

Livvi's Place Project Report

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Executive summary

This study sought to assess whether or not Livvi's Place, a playspace in Port Macquarie, was meeting its goal of social inclusion (including accessibility and intergenerational play). Livvi's Place was planned and designed as an inclusive, all abilities playspace by Touched by Olivia and Port Macquarie Hastings Council. It opened in 2014. A total of one hundred and ninety three (193) online and face to face structured questionnaire surveys were completed with park users. Australia's early childhood learning framework - Belonging, Being & Becoming (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009) was used as the framework to analyze the data. The current user group is mainly families with children under 13 years and predominantly pre-schoolers aged 3-5 years. Livvi's Place is especially popular with families of children with disabilities.

Evidence was found that Livvi's Place promotes a sense of social inclusion as users expressed feelings of safety, welcome and of *belonging* at the playspace. There are also indications that Livvi's Place encourages its users to *be* themselves, live in the moment and enjoy their experiences there. The friendships formed, conversations started and playful interactions experienced at Livvi's Place demonstrate how it facilitates people connecting and *becoming* members of the local community. The findings also revealed that people recognised creative learning took place through play at Livvi's Place and together with the relationships forged at the playground, suggests it is a space where people can feel part of the local community. This study found that Livvi's Place is achieving its goal of social inclusion, however areas for improvement were identified by some respondents that, if implemented, may enhance inclusive play and improve the safety aspects of Livvi's Place.



“Many thanks for the concept, helping creative play and interaction with others of the same age. I certainly hope that there will be other playgrounds built” (online survey response)

“My son has cerebral palsy and needs a lot of help and assistance to play and get around at any park. He loves this Park, the water, slide and music thing...” (online survey response)

“Both my kids loves this park and we try to go every week 😊” (Online survey response)

Introduction

This document reports on the findings of the Livvi's Place Project, Port Macquarie, commissioned by the not-for-profit organization Touched By Olivia (TBO). In 2015 TBO was successful in gaining funding of \$2500 through Charles Sturt University's (CSU) *Rural and Regional Community Initiated Research Grant* to explore whether or not Livvi's Place, a playspace in the regional New South Wales town of Port Macquarie, was meeting its goals of social inclusion through play. The research was undertaken by Janice Ollerton and Rosemary Black from Charles Sturt University.

TBO believes play is an essential part of childhood and through a number of partnerships with other organisations has created accessible, intergenerational playspaces across Australia. One such playspace was created in Port Macquarie, NSW in 2014 after TBO partnered with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council (PMHC) to establish Livvi's Place, within the confines of WestPort Park. In 2015 the estimated population of Port Macquarie was 75,635 people, of which an estimated 27% (adults and children) had a disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2013). In this context disability "includes profound, severe, moderate, mild limitations as well as persons with a schooling or employment restriction or disability with no restriction or limitation" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, paragraph 2). Children aged 0-12 years represent 1% of this population according to these ABS figures. The Port Macquarie-Hastings Council owns and manages Livvi's Place. However, since its 2014 opening no evaluation has been undertaken of Livvi's Place to determine if it is meeting its goal of social inclusion.

In January 2016 initial meetings between the researchers and Lucilla Marshall, Group Manager Community Place of Port Macquarie-Hastings Council were conducted in consultation with TBO, to clarify the project's goals and establish a plan for this evaluative research. A timeframe was established, a formal plan was developed and this was distributed to PMHC and TBO. Following formal ethics approval (number 400/2016/07) from Charles Sturt University's Faculty of Science Human Ethics Committee, the project began.

Methodology

How and when was the research completed?

The Livvi's Place project sought to find out whether or not Livvi's Place was meeting its goal of social inclusion. Cross-sectional design questionnaire survey was chosen to be the primary research method as it is an efficient tool for collecting data from a large sample size (Tranter, 2010, p. 155). As this was a small project with both resource and time constraints, the research was designed for participants aged 18 years and over, in order to achieve its aims in the prescribed time and did not attempt to capture the children's perspectives. Traditional data collection methods, such as surveys, are usually not appropriate or effective with young children (i.e., 6 years and under). McDonald and Rosier (2011) cite a range of reasons why quality data accurately and authentically reflecting children's experiences and views are difficult to gain. Difficulties can include a child's shyness, being uncomfortable with the unknown researcher, and a child's developmental language skills and abilities to respond to survey questions. Often, creative, visual and time intensive methods are deemed more appropriate for research involving children participants. While we acknowledge the right of children to have a say in decisions concerning themselves and the city in which they live (UNICEF, 2004), child research was not within the scope of this project and remains an area for future investigation.

Using a structured questionnaire survey enabled the collection of varying perspectives from across a range of different respondents. The survey was conducted using two data collection methods: face to face questionnaire surveys and via an online survey (see Appendix 1 for survey questions).

