolates play area from wider park, and argued that parental and community supervision should suffice.

### **Shade**

While a significant number of public submitters indicated that shade is important, there was no consensus as to why. Reasons included:

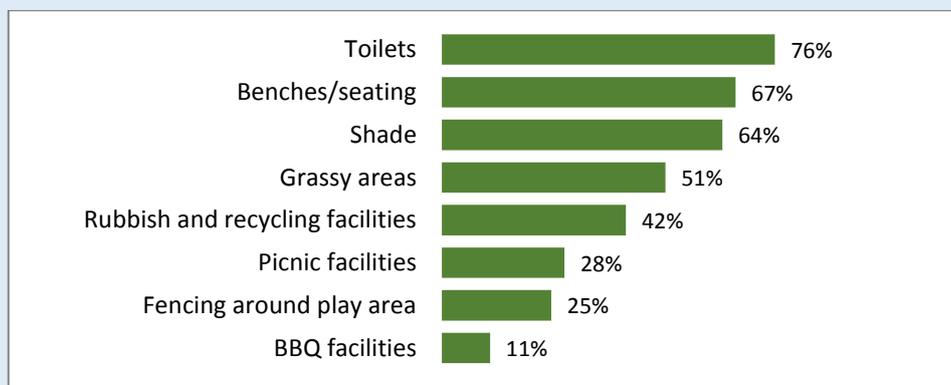
- concerns about children getting too hot, or play equipment overheating
- comfort of accompanying adults
- protection from ultraviolet protection
- protection from rain and other adverse weather.

Few expressed specific preferences as to how shade should be provided. Shade sails, building permanent structures and planting more trees were all identified as options. There was no consensus in favour of any one option.

Submitters who opposed investment in shade saw sun protection as the responsibility of parents and caregivers.

### ***People's Panel***

Submitters were asked to name four additional facilities which make a playground visit more enjoyable:



## 6. What we suggest as the way forward

Your feedback has provided us with valuable insights about how to develop *Tākaro – Investing in play* to support the best outcomes for play across the region.

Appendix 1 summarises submitter's key suggestions for the council to address, as well as the council's initial responses.

In some instances your feedback highlighted tensions between achieving multiple competing goals. These include:

- a desire to support regional equity, but also to respect local diversity and avoid a single universal approach
- a desire to make play spaces more open and accessible, yet also more secluded and enclosed
- a desire to make play more challenging while not compromising safety
- a desire to invest more in both fixed and temporary play
- a desire to invest more in play space theming and ancillary infrastructure without compromising investment in core play.

Based on your feedback, our next step will be to develop a draft plan. We propose that it will have three main components:

- A formal policy statement setting out the vision, aims and scope of investment, hierarchy of provision, investment principles, position on safety and risk, and approach to partnerships
- A decision-making framework defining the different modes of play, assessing the capacity of each to support different local outcomes, and facilitating comparison of the relative strengths and weaknesses of investing in different modes of play
- A monitoring and evaluation framework measuring the sufficiency of play provision across Auckland, and assessing the beneficial impact of new investments.

As *Tākaro – Investing in play* is intended to serve as a strategic document; it is possible that some issues raised in consultation feedback will be addressed through the subsequent development of operational guidelines, rather than the plan itself.

Public consultation on the draft of *Tākaro – Investing in play* will take place in mid-2018.

## Appendix 1: Initial responses to submitters

The table below summarises submitters' key suggestions for the council to consider in its drafting of *Tākaro – Investing in play*, as well as the council's initial responses.

Suggested actions from consultation feedback	Auckland Council's response
Provide play closer to where people live, work and socialise	Agreed – Feedback highlighted a number of opportunities to make play more assessable to those who cannot travel.
Make it easier for the public to find play opportunities which meet their particular needs	Agreed – The council will review how it publicises the existence of play spaces and play events.
Provide play for all ages and abilities	Noted – The plan will consider the merits of expanding the scope of investment to support a wider range of ages and abilities.
Support a hierarchy of differently sized, equipped, and located play spaces	Agreed – The plan will propose a hierarchy of provision as to support local board open space planning.
Prioritise socio-economic equity, while catering to growth	Noted – Feedback identified a tension between prioritising equity outcomes, or supporting regional growth. The plan will need to balance these two objectives.
Develop a more sophisticated approach to risk	Agreed – The plan will aim to permit greater public exposure to 'benign' risk, while continuing to guard against hazardous risk.
Preserve high maintenance standards for play spaces	Noted – Feedback indicated a low tolerance for reduced maintenance of play spaces, unless the rationale can be clarified. The plan will not propose a general reduction in maintenance standards, but will consider how maintenance practices can impact on the delivery of nature play.
Review its adherence to	Noted –The council will support the consideration of

