



SYDNEY
HOLIDAY CLINICS
#touchedbyolivia

2016

STATE OF PLAY



Touched
by Olivia

BECAUSE EVERY CHILD NEEDS TO PLAY

Play is a basic part of every childhood. Unfortunately, not all children and their families can access all playspaces in Australia.



“When children with disabilities are able to participate in normal activities, like playing at the park, it teaches other children and adults acceptance and compassion. It reminds us that they matter too.”
- survey respondent

Some families face a range of barriers that prevent them from having the same experiences as other families in these important community hubs.

- **1 in 100 children are on the autism spectrum,**
- **20% of Australians have a disability**
- **43% of those aged over 55 having a disability.**

But there is a solution – inclusive playspaces.

One of the key roles of local government is deciding how to best spend limited ratepayer funds. Lots of elements go into this process – demand, cost, land availability, grant opportunities and community priorities. An important consideration in this process is how many people in the community will benefit from the new asset. Clearly, the more people who can use it, the better. Building a playspace that the whole community can enjoy is clearly a better decision than building a playspace that automatically excludes 20% to 30% of people.

Why build a playspace that at least 20% of your community can never use?

This is where an inclusive Livvi's Place playspace comes in.

Designing an inclusive playspace involves thinking about a lot of issues – access, facilities, equipment, location and safety all have to be factored in to the project.

Can someone in a wheelchair move about the space? Is parking available? Are paths wide enough? Is there an accessible toilet with facilities for changing older children in? Does the equipment feature ramps, low platforms, swings suitable for all ages and abilities? Is it located near transport options? Is there sufficient fencing? Can children of all abilities play together in the same space?

All of these factors go into designing a playspace for everyone.

The benefits of inclusive play go well beyond the families that are directly impacted.

A hub that encourages children of all abilities to interact and engage with each other can only lead to a strong, inclusive community that is a great place for everyone to live in.

Make your community a place where everyone can play together

Working together so communities can play together

At Touched by Olivia we strive to partner with local Councils and developers to put inclusive playspaces into every community in Australia.

We have the expertise to assist you build a healthy and inclusive community.



“Inclusive play is about more than a Liberty Swing”

ABOUT US

In November 2006, John and Justine Perkins lost their 8-month-old baby daughter Olivia to a rare illness. It was a devastating time, and yet this point in John and Justine's lives brought with it new meaning: a gift with a message—a message to positively enhance the lives of children and their families in a significant way. This vision was of a world with happier, healthier kids.

In her short life, Olivia touched many hearts. Through founding the Touched By Olivia Foundation, Olivia's legacy will continue to positively enhance the lives of many children and their families who have been given the opportunity to play.

Touched by Olivia is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to directly relieve the disability, helplessness and misfortune experienced by many Australians through, among other things, developing and implementing inclusive play spaces and to thereby:

- give every Australian the right to play, side by side, without discrimination or prejudice; and
- facilitate social and community inclusion for people with disability as well as their families and carers

The organisation has partnered with councils and developers on over 20 projects across Australia to deliver inclusive playspaces so that ALL families in a local community can enjoy the outdoors and play together.

We would like to build on these successes and deliver an inclusive playspace in every community across the country.

Ultimately we would like there to be no need for our organisation anymore – we'd like to be redundant. We would be if it became *mandatory for all playspaces to be inclusive* and follow the Principles of Universal design and the Federal Government's National Disability Strategy.



PLAY MATTERS

Child's play is not just about having lots of fun. It is also a key part of the development process.

Regular active play helps children not only develop a lifelong habit of daily exercise, it also assists in developing life skills such as:

- communication and social skills
- an understanding of social rules
- friendships and acceptance
- a sense of 'give and take'
- patience and perseverance
- an understanding and tolerance of others
- teamwork and a sense of belonging



Active outdoor play delivers additional benefits to children, such as developing physical skills and co-ordination. According to the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, there is increasing evidence to suggest that children who have access to wild nature play will gain innumerable cognitive, problem solving, emotional and physical benefits.

Given the emerging obesity challenge with 25% of Australian children overweight or obese, encouraging children to be active is becoming increasingly important. Weight is also a problem for their parents – with 63% of Australian adults overweight or obese.