Method 1. Face to face questionnaire survey

Spot-sampling, the collection of data at a specific point in time rather than over a continuous period, was the process for implementing the face to face questionnaire surveys. This provided a snap-shot of public opinion from the respondents surveyed on particular days and cannot be said to represent the view of all Livvi's Place users or the broader Port Macquarie community (Walter, 2006, p. 190). The questionnaires were conducted on Saturday 9/4/16 and on Wednesday 12/4/16, between 10am-12pm, at two playgrounds in Port Macquarie – Town Green Park and Livvi's Place WestPort Park. The Saturday surveys coincided with the Saturday "foreshore market day" in Port Macquarie, to maximize the number of park users. The Wednesday surveys were conducted at both Livvi's Place and Town Green Park, in order to collect data from those people who may have avoided the playspace on a busy market day, or who preferred weekday visits. Livvi's Place and Town Green Park users were randomly selected via playground entry and invited to participate. In total 96 people consented to be surveyed across both survey periods. Two thirds (66.32%) of the participants were female and approximately one third (31.58%) were male. Whilst the survey questions pertained to Livvi's Place the researchers also sought the views of Town Green Park users as they aimed to possibly collect the views of park users who had visited Livvi's Place previously but were currently using another playground. It was hoped that this feedback would provide insight into why these park users had chosen not to visit Livvi's Place on the day the research was undertaken.

CSU Social Work student volunteers undertaking studies in social research methods were recruited to assist with the surveying. Theoretical training and an opportunity to practice using the survey was provided to the students in class by Rosemary Black. This learning was then complemented and consolidated by the practical experience of conducting a survey within the local community, under the supervision of the researchers.

Method 2. Online Survey

The second research strategy was to conduct an online survey using identical questions to those used during the face-to-face surveys. SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) was used to deliver the online survey. Online survey respondents were recruited through a range of means including social media, posting the online survey web-link to the Port Macquarie Hastings Council and Touched By Olivia's websites, distributing flyers (see Appendix 2) to all schools listed on the PMHC's community organization's database and to PMHC community services such as the local libraries, and also to members of the "Friends of Livvi's Place Port Macquarie" database. TBO marketing department provided assistance with the design of the promotional flyers.

The online survey was open for six weeks, to accommodate school holidays and any minor delays that might be encountered posting the promotional flyers on community notice boards or by missing cut-off dates for flyer inclusion in month/weekly school newsletters. Online survey reminders were posted on Facebook during the last week the survey was open to increase responses. In total 97 people participated in the online survey. Similar to the face to face surveys, most of the respondents were female.

The survey comprised of 33 questions including open and closed questions. Some of the survey questions were developed and drew upon the principles and values underpinning Australia's early childhood learning framework - Belonging, Being & Becoming (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009). The survey questions asked whether or not respondents had visited Livvi's Place and if they would return (if not why not).

Questions were asked about feelings of safety, comfort, happiness, learning and imaginary play opportunities, social engagement with others and of the ways respondents had observed Livvi's Place being used. Suggestions for improvement were also sought from the survey respondents along with a series of demographic questions. The survey took approximately eight minutes to complete.

Data from the face to face surveys sheets were manually entered into SurveyMonkey for collation. The closed questions of both the online and face to face surveys were then analysed using SurveyMonkey. The open ended questions were thematically analysed according to commonly used words and recurring topics raised by the respondents. The results of the face to face surveys and online surveys were kept separate to determine if there were any differences in the survey results. Some differences were noted. Whilst most respondents to both surveys were female the proportion of female respondents of the online survey was higher at 86.08% female with only 12.66% male compared to the face to face survey respondents, which were 66% female and 32% male. Similarly, most of the respondents to both surveys were in the 31-40yrs age group, with a high proportion of these in the online survey (54%) compared to 44% of face to face survey respondents. Further differences are discussed below.

The analytical framework

The aim of this study was to assess whether Livvi's Place was achieving its goal of social inclusion through play and as such the authors drew upon the principles of inclusive play underpinning the Livvi's Place playspace. These included the notions that play is a fundamental social building block that should be fun and shared. Inclusive play is grounded on the principle that play can be experienced by people of all abilities to promote independence and a sense of mastery and accomplishment (Inclusive Play Space, 2012).

Livvi's Place is a playspace that was specially designed to encourage accessible and intergenerational play. Since play is a learning medium for people of all ages the authors drew upon the principles and values underpinning Australia's early childhood learning framework - Belonging, Being and Becoming (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009). While most educators recognise play as intrinsic to learning for young children, play pervades the whole of human life. Humans are a particularly playful species and our ability to play right through to older life keeps our thinking and life skills sharp (Bergen, 2009). The authors used the existing pedagogical framework of Belonging, Being and Becoming, to explore whether or not users of Livvi's Place had a sense of *Belonging* to the Port Macquarie community, of *Being* part of the Port Macquarie community and of *Becoming* part of the Port Macquarie community. This framework was used to guide the data analysis. Drawing from the COAG (2009, p. 7) report the concepts were understood as follows:

Belonging

Belonging acknowledges that all people are interdependent upon one another. We all belong somewhere – to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and to the wider community. A sense of belonging is integral to our human existence and is the basis upon which we establish relationships and by which we define our identities. *Belonging* is central to *being* and *becoming* because it shapes who we are and who we can become.

Being

Being recognises the significance of living in the present -the here and now, and not just preparing for the future. A sense of being is about people knowing themselves, building and maintaining relationships with others, engaging with life's joys and complexities, and meeting challenges in everyday life. Children's immersion in their play provides a picture for us of how play enables them to simply enjoy *being*.