applicable national play safety standards	accessibility standards as part of best practice play provision.
Require that play spaces are designed to be physically accessible	Noted – The council will support the consideration of accessibility standards as part of best practice play provision.
Encourage the design of play spaces to celebrate local history and culture	Noted –The council will consider how the design of play spaces can support local identity, while recognising that there may be a trade-off between investment in theming and investment in core play equipment.
The design of play spaces should celebrate Māori culture and identity	Noted – The council will consider how the design of play spaces can support Māori culture and values, including through the application of the council's <i>Te Aranga</i> principles.
Provide guidance on the use of partnerships to extend the public play network	Agreed – The plan will clarify the council's for delivering play through the use of partnerships.
Use criteria to guide future investments	Agreed – The plan will propose investment criteria as a tool to support local board decision-making.
Gather data on the quality and sufficiency of investment	Agreed – The plan will include a monitoring and evaluation framework, which will inform investment.
Prioritise the creation of mixed-use play spaces	Noted – Adopting a hierarchy of play will help guide investment in mixed-use play spaces.
Locate play spaces near other community, play, recreation and leisure opportunities	Noted – The council consider providing guidance on the location of play spaces, in the context of the hierarchy of play.

Expand provision of nature play and adventure play, and pop-up activations	Agreed – The plan will include a menu of play investment options, including nature play, adventure play, pop-up activations, as well as traditional structured play spaces. The menu of options will set out the relative merits of each type of play.
Prioritise investment in small, natural water play opportunities over large splash pads	Noted – investment in water play installations with demonstrated high efficiency is likely to be encouraged.
Increase the flexibility and efficiency of play investments	Agreed – the plan will consider the flexibility and efficiency of different types of play investment in the development of its menu of play.
Expand the provision of technology-based play	Noted – The council will consider the inclusion of technology based play options as part of its menu of investment.
Expand the provision of play in the wider public realm	Noted – The council will consider the inclusion of technology-based play options as part of its menu of investment.
Provide more ancillary infrastructure, such as fencing and shade	Noted – The plan will provide guidance to support local board decision making on investment of ancillary infrastructure.
Delegate development of detailed play investment planning to	Noted – The plan will consider how to promote regional equity, while recognising the delegated authority of local boards to determine local play provision in their areas.
Clarify how the policy will support local decision-making and planning	Noted – The plan will recognise the delegated authority of local boards to determine local play provision in their areas. The plan will aim to feed into local boards existing open space network planning processes.
Clarify the funding implications of the plan	Noted – As a strategic document, the plan does not propose any immediate change to funding levels. It may inform bids for new local funding under the Long-term Plan and Annual Plan processes.

## Appendix 2: Additional questions

During local board workshops, members were asked to comment on the following questions:

- Which benefits of play are the most important?
- Should council investment prioritise a particular segment of population?
- Should council prioritise investment in areas of high deprivation over other areas?
- What is an acceptable level of risk in play?
- Where does the council's responsibility to manage risk end?
- How can the council provide a play network that welcomes and accommodates all?
- What are the opportunities for partnerships between the council and private providers of play?
- Should the council encourage and provide for nature play?

During advisory panel workshops, members were asked to comment on the following additional questions relating to accessibility and inclusion:

- Where do you play the most? At home? On in street? At the park? What stops you from playing in public spaces?
- How can the council provide play spaces that welcome and accommodate all?
- What types of play opportunities would be more inviting to youth, seniors, with disabilities, people from different cultural backgrounds?
- What kinds of ancillary facilities make a playground visit more enjoyable?

During the hui with mana whenua, representatives were asked to comment on the following questions:

- What value do you see in the development of an investment plan?
- What principles or criteria should council consider when investing in play?
- What new types of play do you see value in?
- What opportunities do you see for partnerships with council on the provision of play?
- What would best practice engagement with mana whenua on play look like?

