Plum Garland Playground
SITE ANALYSIS & CONSULTATION REPORT

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

Plum Garland Playground is one of the most popular playgrounds in the City of Port Phillip (COPP). Located on the foreshore, it is securely fenced due to its proximity to Beaconsfield Parade.

The existing playground is due for replacement due to significant corrosion and general deterioration. The construction budget for a new playspace is $335k to be spent in the 2011/2012 financial year.

COPP have engaged Mary Jeavons Landscape Architects to design and document a new playspace for Plum Garland in the 2010/2011 financial year.

This report summarises the Site Analysis undertaken by Mary Jeavons Landscape Architects including:

- Strategic Context
- Site analysis of the physical site
- Analysis of the existing playground

COPP have conducted community consultation, the results of which are also included in this report.

The conclusion summarises the direction for the design.
SECTION 2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Plum Garland Playground is located on the foreshore between the beach and Beaconsfield Parade, in Albert Park.

Aerial photo showing the location of Plum Garland Playground in relation to Albert Park Lake, the bay and the CBD.

2.1.1 Strategic Context

According to the COPP Playground Strategy the South Melbourne District has 15 playgrounds managed by COPP and 2 in Albert Park managed by Parks Victoria. Plum Garland playground is a district level playground. It is currently the second most used playground in the City of Port Phillip.

It is one of only a few playspaces available to people living in this area. With its foreshore location, it is also a significant playspace for visitors to the area.

In the local area there are also two new playgrounds in Danks Reserve. This reserve is a narrow open space / road reserve located a few hundred meters from the foreshore. These two new playgrounds are a neighbourhood scale. The new design for Plum Garland should aim to provide different experiences than are available at these other sites.
2.1.2 Strategic Role

The fenced playground provides a space for younger children to play; safely protected from the adjoining major road (Beaconsfield Pde) and bike path.

The community feedback revealed a desire for play equipment for both older and younger children as well as natural and unstructured play elements. The site analysis identified that even with a 50m increase in the footprint of the playground it will be challenging to provide adequate play equipment for both older children (8-12 years) and younger children (0-7 years). With this constraint in mind it was determined that the playground should primarily cater for younger children in the 0-7 age range and their families for the following reasons:

- older children are able to play more safely on the beach and will find swimming and games on the beach attractive.
- the space is small, being constrained by the bike path on one side and the beach on the other. Therefore there is not the space for larger structures suited to older children.
- the site caters to a large number of stay at home parents in the area, mostly mothers, who regularly visit the playground. It is well suited to this use as it is shaded, fenced and features a sand surface which is good for babies and young children. The playground is also well sited beside the Foreshore Shared Trail and it has been observed that many parents will use the trail for exercise with the pram and then stop off for a visit at the playspace.

Although the 0-7 age range will be the focus for play, the design will include some play elements that are attractive for all ages. The design should also create a place which is inviting for people of all ages through possible elements such as indigenous gardens and social spaces (picnic tables, seat decks etc). The community consultation also highlighted that the foreshore location, is a significant attraction of this playground and the design should seek to build on this further with measures that interpret and enhance the local environment.
SECTION 3. SITE ANALYSIS

3.1 OVERALL SITE ANALYSIS

3.1.1 A view from above!

*Aerial photo showing the location of the playground within Albert Park.*
Close up aerial photo of the playground.

3.1.2  Broader physical context

Albert Park is principally a residential area characterized by low rise terrace style housing and apartments. Other than the foreshore and Albert Park lake, open spaces are typically very small.

The South Melbourne/Albert Park beach is a popular place for swimming, sunbathing and windsurfing. There are several cafes and kiosks along the foreshore and the Kerferd Road Pier is a local landmark.

Further afield there is a penguin colony at the St Kilda breakwater. This possibly could provide inspiration for the playground design.

Public toilets are available on the foreshore, a short walk to the south.

3.1.3  Visual Amenity

The location of the playground on the foreshore takes advantage of the amazing views out over the beach and Port Phillip Bay. The playground is elevated above the beach, further enhancing the views.
There are also significant palm trees lining the trail to the east of the site.

View over beach and bay from the playspace. View south along foreshore from the playspace.

3.1.4 Park Size

The foreshore is a major linear reserve running along the bay from Garden City to Elwood in the City of Port Phillip. The actual playground site is quite small and constrained and is approximately 17m x 38m.

To the Eastern Boundary there is an existing bike path. To the North & West there is a footpath, beach wall and then the beach itself. The playground is therefore constrained at 17m wide. However, there is the potential to extend the area of the playground to the south, pending advice from the DSE.