Becoming

Becoming acknowledges that who we each become in this world is shaped by different events and circumstances we experience throughout our lives. *Becoming* reflects the process of rapid and significant change that occurs during childhood as a child's knowledge, understandings, capacities, skills and relationships change. The notion of *becoming* emphasises learning to participate fully and actively in society.

The results presented in the next section are for the total number of surveys that was 193 (online and face to face surveys). Some quotes from the open ended questions have been included to support the quantitative analysis.

Results

Who uses Livvi's Place?

Survey respondents mainly (83%) resided in the Port Macquarie Hastings Council area. However, some respondents were visitors from other parts of New South Wales, including the Hunter region, Bathurst, Orange and Sydney. Others came from Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania along with international visitors. Although the respondents were randomly chosen for the face to face surveys or self-selected to participate in the online survey, both survey modes reflected a higher percentage of female respondents to males. Most respondents did not identify as coming from a linguistically or culturally diverse backgrounds (84% face to face, 72% online). 6.32% of face to face respondents compared to 5% online identified as Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander. These figures broadly reflect the demographic profile of Port Macquarie which is 92.72% non-Indigenous and 3.32% of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (Port Macquarie-Hastings Council, 2011). The majority of respondents were aged 31-40 years old (44% face to face, 54% online). The vast majority (94% face to face, 95% online) of the children brought to Livvi's Place were under 13 years of age, with the most common age group being 3-5 year olds (69.5% face to face, 58% online).

The demographic profile of respondents of both the online and face to face surveys was very similar although there were some differences. The majority of respondents (98% of face to face and 94% online survey) brought children with them to Livvi's Place and most were parents (75% face to face and 89% online). See Appendix 3 for a detailed comparison of the face to face and online survey respondent demographic data.

Livvi's Place users with disabilities

The ABS estimated that in 2015 27% (adults and children) of the Port Macquarie population had a disability (2013). The ABS also estimated that 1% of Port Macquarie's population were children aged twelve years and below with disabilities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Only 5% of our survey respondents identified as having a disability. This indicates that adults with a disability are under-represented in our survey results. However 9% of our respondents reported having at least one child with disabilities. Given that just 1% of people in Port Macquarie with disabilities are children aged 0-12 years, the figure of 9% suggests an over-representation of these children at Livvi's Place. This is a positive result indicating Livvi's Place is achieving its goal of social inclusion for children with disabilities since many parents are bringing their children aged 0-12 years with disabilities to play there.

What the study found

Most face-to-face respondents (90.6%) had visited Livvi's Place. The few who had not visited also advised that they had not heard of it. Of those who had visited Livvi's Place almost all (96.5% face-to-face/89.2% online) stated that they would return. Seven respondents said they would not return and cited lack of toilets (6 respondents), not suited to their needs (4 respondents) and lack of shade (2 respondents) as the key reasons. Livvi's Place is being regularly used in a variety of ways by people in the Port Macquarie area and is building a sense of community. Firstly, through a sense of belonging.

Belonging

All the survey results demonstrated that Livvi's Place is a space of belonging, where people were happy to bring their children to play. Survey respondents said that they felt welcome (98.77% face to face/88% online) at Livvi's Place, there was a sense that they were *insiders* who belonged there (96% face to face/87% online) and they felt safe at Livvi's Place (92% face to face/ 85% online). Almost all respondents (93% face to face/88.46% online) expected others to also be using the playspace when they arrived suggesting that Livvi's Place was recognised by our respondents as a community facility that was actively in use by the local community. The respondents observed that Livvi's Place was being used for a number of activities. Some of the interactive ways Livvi's Place is used included:

- Family picnics: (68% face to face/57% online)
- Parties: (61.25% face to face/54% online)
- Parent groups: (63.75 face to face/44% online)
- Meeting friends: (65% face to face/69.4% online)
- Playgroup: (61.25% face to face/37.5% online)



Livvi's Place is *"A place to play with other children, a place to be noisy, a place to play safely outside, a place to exercise through Play"* Online survey response

"I often go here with a close friend and her grandchildren and it's just delightful to watch how they can just all join in and have fun, even the adults get involved" Online survey response

Belonging acknowledges our interdependence with others. A sense of interdependence and belonging emerged from the data in the respondents' willingness to engage in conversation with strangers. Most respondents (53.66% face to face/ 75% online) stated that it was likely that they would have conversations with other Livvi's Place users not known to them, and some respondents (18.29% face to face/ 5% online) thought that such conversations were very likely. While most of the respondents stated that Livvi's Place encouraged children to play together the proportional difference of the survey group answers to this question (95.18% face to face/ 56% online) is interesting. One explanation for this difference could be that many face to face respondents were at Livvi's Place when the question was asked and could actually see children playing

together. The study found that children want to visit Livvi's place as 89% of face to face and 71% online respondents claimed that their children eagerly looked forward to the Livvi's Place experience. It was a place they wanted to be in.

Livvi's Place provides "Respite for mums - it is a safe place" (Face to face survey response).

