

22 February 2018

RE: Submission to City of Sydney: New City Centre Playground Proposal

Thank you for your request for feedback on the proposal for the new city centre playground at Cook + Phillip Park.

The Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN) is the peak body representing people with physical disabilities across New South Wales. This includes people with a range of physical disability issues, from young children and their representatives to aged people, who are from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances and live in metropolitan, rural and regional areas of NSW.

PDCN would like to commend the City of Sydney on their proposal to create a playground in Cook + Phillip park that offers opportunities for a diverse range of play experiences. PDCN strongly believes play spaces and structures must be inclusive and accommodate children of all abilities and development levels.

PDCN urges the City of Sydney to ensure the new city centre playground is accessible and incorporates universal design principles allowing it to be widely accessed by the community. Playgrounds are an important aspect of socialisation for children and assist in the building of confidence and skills while encouraging a healthy lifestyle. Accessible playgrounds are crucial in fostering community belonging and addressing the social isolation experienced by many children with disabilities, their families and carers.

PDCN believes considering physical and sensory accessibility at the design stage of this new playground is paramount in creating an inclusive place where children with disability can access the playground alongside their peers.

There are many accessible design features that the City of Sydney should consider in the proposed new city centre playground including level access, smooth transitions between surfaces, provision of shade and routes to playground components that are wide, have wayfinding features and accommodate everyone. Playground components should also be simple and intuitive to use, flexible and provide equitable access, including ramps where required.

Accessible carousels are an example of accessible play opportunities that could be suitable in the proposed playground. Larger than traditional playground carousels, they provide spaces for children who are wheelchair users and can also be designed with limited seating to ensure the carousel can be enjoyed by children with mobility issues who may be unsteady on their feet.

Other playground equipment that can be installed at a suitable height to be accessed by children who are wheelchair users should also be considered. This could include musical instruments, mazes or raised sandpits which all allow for a child with a disability to play together with other children utilising the space.

Furthermore, PDCN suggests City of Sydney include a changing place facility in the new playground as it would be valuable in ensuring the space also meets the needs of children and adults with disability who have high support needs. Changing places have additional facilities than regular accessible bathrooms including space for two carers, height adjustable change tables and an electronic hoist. Changing places offer people with disability who due to their assistance requirements are unable to use a regular accessible bathroom a clean, safe and appropriate place to change and use the toilet.

Finally, PDCN would like to highlight that playgrounds must also consider the needs of people with disability who are parents, grandparents or carers to ensure equal access to playground spaces for the whole community, and to enable people with disability to be able to both supervise and play with children in their care.

Utilising universal design features will guarantee playgrounds can accommodate all members of the community and facilitate intergenerational play.

PDCN appreciate the opportunity to provide comment to the City of Sydney on the new city centre on playground proposal,

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ES', is written over a faint circular stamp.

Ellen Small
Policy Officer
Physical Disability Council of NSW