The importance of inclusive play for every child has also been recognised in the Federal Government's National Disability Strategy. A key policy issue identified in the strategy is:

*Inclusive and accessible communities—the physical environment including public transport; **parks**, buildings and housing; digital information and communications technologies; civic life including social, **sporting, recreational and cultural life**.*

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLAYSPACE?

During 2016 Touched by Olivia conducted an online survey asking people a range of questions about their views on play, and the key things they look for and like to do in their local playspace. Over 1200 responses were recorded.

We found that people go to playgrounds to get a range of benefits for their families and friends. The key themes that emerged as to why people go to a playground space were:

- so children can play
- to have fun
- to get outdoors and enjoy the fresh air
- to get some exercise for both parents and children, including developing gross motor skills
- social benefits, for both parents and children
- to have some family time such as picnics, celebrations
- to play on equipment and in space that isn't available at home
- to have a change of scenery and get out of the house
- to access a free activity



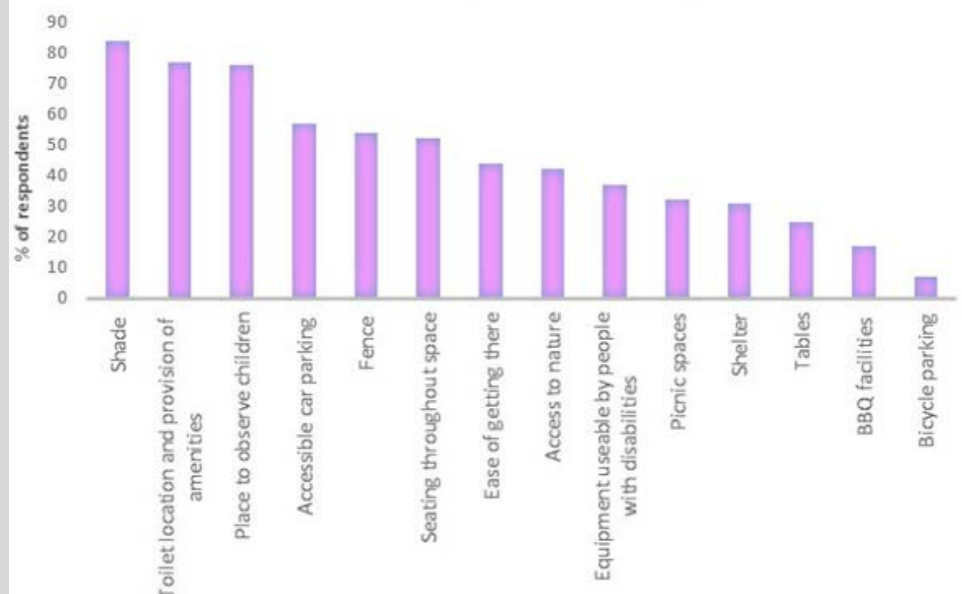
Our survey also showed that local playgrounds are places that are enjoyed by groups of people beyond only children and their parents. Playgrounds are a place that grandparents take their grandchildren, extended family of multiple generations meet up in, work related and social groups use and for people to enjoy times with their pets such as the family dog.

Playgrounds are also a place where a huge range of activities take place. Yes, people still like the traditional slides and swings but some of the other popular attractions that showed up in the survey were:



- Make-believe/imagination equipment – shops, houses, tunnels
- Nature space to observe animals, birds, trees, plants, flowers, ducks
- Climbing equipment such as nets and monkey bars
- Sensory play – sand, water, dirt, grass, sticks
- Musical and art play – chalk, equipment that generates a noise
- Balance equipment - beams
- Exercise/gym equipment
- Walking/running tracks
- Bike/scooter paths
- Open space for ball games, running games, frisbees
- Swinging equipment – including various styles such as toddler, traditional swing, basket swings, rope swings and flying foxes.
- Traditional slides, see-saws and roundabouts.

What facilities are most important to make your visit fun?



People who responded to our survey also indicated that there were key facilities they looked for when going to a community playspace. Amenities were the highest valued facility - shade, toilets and car parking.