Being

The second concept considered in our analysis of the data was that of *Being*. This recognises the significance of living in the present - the here and now. Our study found that Livvi's Place encouraged a sense of being. Most of the respondents (98.79% face to face/96% online) were happy while they were at Livvi's Place with 30% face to face and 10.26% online stressing that they were *very* happy at Livvi's Place. Similarly, our respondents indicated that their children were also happy to be at Livvi's Place (98.79% face to face/ 96% online).

"I think it's pretty wonderful the way it is and we enjoy it very much (especially as it's fenced)" (Online survey response).

Although there were proportional differences between the online and face-to-face responses given to questions on imaginary and collaborative play (online responses tending to be more conservative), most respondents stated that Livvi's Place was a place that encouraged children to use their imagination (87.95% face to face/50% online) and also encouraged children to play together (95.18%/56% online). These are important findings with respect to *Being*, as imagination fosters creative and active learning through play and helps children to not only initiate learning opportunities it also enhances a sense of well-being (COAG, 2009). Playing with others also provides an environment where children can ask questions, collaboratively solve problems and engage in critical thinking. Playing with others can expand children's thinking and nurture their desire to know and to learn more. In these ways play promotes a positive disposition towards learning (COAG, 2009, p.9).

Livvi's Place is somewhere for "Children to use their imagination" (Online survey response).

The face to face respondents acknowledged Livvi's Place as a space that facilitated social interaction between adults (81.93%). In contrast the online respondents were less certain with 41% stating they thought Livvi's place did encourage social interaction and 41% were unsure. However, both survey groups agreed it facilitated social interaction between children (98% face to face/ 82% online).

"It's just delightful to watch how they can just all join in and have fun, even the adults get involved" (Online response)

With regards to seizing the day or living in the moment, the respondents had used Livvi's Place or had seen others using Livvi's Place as a playspace in a number of ways:

- On the way to the shops (50% face to face/47% online)
- After school play (45% face to face/44% online)
- As a place to learn new skills (45% face to face/37.5% online)
- As a place to make friends (36.25% face to face/39% online)

Becoming

The third concept considered was that of *Becoming*. Our relationships with other people have a strong influence on our becoming the person we will eventually grow into. Livvi's Place was specifically designed to encourage accessible and intergenerational play. It is for everyone not just for the children. We explored whether or not people felt that they were becoming part of the Port Macquarie community by looking at whether Livvi's Place was a space that encouraged relationships with other people.

Less than one in five online respondents thought it likely or very likely that adult friendships would be formed from the people they met at Livvi's Place, and 45.45% were unsure. In contrast 55% of the face to face respondents stated that it was likely or very likely that adult friendships would form.

In the case of children making friendships at Livvi's Place most respondents (79.5% face to face/52% online) considered it was only 'likely' that friendships would be formed between children.

The respondents agreed that Livvi's Place provides good learning opportunities for children (92% face to face/77% online) supporting the proposition that play helps one learn new things, to practice and hone skills (Ebbeck, Yim, & Lee, 2013).

"It's fine from this grandmother's opinion. I have seen and used or watched lots of different interactive equipment, as this is the first of this type in Port (that I know of). I'm thankful that it is here for our free use, it's a wonderful playground" (Online survey response)

Community suggestions for improvement

Whilst the data has shown that Livvi's place is recognised by the survey respondents as a safe and welcoming environment in which people feel happy, children play, learn new things and make friends and adults engage with one another, the respondents mentioned areas for improvement. There was a range of views regarding the age group to which Livvi's Place was most suited, including:

- *It's a great playground for younger children up to maybe 12 years.* (Online response)
- *Not enough for the very young children* (Face-to-face respondent)
- *This park doesn't really cater for children much older than 5"* (Online response)
- *Needs to cater for the older age group play experience* (Face-to-face response)
- *I feel for the under 2's the park doesn't offer a lot. Awesome park but caters more for the older children"* (Online response)

It is not surprising therefore that when asked for suggestions on how Livvi's Place could be improved and made more inclusive a host of suggestions was received. The following is a list of the key suggestions mentioned by the respondents (see Appendix 4 for a more comprehensive complete list of suggested improvements).

Independent issues or areas for improvement raised by respondents (total number of times mentioned by respondents in parentheses)

Shade – This was the main area of concern mentioned across both survey modes and a reason cited for not returning to Livvi's Place (106).

Equipment - more equipment suitable for older children, e.g. climbing equipment (28)

- more swings, including swings specifically for babies and toddlers, wheelchair users (34)

- more seating/benches (27)
- more play equipment for children with disabilities (15)

Toilets - including baby change areas and disability accessible toilets (32)

Safety - Concerns about gates, including the gates being left open and that there were too many entry/exit points to the playground through which small children could leave. Respondents recommended self-closing gates and fewer gates (16).

- Algae and slipping in water play area (10)
- Plants/equipment obscuring line of sight to children (7)

“I think it is a fantastic park. There could be more shade for child supervision, disability swing, swing for kids in a wheelchair, more climbing equipment” (Face-to-face response).

“Love the water play area and musical instruments, however needs more constant maintenance as vandals seem to ruin the mechanisms often” (Online response).

