

The Nature of Play



Subiaco Arts Centre
180 Hamersley Road
Subiaco Western Australia



CHILD ACCIDENT PREVENTION FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA

ABOUT KIDSAFE AND OUR PLAYGROUND SAFETY PROGRAMS

KIDSAFE

Kidsafe is the leading Australian, non-government organisation dedicated to preventing unintentional childhood injuries and reducing the resulting deaths and disabilities associated with childhood "accidents" in children under the age of 15 years.

Injuries are the leading cause of death in Australian children aged one to fourteen, accounting for nearly half of all deaths in the age group. Unintentional injuries account for about 90% of all injury-related child deaths and about 98% of all injury-related hospitalisations.

The Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia was established in 1979 and adopted the name Kidsafe in 1993.

Since the establishment of Kidsafe, the number of injury related child deaths and hospitalisations has more than halved.

PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Kidsafe NSW, SA and WA offer a range of services for playground providers and groups interested in children's outdoor play. Kidsafe can help groups create playgrounds that are not only safe for children but also great fun!

Kidsafe Playground Consultants have professional backgrounds in areas as diverse as occupational therapy, education, early childhood services, health sciences, social sciences and community development, as well as having completed UTS Playground Safety Inspectors training up to Level 3. Kidsafe Playground units can provide:

- General information and advice about playgrounds
- Playground Development Consultation Workshops – for children, parents, professionals and community groups
- Playground Standards PD sessions – for local government, child care and education, landscaping, playground and maintenance professionals
- Playground Assessments & Audits – from on-site discussions to comprehensive audits with written reports. Recommendations include ideas and advice to ensure playgrounds are safe and fun without blowing the budget
- Technical & Design Support – review of plans to assess for children's safety, play and learning needs

PLAYGROUND SAFETY WEEK

Playground Safety Week, celebrated annually in the third week of April, is an opportunity to focus on play environments for children and promote both safety *and* participation in physical activity.

The Kidsafe Playground Conference is a feature event of *Playground Safety Week 2010*. **Presentations will highlight** playground safety and the importance of providing children with development and learning opportunities, including age-appropriate challenge in children's playspaces.

Kidsafe encourages all individuals and organisations involved in the development and management of children's playgrounds to take time during Playground Safety Week to promote quality children's outdoor play environments and ensure children's safety and wellbeing.

SPECIAL PRE-CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

VARIETY PAVILION, SAW AVENUE, KINGS PARK

SUNDAY 18 APRIL 2010

4.30-6.30PM

Pre-Conference Sundowner

Come along for some fantastic WA food and wine in the beautiful natural surroundings of Kings Park – our iconic nature parkland overlooking the City of Perth.

This will be a great opportunity for networking and introducing yourselves to our guest speakers, presenters and other conference delegates.

Rio Tinto *Naturescape*

David Smith, Plan E

The Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority (BGPA) along with the Friends of Kings Park have entered into an innovative multi-sector partnership with private enterprise organisations and statutory authorities to bring to life the Rio Tinto *Naturescape* at Kings Park.

The Rio Tinto *Naturescape* will form the base for an exciting new environmental education concept at Kings Park. In what is believed to be a world first, the vision for this project is to provide a natural environment that inspires learning and positive environmental action through fun, discovery, immersion and connection with nature. It will include a purpose built environmental education centre, a place for community gathering and a range of experiential nodes. These will each have distinct themes and incorporate opportunities for interactive experiences to inspire and engage the senses. There will also be opportunities for activities such as cubby building, sand and water play and safe, environmentally sensitive bush exploration.

David will provide an overview of this exciting project, its objectives and the current design process.

Speaker profile: David is a Director at Plan E, a leading Western Australian landscape architectural firm that undertakes a broad range of projects in environmental/conservation, land development, land management, recreational, educational, infrastructural, health and urban design. Plan E has a long standing appointment as landscape architects to Kings Park, Western Australia's most popular tourist attraction.