MANY PLAYSPACES IN AUSTRALIA DO NOT MEET THE NEEDS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES



In our survey around a third of the respondents had either a child, parent, family member, friends or clients that have a disability.

National statistics show that 1 in 100 children are on the autism spectrum, around 20% of Australian children and adults, many of whom are parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, have a disability. Disability also increases with age, with 43% of those aged over 55 having a disability.

This means that non-inclusive playspaces are excluding a significant proportion of communities from enjoying local assets such as playgrounds.

WHAT MAKES A NON-INCLUSIVE PLAYSPACE?

The survey respondents who had a family member or friend with a disability identified multiple barriers to them enjoying their local playspaces.

- Not being able to access equipment (e.g. wheelchairs/walkers cannot get close to equipment or BBQs & picnic tables too high)
- Not being able to use equipment in the park (e.g. too many ladders and not enough ramps or rails, getting on/off too hard, no wheelchair-accessible equipment)
- Not much variety of equipment that is suitable for a wide range of abilities/sizes/ages (e.g. parents of older children with a disability find their child still wants to play on equipment but are either too big or can no longer be lifted on unless another adult is present)
- Not being able to ensure safe play space (e.g. child running out of area, not full visual of play area, water access nearby)
- Not enough support facilities or suitable facilities at the park (e.g. toilets, nappy changing facilities for bigger children, seating, close parking)
- Lack of 'quiet space' for children who struggle with sensory overload challenges
- Even if suitable equipment is there it is sometimes broken
- Too much sunlight exposure/not enough shade
- Inappropriate paths/coverings (e.g. soft sand, bark, uneven ground)
- Lack of understanding/respect from other families in the play space

"We never go. Why would we? To watch the other kids have fun? No thanks." – survey respondent

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE PLAY?

An inclusive playspace offers a unique environment for children of all ages and all abilities to play side by side. This is what Livvi's Place playgrounds are all about.

It's not about installing a liberty swing and a few ramps up to a slippery slide.

It means incorporating accessible pathways, passive areas, sensory and tactile play and artworks, graduated challenges, points of recognition and visual cues, fencing, accessible parking, designing and creating custom made, accessible and intergenerational play equipment and amenities and bus drop off zones.

Physical disabilities, coupled with childhood disorders, and the ever-changing demographic of stay at home carers, means that every detail needs to be considered for a space to be truly inclusive.

Respondents to our survey identified many key features that they need to see in a their local playspace to improve access for all families in their community.

- Swings that can cater for all abilities (e.g. basket swings, 'toddler' style swings that can fit older children in, Liberty swings, flying fox with a sling,)
- Equipment that doesn't just rely on ladders to access – ramps and rails option needed as well
- Larger equipment that can be used by older children with a disability or by a parent assisting a child (e.g. twin slides)
- Climbing platforms, tunnels, cubby houses that are accessible for all such as lower to the ground or accessed via a wide ramp
- More shade, trees, nature incorporated
- Better toilet facilities, including nappy changing for older children
- Better playground and equipment access including smooth, flat surfaces
- More seating and tables
- Inclusive play that does not separate children with a disability (e.g. don't put a Liberty swing away from all the other swings)
- Sensory play areas but also 'quiet' areas
- Fencing around the playground



"Love the fenced playgrounds, the inclusiveness for all abilities and the climbing frames and the open spaces for running and free play"
– survey respondent

6 PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE PLAY

Touched by Olivia has undertaken extensive research and community consultation to develop Livvi's Places, and to make them truly world class facilities. In 2012, Touched by Olivia joined with leading academics, practitioners, not for profit and NGO's and developed a best practice guideline to assist decision makers, advocates and designers looking to create an inclusive playspace.

**Everyone can play.
Access to nature.
Total experience.
A connection to
community.
Play independence.
Friendship.**

our success stories

So far Touched by Olivia has partnered with over twenty communities to build inclusive playspaces.

Here are some of their stories.

Luke's Place

Part of Livvi's Place National Network of Inclusive Playspaces

This special place welcomes people of all ages and abilities, and is the result of a partnership between Wollongong City Council and Touched by Olivia Foundation, supported by corporations and the community of the Illawarra. Luke's Place was opened by Lord Mayor Gordon Bradbery OAM, Hon. John Ajaka MP, Ryan Park MP and the Rapley Family on Friday 28 March 2014.