Conclusion

Livvi’s Place Port Macquarie is a popular and well used playspace enjoyed by visitors to Port Macquarie and the local community. The current user group is mainly families with children under 13 years and predominantly pre-schoolers aged 3-5years. Many of these families have children with disabilities. This study indicates that Livvi’s Place Port Macquarie is achieving its goal of social inclusion for children with disabilities.

We found Livvi’s Place promotes a sense of social inclusion among the local community, evidenced by users expressing their feelings of safety, welcome and of **belonging** whilst at Livvi’s Place. This study found that Livvi’s Place encourages its users to **be** themselves, live in the moment and enjoy their experience of Livvi’s Place. The friendships formed, conversations started and playful interactions experienced at Livvi’s Place all demonstrate that this playspace facilitates people connecting as members of the local community. The findings also revealed that respondents recognised that creative learning takes place through play at Livvi’s Place and this, together with the relationships forged, points to a playspace where people can **become** included as part of the local community.

This study demonstrates that Livvi’s Place is achieving its goal of social inclusion, however areas for improvement were identified by some respondents that, if implemented, may both enhance inclusive play and improve the safety aspects of the playspace.

Recommendations

1. Strategies to improve shade at Livvi’s Place be addressed as a priority. It is noted that since the surveys were completed a shade sail has been erected over the water fountain. However, as respondents recommended shade was required over other sections of the park (for example, the sandpit) further research is required to determine whether or not the current level of shade available is acceptable to park users.
2. Child safety would be enhanced by improved maintenance of the wet play area removing the build-up of slippery algae. Regular pruning of the plants inside the playspace is recommended to ensure visitors

have a clear line of sight across the park to their children, from all sides of the area. This is especially needed during peak use periods, such as market day, when the playspace is crowded. The replacement of the long grasses with a different shrub that would not harbour snakes or rodents (see comments in Appendix 4), is also recommended.

3. Self-closing gates should be fitted to all Livvi's Place exits and consideration given to reducing the number of gates to two; one on the north side of playground (facing the car park) and the other directly opposite on the south side of the playground (facing WestPort Bowling Club).
4. Consideration is given to erecting an accessible toilet/change room facility adjacent to Livvi's Place. One option based on respondents' suggestions (See Appendix 4) would be to incorporate the cafe/kiosk suggestion into this building.
5. Consideration is given to enhancing the "all abilities" concept underpinning Livvi's place and the desire to promote inter-generational play, by incorporating more play opportunities for children with disabilities, infant playspaces and challenging play equipment that would appeal to older children. This would provide a wider range of activities for families with children of mixed ages and abilities.
6. Recognising that the views of a Port Macquarie's children should be considered when assessing and possibly making changes to areas that affect them (UNICEF, 2004, p. 4), we recommend that Port Macquarie Hastings Council build upon the this study by investigating what children think of Livvi's Place.

Acknowledgements

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Cover Sheet to be handed to all participants

Livvi's Place Project Information Sheet

Touched By Olivia is a registered charity which partnered with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council in 2014 to establish Livvi's Place, an inclusive playspace for the local community in Westport Park at Port Macquarie. The purpose of Livvi's Place is to establish a special place that changes the way our society plays together and which builds inclusive communities. It is now time to see how things are going.

Using funds accessed through Charles Sturt University's Rural and Regional Community Initiated Research Grant Touched By Olivia has commissioned researchers to survey the local Port Macquarie community on what they think about Livvi's Place via this survey. Participation is completely voluntary and you can choose not to participate in part or all of the survey. You can withdraw at any stage of the survey until it is submitted without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. The survey does not collect identifying data (such as name, address, contact details). It does collect demographic data (such as age, gender) so that we can identify broadly rather than individually, who is using Livvi's Place. By proceeding with this survey you are consenting to the anonymous use of your answers by the research team. Information provided is confidential. Upon completion the project report will be available on both Touched By Olivia's and the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council's websites. The results of the survey will be used to assist Port Macquarie Hastings Council and other organisations in designing similar playspaces in the future.

For more information or to give feedback please contact:

Dr Janice Ollerton jollerton@csu.edu.au

Dr Rosemary Black rblack@csu.edu.au

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study
(Ethics approval number - 400/2016/0).

If you have any complaints or concerns about this research please contact:

Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee Office of Academic Governance Charles Sturt University, Panorama Avenue, Bathurst NSW 2795 Phone: (02) 6338 4628 Email: ethics@csu.edu.au

Livvi's Place Project Survey questions

Hello. My name is []. I'm a student at Charles Sturt Uni here in Port Macquarie and I'm assisting in a survey to gain the views of people about Livvi's Place Playspace in Port Macquarie. Do you have time now to complete a short survey? It should take no more than eight minutes. Here is an information sheet explaining the project.

Livvi's Place was designed to change the way our society plays together and to be inclusive. This survey will assess how things are going. By proceeding you are confirming that you agree with the following statements. Please indicate that you

€ agree to take part in the above project which aims to explore whether or not Livvi's Place playspace is meeting its goal of social inclusion through play. The results of the survey will be used to assist Port Macquarie Hastings Council and other organisations in designing similar playspaces in the future.