Wadumbah Aboriginal Dance Group

Wadumbah is a group of hard working Noongar men representing the Noongar Nations of Western Australia. They live and work in the city of Perth, which is the tribal homeland of the 'Whadjuck' region.

They have been performing throughout Western Australia for more than 12 years and also been invited to perform in many other countries, including Germany, Italy, the USA, Mauritius, Singapore, Malaysia and China. The Wadumbah Dance Group has achieved the status of being one of the **premier Indigenous dance groups** in Australia.

Wadumbah specialises in showcasing traditional Noongar dance, music and tales from the 'Dreaming' and they also enjoy sharing funny and interesting stories from their adventures when touring throughout the State and the world.

Audiences around the globe have enjoyed Wadumbah's fiery and energetic dances and wild Didgeridoo playing! We're sure this will be a highlight of the conference.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

DAY ONE – 19 APRIL 2010

8:15-8:45	Registration		
8:55-9:00	Conference commencement & housekeeping information		
9:00-9:05	Welcome to Country – Marie Taylor		
9:05-9:10	Sue Wicks, CEO Kidsafe WA		
9:10-9:15	Hon Robyn McSweeney, Minister for Community Services		
9:15-9:20	A short film presentation – <i>What Kids Want: Playgrounds and Play Spaces</i>		
9:20-10:30	Keynote 1: Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained – Helle Nebelong		
10:30-11:00	Morning Tea		
	Playspace Design Essentials	Making Connections	Food for Thought
11:00-11:30	Rubber Coated Playgrounds? – Kate Fraser	Making the Connection from Ideas to Plans – Tracy Blaszkow	ParkWatch: Safe Play Healthy Kids – Kim Buttfeld
11:30-12:00	Seatbelts are Mandatory: Why Not Shade? – Mark Strickland	Connecting Children with Nature – David Smith	Labyrinth (not just a movie title) – Kay Lockhart
12:00-12:30	Playground Surfacing 101 – Dr David Eager	Connecting with Country – Greg Grabasch	Ellenbrook 'Rainbow Waters' Playground – Rachel Thorpe
Venue:	Main Auditorium	Undercroft	Multi-Purpose Room
12:30-1:30	Lunch		
	Public Open Space	Workshop One	Nature Based Play
1:30-2:00	Play City – Brett Wood-Gush	The Value & Values of Children's Outdoor Playspaces – Marie Martin	Naturally Better – Fiona Robbé
2:00-2:30	Restorative Landscapes – Dr Wendy Sarkissian		Power of Natural Play Environments – Catherine Lee
2:30-3:00	From Opportunity to Reality – Laya Baker		The Child's Voice in Creating a "Wild Space" – Gillian McAuliffe
Venue:	Main Auditorium	Undercroft	Multi-Purpose Room
3:00-3:30	Afternoon Tea		
	Workshop Two	Workshop Three	Workshop Four
3:30-5:00	Play Spaces – Special Places – Ric McConaghy	Child's Play: Reinvigorating our Parks & Playgrounds – Dr Lisa Wood & Dr May Carter	Addressing the Challenge – Lianda Gibson
Venue:	Main Auditorium	Undercroft	Multi-Purpose Room

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

DAY TWO – 20 APRIL 2010

8:15-8:30 One Day Registration

8:30-9:30 **Keynote 2: Can Local Authorities Provide for Play without Killing It? How a local authority in Scotland tried to – Sue Gutteridge**

9.30 – 9.45 Beverley Boland – Kidsafe Special Announcement

9.45-10.30 **Keynote 3: The Nature of Play... Let's Get Dirty – Bernhard Kaiser/Terry Farrell**

10.30-11.00 Morning Tea

All Inclusive

Workshop Five

Workshop Six

11.00-11.30 Pia's Playground – Amy Hollins & Lynda Del Bianco

Play Spaces – Special Places (repeated)– Ric McConaghy

The Nature Action Collaborative for Children – Helle Nebelong, Fiona Robbé & Gillian McAuliffe