A partnership between:



Supported by:



Luke's Place, Wollongong NSW

Sean Rapley's son, Luke, has special needs that prevent him enjoying outdoor play. When he heard about Touched By Olivia, via the SBS documentary "Behind the front Door", he knew he had to get involved and get an inclusive playspace in his local community.

Sean said "We learned Luke was a unique little person, and due to his uniqueness, would face barriers to participation, opportunity, and relationships. We also saw how uncomfortable, and indifferent the wider community is with disability. Touched by Olivia's vision of creating a national inclusive play

space network struck a chord with us, and we contacted TBO the next day."

Sean found the most interesting part of his family's involvement was the opportunity to meet many amazing people on their journey. From the founders of TBO, who were inspired by their daughter, Olivia to create their vision of inclusive play, to Rebecca Ho, who's tireless energy, drive, and sense of fun, delivered the vision.

Sean's biggest challenge was to get the wider community to understand the vision and the need for an inclusive play space. It is very difficult

for people to understand the barriers to inclusion in the community, without having any direct experience with disability.

Engaging the community in the project is critical to its success, as each community's needs are unique. After all, the project is for the community.

Without strong community support, the design, funding, use and care that a play space needs will not happen. Sean says that he is most proud of his community and for getting behind this project and turning it into a reality so quickly..



The Hon John Ajaka MLC

Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Multiculturalism

EAP16/7376

Ms Bec Ho
Executive Officer
Touched by Olivia
64 Roseby Street
DRUMMOYNE NSW 2047

Dear ~~Ms Ho~~, *Bec,*

I am always delighted to hear about positive outcomes achieved for people with disability. I acknowledge the important role of Touched By Olivia in providing accessible playgrounds that meet the needs of young people with disability.

Touched By Olivia has a vision of creating healthier, happier lives for children and a mission to advocate for an inclusive society connected by play through Livvi's National Network of inclusive playspaces.

I commend your organisation's commitment to improve the lives of young people with disability and their access to the community. Through partnership with government, business and communities your organisation has created 19 inclusive playspaces across Australia since its inception in 2006. In NSW alone, ten Livvi's Places are in operation while another five are at different stages of development, from concept through to construction stage.

I note the extensive research and community consultation your organisation has undertaken to help communities create playspaces that are truly inclusive.

I strongly encourage you to continue to expand your work and strengthen Touched By Olivia's community profile. I also support your organisation in seeking *partnerships with local councils* and wish you success in this endeavour.

Yours sincerely,


John Ajaka MLC

10 OCT 2016



Livvi's Place Casey

Therese Howell, Community Driver

Therese Howell is mother to Jack (12) and Alyssa (9) and she played a key role in delivering Livvi's Place Casey. Jack was born with a limb missing on his hand and Therese knew that he would have challenges throughout his life.

Therese was part of a mothers group where 5 kids had disabilities some physical, neural and mobility challenges. When it came time to meet there was not a local space that was safe and suitable for everyone. Most parks weren't fenced or were close to water ways and none had wheelchair access. Therese found this very isolating for her mothers group and she started to realise that something needed to be done.

Therese was the perfect community driver for Livvi's Place Casey and the need for an inclusive playspace quickly ignited her passion for the project. Her previous employment at her local council and involvement in its access and inclusion committee meant she knew who to talk to in order to kick-start the project.

Therese was especially proud that the community embraced the project and understood the need for a 'Livvi's Place' in Casey.

**"It's amazing how if
people give
themselves wings to
fly, what a difference
they can make
beyond four walls."**

Therese Howell



amanda stapledon

City of Casey Councillor

Amanda Stapledon's personal experiences within her own family meant she has long recognized the need for inclusive playgrounds but did not know how to go about it. Then she heard about Touched By Olivia, through Therese Howell, and found a partner with the expertise to deliver a playspace for everyone to enjoy.

Her fellow Councillors were supportive of the idea, but the challenge was to increase awareness about what an inclusive playground actually was. Amanda needed to move perceptions beyond focusing on a playground that had a Liberty swing in the corner. Issues such as access paths, car parking, fencing and other facilities are all critical features that need to be well planned to make sure all of the community can enjoy a playspace.