€ You understand that any information you provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

€ You also understand that my participation is voluntary, that you can choose not to participate in part or all of the survey, and that you can withdraw at any stage of the survey without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. You understand that once you complete and submit the survey, you are no longer able to withdraw my participation.

For more information or to give feedback please contact:

Dr Janice Ollerton [or](#) Dr Rosemary Black rblack@csu.edu.au

(Their details are listed on the information sheet)

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study

If you have any complaints or concerns about this research you can contact: Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee noted on the Information sheet

By proceeding with this survey you are consenting to the anonymous use of your answers by the researchers. Upon completion the project report will be available on both Touched By Olivia's and the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council's websites.

Section 1

In this section we are exploring who is or is not using the Livvi's Place playspace and how often it is used

1. Have you ever visited Livvi's Place playspace at Westport Park Port Macquarie?
 - Yes [proceed to Q.3]
 - No [proceed to Q2]
2. What is your reason for not visiting Livvi's Place? Please choose from the following options (tick all that apply to you).
 - Never heard of it
 - Don't know where it is
 - The location is not convenient
 - It is not suitable for our needs
 - It is too crowded
 - The play equipment is not adequate
 - Lack of shade
 - Lack of amenities
 - I have heard bad reports about it from others
 - I'm happy with the parks I do use
 - Other (please indicate your reasons if not listed above)

Proceed to Q27

3. Having visited Livvi's Place playspace at Port Macquarie, would you ever return?
 - Yes, I would return (Proceed to Question 7)
 - No, I would not return
 - Not sure
4. If you decided not to revisit Livvi's Place, we would like to know your reasons. From the following list, please select any of the reasons that apply to you (tick all that apply).
 - The location is not convenient
 - It is not suitable for our needs
 - It is too crowded
 - The play equipment is not adequate
 - Lack of shade
 - Lack of amenities
 - I have heard bad reports about it from others
 - I'm happy with the parks I do use
 - Other (please briefly explain your reason for not revisiting Livvi's Place if not listed above)

My reason for not returning to Livvi's Place is

6. Please briefly explain any ways in which you think Livvi's Place playspace could be improved

(proceed to Q27)

Section 2

This section is for Livvi's Place playspace users

7. Do you bring a child/ children to Livvi's Place

- Yes
- No

8. In what age group/s are the children you bring to the park? (Please indicate all that apply)

€ 0 - 2 years

€ 3 - 5 years

€ 6- 12 years

€ 13yrs and over

9. To help us understand the role you have when visiting Livvi's Place please tick all the options that apply to you from the choices below. *Do you visit Livvi's Place as*

€ A Parent

€ A Carer

€ A Grandparent

€ Someone who enjoys parks

€ A teacher/child care worker supervising a group of children

€ Other (please specify)

10. How often do you visit Livvi's Place? Please choose from the following

€ 3 or more times per week

€ Once a week

€ Once a month

€ Occasionally

Section 3

In this section we are exploring whether or not people have a sense of *belonging* to the Port Macquarie Community.

11. When you arrive at Livvi's Place, how likely is it that there are others using the playspace at the same time as you?

- Very unlikely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Very likely

12. How safe do you feel when you visit Livvi's Place?

- Very unsafe
- Unsafe
- Sometimes safe, other times unsafe
- Safe
- Very safe

13. How likely is it that you would engage in a conversation with other Livvi's Place users unknown to you?

- Very unlikely
- Unlikely
- Likely
- Very likely

14. Do you feel you are welcome at Livvi's Place?

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

15. When you visit Livvi's Place do you feel like an insider (comfortable, as someone who belongs) or as an outsider (uncomfortable, and not one of the 'locals')? Please tick which ever applies to you.

- Insider
- outsider

Section 4

In this section we are exploring the experience of being at Livvi's place, of playing and living in the moment.

16. How happy do you feel while you are at Livvi's Place?

- Very unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Very happy

17. How happy do you think the children feel while they are at Livvi's Place?

- Very unhappy
- Unhappy
- Happy
- Very happy

18. In your opinion does Livvi's Place encourage children to use their imagination?

- € Yes
- € No
- € Unsure

19. When you visit Livvi's Place do you see children playing with others (including children they do not know)?

- € Yes
- € No
- € Unsure

Section 5

In this section we are exploring whether or not Livvi's Place is building a community in Port Macquarie and how it could be improved.

20. If you take a child / children to Livvi's Place do they eagerly look forward to this experience?

- € Yes
- € Sometimes
- € No
- € Not applicable

21. Does Livvi's Place encourage people to interact and engage with one another?

Adult to Adult	Child to child	Adult to child
€ Yes	€ Yes	€ Yes
€ No	€ No	€ No
€ unsure	€ unsure	€ unsure

22. How likely do you think it is that friendships will be formed at Livvi's Place?

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Unsure	Likely	Very likely
Between adults					
Between Children					
Between Adults & Children					

23. Livvi's Place provides lots of different spaces for play and opportunities for different types of play experiences (using sand, water, sound and a variety of play equipment).

How would you rate the learning opportunities available at Livvi's Place?

- Very poor Poor Unsure
 Good Very good

24. What do you think could be done to make Livvi's Place more inclusive for people of different abilities, backgrounds and ages?