Path, wall & beach constrain west & north boundaries (left & centre). Shared trail to the east (left image)

Area to the south of the playground – we may be able to expand the playground into this zone.
3.1.5 Street Access, Parking & Connections.

There is ticketed parallel parking on Beaconsfield Pde.

There are limited places for pedestrians to safely cross Beaconsfield Pde however the crossing points are linked to the playground via the foreshore shared trail, which provides excellent bicycle and pedestrian access.

3.1.6 Prominence /Passive Surveillance / Relationship to the street

There is good passive surveillance of the site coming from the beach & foreshore.

The shade sails mark the site of the playground from the street. There is no other obvious signage or entry from Beaconsfield Pde.

Pedestrians & cyclists can see into the playspace as the fence is only low. However, the existing low fence and shrubs could present a more ‘playful’ appearance to the street.

3.1.7 Accessibility to the site

There is an accessible path to the playground and into the playspace.

Existing southern entry with accessible concrete path to gate.

3.1.8 Topography & exposure

The site is

- very flat.
- very exposed to wind across the bay including hot northlies and cold south-westerlies.
- very exposed to traffic noise on Beaconsfield parade.
3.2 PLAYGROUND FUNCTIONAL DESIGN ANALYSIS

3.2.1 Paths
There are existing concrete and rubber paths in the playground. These are mostly covered by sand and do not really go anywhere useful. Therefore they do not provide disabled access to the play equipment.

3.2.2 Bike parking
Three bike racks outside each of the south and north gates.

3.2.3 Pram parking
There is not currently enough space for prams within the playspace.
On busy days there can be more than 30 prams within the space. At the time of our visit it was not very busy, however there were >7 prams parked within the playspace. At the northern gate prams were spilling off the paths into the sand. At the southern gate prams were parked on the boat play structure. The new playspace needs much more space for pram parking.
There was no pram access to the West gate which does not have a path surface.
3.2.4 Bins

There is a bin located near the south gate. There are bins located outside the playspace in the adjoining open area.

![Bins in adjoining open area.](image)

3.2.5 Drinking Fountain

One drinking fountain is provided near the north gate. It is accessible with a small concrete pad and standard COPP design. The run-off water is not currently used for play.

3.2.6 Toilets

Located a 5 minute walk along the foreshore. There will be no new toilets.

3.2.7 Lighting

Lighting is provided to the shared trail which spills into the space.

There is a light to the South-west corner of the space on the adjoining footpath.

3.2.8 Carparking

Parallel parking on Beaconsfield Pde separated from the path by the nature strip. No dedicated accessible spaces.

3.2.9 Fences

The playground is fully fenced. Open style pool fences frame the North, West & South. These fences have significant corrosion.

![Existing corroded gate to the West.](image)

The eastern boundary fence has very minimal corrosion and is currently beside existing small shrub vegetation. It serves several very useful functions including:

- stopping sand from blowing or spilling onto the shared trail.
• protecting playground visitors from the visual intrusion of Beaconsfield Pde, emphasizing instead the views out to the water.
• protecting children from shared trail traffic and Beaconsfield Pd.
• providing a small amount of noise protection from the street.

As referred to earlier, this fence could provide a more playful appearance to the street.

Gates are provided to the North, South & West. These have child locks. The west gate does not close properly due to the build up of sand.

Fences would need to be extended if the playground is extended.

3.2.10 Shade

Existing shade is provided to most of the space via large sails. These are to be retained.

Palm trees provide minimal morning shade to the area suggested for extending the playground. Shade may be required for this space. Council policy is to use natural shade from trees, however trees can be difficult to establish on the foreshore. Depending on the design a mixed shade solution with some sails and some tree planting may be required to this area.

There is no roofed shelter and there are no plans for this type of shade.

3.2.11 Vegetation

There is no vegetation inside the playground except for some grass weeds in one corner.

Correa shrubs line the outside of the eastern boundary fence. Mature palms line the adjoining shared trail.

Existing lawns dominate the area for possible expansion.

COPP would like to increase the amount of vegetation in the new playspace.

3.2.12 Seating

Seating is currently inadequate.

There are 4 bench seats located inside the playground. An additional bench is located outside, 12m south of the playground.

There is no children's seating. There are no picnic tables or informal seating such as low walls. The provision of individual bench seats spread around the playground does not encourage social interaction of parents or engagement in the playspace. One bench is located behind the area for pram parking at the north gate.

Many parents sat in the sand, some took advantage of the edge of the rubber surfacing as a comfortable spot to lean back.
The new design should provide much more seating including informal seating such as low walls, decks, rocks or logs. COPP would like to provide some picnic tables or platform seats in the new design. The new design should provide more social seating and seating to bring parents into the playspace. Some seating with backs and arms should still be provided for older people.