11.30-12.00 All Abilities Playspace Development – Wendy Seymour

12.00-12.30 The Playground as a Microcosm of Society – Dr Jenene Burke

Venue: **Main Auditorium**

Undercroft

Multi-Purpose Room

12.30-1.30 Lunch

Art & Sensory Design

Workshop Seven

Focus on Early Childhood

1.30-2.00 Art & The Play Experience – David Stockdale

Play, density and community safety for children in the middle years (ages 6-12): reconciling these aspects in residential neighbourhoods – Dr Wendy Sarkissian

Exploring Outdoor Spaces in Family Day Care – Laurinda Jones

2.00-2.30 A Sensory Garden with Opportunities for Play – Lisa Shine

Back to Nature for Early Childhood Centres – Jennine Primmer

2.30-3.00 Plants in Play Spaces – Tess Michaels

Spaces & Places in NZ Early Childhood settings – Cheryl Greenfield

Venue: **Main Auditorium**

Undercroft

Multi-Purpose Room

3.00-3.30 Afternoon Tea

3.30-4.30 **Summation Panel Discussion – *Can a Playground be Too Safe?***

Dr David Eager, Bernhard Kaiser, Francis Burke

Sue Gutteridge, Helle Nebelong, Wendy Sarkissian

OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Helle Nebelong, *Sansehaber.dk*

Helle is a Danish Landscape Architect and Master of Public Management. She is director of *Sansehaber.dk*, a consulting firm that specialises in the design of natural spaces and sensory gardens for children, young disabled people and elderly people.

Prior to establishing *Sansehaber.dk*, Helle worked for the City of Copenhagen for more than ten years where she undertook project development, policymaking, public consultation, tree planting campaigns and public events in relation to roads and parks as well as urban design and planning. As the head of an interdisciplinary team she was responsible for a strategic plan for improving accessibility in Copenhagen.

Sue Gutteridge, PLAYLINK UK

Sue has been a PLAYLINK associate since leaving Stirling Council (UK) where she was head of play services for over 20 years. Her work on Stirling's public play areas is commonly described as 'groundbreaking', promoting a dynamic approach, light years away from the world of equipment and safety surfacing catalogues.

Sue's career in the public sector has given her a wealth of experience of how to make things happen in the real world of local authority regulations and restricted budgets, how to work effectively with communities and how to involve children *meaningfully* in the design and construction of play areas.

Sue is also interested in the wider questions of what constitutes child-friendly places, how they relate to broad issues of planning, housing, transport and urban regeneration and how these can be related to local and implementable practice.

Unfortunately, due to European airport closures, Sue Gutteridge was not able to fly to Perth and present at the conference – disappointing for both Kidsafe WA and Sue.

However, Kidsafe WA is working with PLAYLINK on possible future collaboration.

Bernhard Kaiser, Natural Play Environments & Terry Farrell, Canopy Designs

Bernhard is a Western Australian institution. His easily recognised, unique playground designs are well-loved by the organisations that have commissioned them, have stood the test of time and most importantly, delighted hundreds and hundreds of children over the last 4 decades.

Terry is an architect and runs Canopy Designs, which focuses on green architecture; public art; landscape design and construction; and play environments.

DAY ONE – SESSION ONE

Welcome and opening speech

Auditorium

Our Master of Ceremony

Tim Long, Longitude Multi-Media

Welcome to Country – Marie Taylor
 Introductions – Sue Wicks, CEO, Kidsafe WA
 Hon Robyn McSweeney, Minister for Community Services

What our Kids Have to Say about Outside Play

Filmbites Youth Film School

The Department for Communities commissioned the Filmbites Youth Film School to develop a short film specifically for our conference. The aim is to ensure that we have children's views about parks, playgrounds and play fresh in our minds while participating in the conference and moving forward in our playground or related work.