Once the decision to proceed was made the actual delivery of the process was reasonably straight-forward, thanks to the expertise of Touched by Olivia. Having a local person to carry the project forward was also essential and Therese Howell's extensive community connections helped ensure that locals were quickly behind the project.

Now it is operating, Casey's Livvi's Place has become a hub of activity that serves not just families in the immediate area but the whole region. Coaches filled with visitors are a regular site at the playground. It has become a regional destination, attracting visitors from across neighbouring communities.

As far as Amanda is concerned, "the inclusive playspace is the single most beneficial asset we have put in our community."



Livvi's Place Ballarat

Bec Paton, Community Champion

Rebecca has 2 daughters. The eldest has a rare syndrome that has resulted in physical and intellectual disabilities and needs constant care. She first heard about Touched by Olivia when researching the availability of adult-sized changing tables. Bec had joined the Disability Advisory Committee of Ballarat City Council and was pushing for such a toilet facility to be built there. In her research she discovered there was a playground in Sydney with one.

As she read more about the playground itself, she became excited by the idea of an inclusive playspace. She knew they had to get one in Ballarat!

Playgrounds have always been tough as they tend to showcase what children of their age should be doing. Watching her children play at their local park, her youngest daughter would be all over the equipment. If they were lucky, there might be a wheelchair swing for her eldest, somewhere off to the side and separated from the rest of the playspace by a fence. She wanted somewhere that her girls could play together.

In March of 2012 Bec paid a visit to Livvi's Place at Five Dock. She fell in love with the park, took photos and then presented them to the Disability Advisory Committee at Ballarat City Council.

Bec found the process of designing and constructing a project of this size and nature was very interesting, as was the community consultation process. Of the most positive things to see was the creativity and energy of the volunteer community members, who came up with all sorts of ways to raise money and awareness about the project.

One of the biggest challenges was getting the word out to the community. There had been extensive marketing done, but many people were unaware of the project or the need to raise the funds to build the park.

Bec is really proud of the efforts of the team of volunteers who put so much hard work over the 2 years of the fundraising campaign. She was also pleased that her local community supported inclusion and that the Councillors saw the merit of this project and backed it from the start.



belinda coates

Ballarat City Councillor

Belinda first heard about the exclusionary effect of traditional playgrounds when she was running for Council in 2012. Parents of children with disabilities in her community originally talked to her about the need for a fenced playspace. Once elected to Council, Belinda joined the Disability Advisory Committee and heard about Livvi's Place. She quickly realised the opportunity the community had to build a significant asset that could be used by all families.

All Council's face the challenge of having limited funds to spend on a long list of projects that groups in their community want to see built. Prioritising projects and deciding which ones go ahead is not easy. Belinda was able to get a Livvie's Place on the list of projects for consideration and the combination of support from senior Council staff and broad community support, led by parents, meant the project was given the go ahead.

Another key reason that the project was selected was that it had broader benefits than disability services, it also met the Council's health and wellbeing aims and inclusive objectives.

Cost was also a factor in the decision - an inclusive playspace looks relatively cheap when compared to alternative projects such as new leisure centres or swimming pool expansions.

One of the key challenges for the project was raising funds. Council were able to commit their share but needed matched funding from other levels of government. This was not easy because a playspace did not neatly fit into many of the grant programs on offer at the time. The community was also busy raising funds, but how much could be raised via this method was largely unknown. Once funding was achieved, there was also the challenge of working with multiple partners on the project rather than it being a standard Council-only build.

The end result is that the Ballarat community now has an amazing playspace that has been a game-changer for inclusion in the city. Inclusion can be an abstract concept at times; difficult to identify. But the playspace is a very tangible asset that demonstrates every day what inclusion really means in a community.

"This is an important shift in our community and I, and my fellow Councillors, feel so proud of the practical contribution we have been able to make to improve inclusion" said Belinda.



Thank you to Louise Southall of The Right Research and Donna Carroll Photography for the beautiful images that have brought so much colour to this report.

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Produced October 2016