3.2.13 Playground surfacing

The existing surfacing is sand. This is very popular and is one of the attractions of the playspace. There is a small area of rubber pathway. It is contained by timber edging and the fences. Sand blows and piles up against the East Fence.

Playground paths need to be provided to provide passage across the sand.

3.2.14 Accessibility

There is wheelchair access into the playspace and onto the boat deck at the south entry. However this boat deck is used for pram parking and the steering wheels and play components have been removed.

If /when sand is not covering the path there is access to the centre of the space.

Presumably very small children can be carried out of their wheelchair/pram and could lay in the sand.

Accessibility should be improved in the new playspace.
## 3.3 PLAY EQUIPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo of item</th>
<th>Description/ Analysis (Age group, Access, Activity type)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Little Slide & Sand play](image) | **Little Slide & Sand play**  
Ages- Baby, toddler, Junior/ Primary  
Accessibility- good access for very young children who like to use the little slide  
Activity types:  
- steps & slide-physical  
- cubby deck & speaker – imaginative  
- sand play table – creative/sensory  
Note – rust has been identified on this item. |
| ![Boat Deck](image) | **Boat Deck**  
Ages - Baby, toddler, Junior/ Primary  
Accessible- yes, this is the only accessible item  
Activity: being on the deck - imaginative  
Note: - the steering wheels have been removed which dramatically reduces the play value of this item. |
| ![Little Boat](image) | **Little Boat**  
Ages- toddler, Junior Primary  
Accessible – no  
Activity: imaginative play, steering the boat |
| ![Sand play & Structure](image) | **Sand play & Structure**  
Ages - toddler, Junior /Primary  
Accessible- (some access to outside if paths were provided)  
Activity:  
- sand play table – creative/sensory  
- climbing – physical  
- cubby - imaginative |
### Digger

Ages – toddler (consultation feedback is that it is difficult for little children to use), Junior Primary
Accessible – no
Activity: Digging – creative/imaginary

### Main structure

Ages – Junior/ Primary
Accessible – no
Activities:
- Steps, wobble bridge, slide pole, net chain, slide – physical play
- High deck & seats – lookout/social & imaginative play

### Swings

Ages - toddler, Junior Primary
Accessible – no
Activity: Swinging – physical
Note: there is one senior and one toddler seat. Ideally there would be two toddler seats on one frame and two senior seats on a second frame.
SECTION 4. CONSULTATION RESULTS

4.1 IMAGE BOARDS – CONSULTATION WITH CHILDREN

Three images boards were presented at the consultation sessions which showed images of different play equipment or playspaces. The boards were divided into play items for Younger children, Natural play and Older children. Children were asked to place stickers onto the photos of their preferred images.

- 79 stickers were placed on the photos of equipment for younger children
- 41 stickers were placed on the photos of natural play elements (these are mostly aimed at younger children)
- 59 stickers were placed on the photos of equipment for older children. These photos show mostly nets and spinning elements.

The combined total of preferences for Younger Children & Natural playspaces show that the community preference is for a playspace aimed at the younger age groups, however they would like some provision for older children.

Key themes depicted in the photographs were:
- Net climbing structures
- Sand & water play
- Spinning or rocking equipment
- Slides
- Swings
- Balance elements
- Tunnels

On the board for Older Children the two main experiences shown are Net climbing structures and spinning elements.

On the Younger Childrens & Natural Playspace boards combined the results are; photos with
- slides are most popular (19 votes)- mostly due to the mound slide though tall grass (13)
- swings received (18 votes) – mostly due to the birds nest swing (11)
- sand & water (14 votes)
- balance items (14 votes)
- net climbing (12 votes)

The most popular individual elements were:
- Mound slide through tall grasses (13 votes)
- Net tower shown on the senior board (12 votes)
- Spinning machine (11 votes)
- Birds nest/basket swing (11 votes)
- Bouncing seats for 3 children (9 votes)
- Climbing structure with slides, towers etc (9 votes)
4.2 SURVEY RESULTS

Questions were asked during the two consultation sessions and a survey was available on the COPP website. The following questions were asked and we have given a summary of the responses.

1. **What do you like about the playground?**

96% of respondents like the location and over 80% of respondents liked the shade sails. People also commented that they like to have a fence around the playground. In terms of the play experiences people commented that they liked the sand play opportunities, imaginative play with the seaside theme and the swings.

2. **What don’t you like about the playground?**

77% of respondents ticked that they did not like the play equipment and 22% selected the benches.