Keynote address

Auditorium

Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained – Exploring Natural Playscapes

Helle Nebelong

Denmark has a long-standing reputation for promoting the child's right to free play in natural surroundings.

- The Junk Playground (Adventure Playground) was invented by Danish Landscape Architect C. Th. Sorensen back in 1931.
- International Play Association, IPA, was founded in Denmark in 1961.

Today The Nature Playground in Copenhagen designed by Helle Nebelong is known as one of the best-designed playgrounds for children in the world. The presentation will focus on Helle's experiences and thoughts as the designer of public playgrounds and playgrounds at daycare centres and schools including issues like:

- Nature's influence on children and lack of nature experiences
- Learning about life through play demands time, courage and risk-taking
- Mystified and demystified playscapes
- The grown-up approach to children's play and children's world of imaginations

DAY ONE – SESSION TWO

Playspace Design Essentials

Auditorium

Rubber Coated Playgrounds?

Kate Fraser, Kidsafe NSW

Does everything need to be rubber coated? An exaggerated question maybe? However, the NSW Playground Advisory Unit frequently field this type of enquiry from schools, local councils, children's services and other playground providers. It is a common misconception that playgrounds must have safety surfacing to offer experiential learning opportunities such as climbing and jumping activities.

Kate's presentation will offer a variety of practical ideas and strategies for creative, purposeful play items that do not require safety surfacing. This presentation is a must for those that have small spaces and/or budgets; or those seeking creative options to include within a natural playspace design.

Speaker Profile: Kate is Program Manager for the Playground Advisory Unit at Kidsafe NSW. Her background as an occupational therapist drives her passion for playgrounds that are safe, creative and challenging for children. She believes in providing playgrounds that are purposeful, offer engaging activities for *all* children and are designed for 'play'. Kate is currently completing a Diploma in Horticulture and Landscape Design to further develop the advice available from Kidsafe NSW in relation to playspace design.

Seatbelts are Mandatory – Why not Shade?

Mark Strickland, Cancer Council WA

Despite the wealth of information connecting sun exposure to skin cancer, it is still common for councils, child care services and schools in WA to construct playground facilities that are inadequately shaded. The most frequently advanced argument for not providing shade are the direct and indirect costs.

This presentation will discuss the question "Should shade be mandatory on all playgrounds in WA?" by examining parallels in automotive safety, the establishment and maintenance costs of typical shade installations, the direct and indirect costs of skin cancer to the community and latest trends in skin cancer data. It will also touch on questions of safe levels of sun exposure, vitamin D needs and duty of care.

Speaker profile: Mark is the SunSmart Education Coordinator with the Cancer Council WA. The Cancer Council WA is a community-funded non-government organisation that aims to minimise the incidence and impact of cancer on the Western Australian community through advocacy, research and education and by providing people affected by cancer with support to enhance their quality of life.

Playground Surfacing 101

Dr David Eager

Playground surfacing is typically the least understood area of playground design, installation and maintenance. It is the causal link to the majority of playground injuries and inadequate or poorly maintained surfacing is the most common non-compliance issue that is consistently identified in playground studies. It is the surfacing onto which our children will impact when they inevitably fall from the play equipment and it is this surfacing that is absolutely necessary for the reduction of children's serious injury caused by these falls. This paper will discuss common playground surfacing issues and questions including:

- Definitions and requirements – what is playground surfacing and when is it required?
- What's the difference in the various playground surfacing systems?
- Testing & certification
- Will a compliant system eliminate accidents?

Speaker profile: David is an Associate Professor within the Faculty of Engineering at University of Technology Sydney. He has a Ph. D in Engineering; a 1st Class Honours Degree in Engineering; and a Graduate Certificate in Dispute Resolution. He is also a Fellow of Engineers Australia; a Councillor on the Board of Kidsafe NSW; and the Associate Editor for the Australasian Parks and Leisure Journal (education and training).

Making Connections

Undercroft

Making the Connection from Ideas to Plans?