How is Livvi's Place being used?

25. Please tick if you (or others you have seen) have used Livvi's Place in the following ways (tick all that apply)

- For family picnics
- For birthday parties
- For parents group/playgroup to meet
- As a meeting place for friends
- As a place to play on the way to the shops
- As a place to play after school
- As a quiet spot to be on your own
- A place where I can make friends
- A place where a child can make friends
- A place where a child can learn new things
- A place where a child can use their imagination

26. Please share your ideas on how Livvi's Place could be improved

Livvi's Place playspace could be improved by

Section 6

In this section we're interested in knowing a little bit about our survey respondents

27. Please provide your postcode

28. Are you
- Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to answer

29. Are you
- 18-20yrs
 - 21-30yrs
 - 31-40yrs
 - 41-50yrs

- € 51-60yrs
- € 61-70yrs
- € Over 71yrs

30. Would you say that you have a culturally or linguistically diverse background - that might be your language background, your religion or culture or your country of birth or descent

- € Yes
- € No
- € Prefer not to answer

31. Do you identify as an Indigenous Australian or Torres Strait Islander?

- € Yes
- € No
- € Prefer not to answer

32. Are you a person with a disability

- € Yes
- € No
- € Prefer not to answer

33. If you bring a child to Livvi's Place do they have a disability?

- € Yes
- € No
- € Not applicable

Thank you for taking part in our survey. We greatly appreciate your views and contribution.

Appendix 2 Promotional Flyer



HAVE YOUR SAY

All children have the right to play.
Play should be fun, enjoyable and shared.
Play provides opportunities for everyone and is a fundamental social building block.

We would like to know how Livvi's Place Port Macquarie is doing.

If you are over 18 years old, please follow the link below to the online survey developed by researchers at Charles Sturt University and tell us what you think about Livvi's Place.

The survey takes less than 8 minutes and is confidential.

https://www.research.net/r/Livvis_Place

For more information about the project please email
Dr Janice Ollerton via jollerton@csu.edu.au

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Appendix 3

Survey Demographic data

	Face to Face Survey	Online Survey
Brought children	97.59%	94%
Social role	(74.7%) parents, 16.87% grandparents.	88.61% parents 12.66% grandparents
Gender	66.32%) female 31.58% male 2.11% prefer not to answer	86.08% Female 12.66% male 1.27% prefer not to answer
Age	43.62% 31-40yrs 25.53%, 21-30yrs 13.83% 41-50yrs 14.9% 51-70yrs.	53.85% 31-40yrs 14.1% 41-50yrs 12.82% 21-30yrs 16.87% 51-70yrs
Child Ages	69.51% 3-5yrs age group 57.32% 6-12yrs age group 48.78% 0-2years age group 6.10% 13+years	58% 3-5yrs age group 51.95% 0-2yrs age group 33.77% 6-12 age group 5.19% 13+ years
CALD backgrounds	84.21% No 14.74% yes	72.15% no 21.52% yes
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Is.	93.68% No 6.32% yes	89.87% (71 respondents) No 5.06% (4 respondents) yes
Person with disability	97.89% no 2.11% yes	89.87% No 7.59% yes
Child with disability	89.47% no 7.37% yes	84.62% no 11.54% yes (9)

Appendix 4

Suggested improvements for inclusion and general improvements from face to face survey and online surveys. (Total number of times mentioned in parentheses)

Activities for wider age groups (12)

"More equipment for kids of different ages" (Face-to-face response)

- Cater more for older children 4-6 years
- Different experiences for older children 8+ years
- Needs activities that cater to wider age group.
- More challenging equipment for older children, bigger slides, maybe a train, internal bike track, section for ball play
- Provide separate section for toddlers-preschool and primary school age (with more adventurous activities)
- More activities for over 13 yrs- often have teens supervising/with younger children need to keep them engaged eg skating area/graffiti wall etc

More 0-2 yr old and toddler friendly play equipment needed (9)

"Awesome park but caters more for the older children" (Online response)

- Not enough for the very young (0-2yr) children.

Multiculturalism (introduce Indigenous theme (4), multicultural themes (4)

"An Indigenous-based activity or artwork, something that celebrates diversity and multiculturalism" (Online response)

- Add some cultural diversity to it. It seems to be a very "white middle classed" area that fits the status quo with little to no Indigenous visuals, activities.
- Include some Indigenous themed play so that Indigenous children can see the park is not only on their traditional land but their culture has been embedded within the play equipment
- Introduce statues of different ethnicities, more animals on the ground, in and out of play equipment, similar to the fish on the ground

Climbing activities (22)

- More climbing/hanging/balance opportunities
- A small climbing rope/web would be a welcome addition.
- "high rise" course
- Flying fox,
- A climbing cubby house
- a climbing frame with a shade sail.