Some people commented that the play equipment is a little boring. That there is not enough equipment and the playground is a little too small. The play equipment is orientated to toddlers and there could be some play equipment for slightly older children 6-7 years. There are not enough swings and one of the slides has a high drop into the sand. The playground lacks a grass area. On a practical note, there is some corrosion of fences and equipment. The toilets are a long way away. There can be cigarette butts in the sand and there could be more even more shade. Children crossing the bike path can be unsafe.

3. **Would you like to see any natural play elements in the area?**

All respondents to this question want to see more natural play.

4. **What natural play elements would you like to see?**

Of the natural play options suggested; logs to balance and walk on was the most popular idea. People would also like to see grasses & plants, boulders and water play.

5. **What play equipment do you like for Younger Children? (Refer photos in Survey in appendix)**

All of the images were popular with the exception of #5. The birds nest swing was very popular with the respondents; the net was also quite popular. This correlates with the responses from the children’s feedback on the image boards – refer above.

Specific elements that were mentioned include sand play, flying fox, swings (including a circular swing), trampolines, a big boat, ring of stones such as at Gasworks park, imaginative elements such as at Garden City Reserve. Equipment suited to very small children.

6. **What play equipment do you like for Older Children? (Refer photos in Survey in appendix)**

All of the images were popular but the big net (#4) was the most popular item. Respondents suggested balancing, climbing, more swings, cubbies on stilts in the sandpit,. more interactive equipment, flying foxes, bigger slides, movement & fitness related equipment and an inground trampoline.

7. **Any Other Comments or Suggestions**

There were many other suggestions and comments. Overall, people want to retain the sand surfacing and ensure that benches, fencing and shade are provided. The playground should aim to fit in with the coastal location and reference this in the playground in some way. There should be play experiences for younger and slightly older children. Overall, we should “just make the park more fun & enjoyable”!
SECTION 5. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This project to revitalise Plum Garland aims to improve the play experiences for children and increase the amenity for adults, thus increasing local community visitation and enhancing the space to encourage longer visits and a more welcoming environment for all.

The current playground is mostly composed of off-the-shelf equipment and the City would like to improve the environment and enhance opportunities for unstructured and natural play. At the same time we would like to provide play equipment that encourages movement and supports child development for example through climbing, spinning, swinging etc. The target age group for play provision is 0-7 years with some elements to suit all ages.

The playground should provide at least one more swing frame so that there can be two toddler seats and a separate swing catering to older children. The swings should ideally face the bay but need to be located so they do not interfere with circulation.

The surfacing should remain as sand and water play should be provided to augment this experience.

Plum Garland requires some kind of ‘personality’ or identifying characteristics or theme. This should be unique to Plum Garland playground. Boat themes are very common on the foreshore and therefore we would like to explore other different options at this site that will capitalise on the foreshore context and the natural qualities of the local environment.

The new design should seek to enhance the overall environment and welcome people of all ages into the space. The playspace should be enhanced with elements such as indigenous gardens, interpretive elements and social spaces. Seating should support social interaction and engagement. Integrating some informal seating into the playspaces will also encourage carer’s to engage with their children’s play.

The existing site is very constrained therefore we will explore the possibility of extending the boundary fence to accommodate natural play elements as well as the other needs such as pram parking, more swings, open areas, seating & social spaces. If this area is to become part of the playspace we will need to consider shade provision as it is currently very exposed.

The existing fence requires replacement and the design of a new fence must factor in views to the bay as well as minimizing the spread of sand. The new fence to Beaconsfield Parade could be designed to look more playful, whilst still screening the street & noise and containing the sand. The fences and other elements provide opportunities to interpret the coastal location.

A summary of some of the other considerations to be included in the design are:

- Maintaining supervision sightlines and carefully planning ‘play circulation’ to minimise conflicts.
- Catering for all ages and abilities, but focusing mostly on the 0-7 age group.
- Special consideration of social & play inclusion for all and consideration of practical matters including provision of a playspace that meets relevant Australian Standards, safety, surfacing and maintenance.
- Provision of shade and social seating areas. Retain the playground fence.
- Child development needs including catering for social, imaginative, creative and physical play. Consider the coastal setting in the design of the play equipment and reference this in some way. Provide more swings and in particular a basket swing!
- Integrating natural playspace qualities, art elements and unstructured play opportunities.
• Integration of planting including species selection and siting to maximize plant survival and play interest whilst ensuring children’s safety. Use of indigenous plants and reference to the coastal location through play experiences.

The coastal location is absolutely critical to the attraction of this playground and was identified strongly in the community consultation as such. The playspace is elevated away from the beach and provides excellent views out over the bay. The new design should retain and enhance the viewing opportunities; providing seating and other elements that address the bay and capitalise on the views.