Water (12)

- More water activities (such as "water channels", where children can divert water), , More musical play equipment/activities.
- More water play activities, larger fountain, more fountains

Specific play zones

"You always find the older kids spinning the roundabout way too fast for the younger kids to feel safe on it" (Online response)

- Quiet play area
- More separate zones for children and parents/ for adult-to-adult interaction and child-to-child interaction.
- a baby toddler friendly area with no water play

Exemplars to follow up (3)

"I have recently been to Darwin & Townsville and was in awe of their free water parks that were constructed for all ages" (Online response)

- More things to do. See Speers Point (Lake Macquarie) for an example of a great park.
- More exciting play spaces. Eg Ruddock park- Westleigh in Sydney

Swings

- Wheelchair-swings/swings for children with disabilities (15)
- More swings - for 0-2yrs, pre-schoolers, older children (8)

Slides

- More slippery slides (6)

Interactive equipment (7)

- More interactive activities on the boat (i.e. turntable steering wheel).
- More interactive play equipment, like the musical instrument(4)
- Repair the broken musical equipment (3)

New additions

- Needs to be more equipment.
- Introduce some of those spring toys, see saws (2) and diggers (fixed excavator toys) in the sand as an idea.
- Tunnels to crawl through
- Internal bike track
- A bicycle rack.
- A supervised "sensorial trail" where a park ranger shows the children different things

BBQs and refreshments

"A coffee shop would be terrific. The toilets are too far away and we need baby change facilities". (Online response)

- More BBQ (7) /increase size of BBQ /picnic area
- More picnic tables needed outside the play space
- Nearer refreshments (2) – build up a Coffee shop
- Water bubblers inside the park (8)
- Kiosk/ coffee van (6)

Shade (106) and seating (27)

"Lots of people have childrens' birthday parties there so extra seating is needed" (Online response)

- More seating/bench space and shaded areas for the elderly
- More shade - erect temporary (or permanent) shade structures until such time as the trees are mature enough to provide shade
- More seating/more group seating in full view of most equipment, seats with backs (not just benches) for nursing mothers, older people, toddlers
- More tables & chairs outside chairs facing the playground. More covered sitting areas for parents.
- More structured shade (e.g. a gazebo)

Disability needs

"We need disability-accessible toilets nearer to the park and baby change facilities". (Online response)

- Some surprise activities (eg something pops up when you pull a lever, for children with intellectual disability – teaching anticipation)
- Swing for children in wheelchairs (wheel onto it/clamps for chair) (15)
- Liberty swing

- Disability-accessible toilets (3)
- Equipment needs to be seat-belted
- The option of using some kind of clamps for attaching the wheelchair to the "round about".
- Set a specific "special needs time" when they are allowed to come in. To encourage other groups you could set a special time for specific groups. Market the inclusion to specific groups of people.

Safety

- Self-closing gates (8)
- Better surface for pram and wheelchair access
- Boat stops vision
- The grass and rocks in the centre of the park removes visibility to half the park.
- Foam on the bars of the carousel thing! It's pretty dangerous
- Inappropriate plants (possible animal habitat, they obstruct view of children playing).
- Clean the algae where the water sits. It is slippery and dangerous (8)
- Ensure parents can have a clear line of sight to the kids (if you are at the tree then you can't see the kids at the other end).
- Emergency phone
- Non-slip surface needed in water play area,
- The roundabout is dangerous. It either needs to be smaller or made so it can't go as fast to prevent injuries.
- Too many entries and exits
- Needs self-closing gates
- Amend the fencing so that there are fewer gates - kids could go missing
- The round thing is unsafe
- Difficult to see children from the table in corner
- Better fall areas around toys
- Lockable gates

Toilets (32)/showers (1)/change room (3)

"Better toilets. The toilets are too far away- unsafe situation" (Face-to-face response)

- Situate the toilets closer, with disability accessible toilet and baby change area
- Toilets – incl. disability-accessible toilets & baby change facilities.
- Shower to wash off the sand after playing in sand/water
- change area for the kids near the water fountain

Maintenance (8)

"Tidy the long grass to make it more safe and accessible for children to climb on large rocks" (Online response).

- Repair all the broken musical equipment that are already there.
- Park maintenance – The Lomandra have dried flowers, the garden is full of weeds (makes me feel ashamed). The park and garden keepers need to have the park in good condition in the school holidays. This would be good for tourism.
- Tiles around the sandpit are loose - dangerous.
- Re-paint some of the equipment. Maybe use longer-lasting, weather-enduring paint.

- Better maintenance, and cleaned regularly (decking is always dirty)
- Tidy the long grass to make it more safe and accessible for children to climb on large rocks.
- The concrete draining into the moat is slippery, which is dangerous and I have seen several falls by excited toddlers.
- The roundabout is surprisingly hot under foot.
- Repair and maintenance is needed – tidy gardens, fix instruments, chips in tiles or lifting tiles.
- The non-slip paint on the stepping stones is all crackling off and they are slippery.
- Better surfaces as the bark chips are not accessible and the ramp to the tree platform was never completed.

Signage

- Better signage. It is not obvious from the road. We found out about it from the web and drove past 3 times before we found it.

Dogs

- Facilities for people with dogs (3) (a leash free area)

Playspace overall (3)/other

"It's a great park but it could be so much better if it was double the size" (Online response).

- Expansion of the park to cater for younger and older children
- Have a councillor there
- Just make the space bigger.
- The play space is not big enough for all the space that was available.

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