Tracy Blaszkow, Kidsafe WA

So you want to develop a new and exciting play space, but how do you transform your ideas to something more concrete and bring your ideas to fruition. Tracy will share her experiences in working with local children and families and local government officers at the Shire of Gnowangerup on the development of its community playground.

Speaker profile: Tracy is a member of the Playground Advisory Service team at Kidsafe WA. She is a Certified Level 3 Playground Safety Inspector and has many years' experience working in regional WA with schools, community groups and local government, providing playground advice and information as well as training in interpreting the Australian playground standards.

Connecting Children with Nature

David Smith, Plan E

David will share his ideas and strategies for designing parks and open spaces that help connect children with nature and also discuss his involvement in the Rio Tinto *Naturescape* project at Kings Park.

Speaker profile: David is a Director at Plan E, a leading Western Australian landscape architectural firm that undertakes a broad range of projects in environmental/conservation, land development, land management, recreational, educational, infrastructural, health and urban design. Plan E has a long standing appointment as landscape architects to Kings Park, Western Australia's most popular tourist attraction.

Connecting with Country

Greg Grabasch, UDLA

Greg will present an overview of his work with Indigenous communities in the Kimberley and the result of his persistent commitment to engagement and consultation with local Indigenous community members to bring the concept of "connection to country" into the design of built environments.

Speaker profile: Greg is principal of UDLA, a small urban design and landscape architecture practice. Much of UDLA's work is on regional community, town centre and general residential developments within north west WA, mainly mid size pastoral and mining towns with high indigenous populations.

UDLA's design philosophy hinges on the understanding that the standard or level of the communities' capacity has a symbiotic relationship with their public space and the associated environment's amenity and health.

Food for Thought

Multi-Purpose Room

Park Watch – Safe Play, Healthy Kids

Kim Buttfield, Albany Injury Prevention Association

The local park used to be a place to play, a meeting place and a social place for the local community. Encouraging children to be more active after school, through the use of their local park is the main driver behind an innovative project called *Park Watch* which has been piloted in Albany over the past 12 months.

Park Watch aimed to overcome parental fears and perceptions and increase the physical activity of primary school age children, create a safe after-school local play environment and encourage families to access their local park to foster community connections. Local parents and supporters, trained as Park Watch monitors, spent two afternoons a week on site to ensure a safe and welcoming park environment. Children were encouraged to walk or ride their bike to the park and enjoy the unstructured play environment.

Speaker profile: Kim is a member of the Albany Injury Prevention Association (AIPA), a community based group which promotes safety and wellness in the Albany community. AIPA established the Albany Safety House, modelled on the Kidsafe Safety House at Princess Margaret Hospital and provides tours and talks on child safety. AIPA has also been involved in other innovative programs including the Albany Safe Playground Program, Healthy Older Blokes and SKAFE (skateboard safety).

Labyrinth (not just a movie title)

Kay Lockhart, Kidsafe NSW

A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The Labyrinth represents a journey to our own centre and back again out into the world. A labyrinth is a right brain task: it involves intuition, creativity, and imagery. With a maze many choices must be made and an active mind is needed to solve the problem of finding the centre. With a labyrinth there is only one choice to be made. The choice is to enter or not. A more passive, receptive mindset is needed.

Participants will learn about the history of labyrinths; their spiritual and healing value; various types and designs in use around the world; and discuss how to include a labyrinth in playspaces.

Speaker profile: Kay Lockhart is a Project Officer of the Playground Advisory Unit of Kidsafe NSW, the principle agency for playground safety and development in NSW where she is engaged in providing technical, design and safety advice to the community. Kay has assisted in the facilitation of workshops amongst various groups and conducted many playground inspections. Kay has a keen interest in play, risk benefit play and natural playspaces. Kay has experience working in Children's Services and has specialised in Occupational Health and Safety. Kay is committed to the education, safety and wellbeing of children.

Ellenbrook 'Rainbow Waters' Playground

Rachel Thorpe, City of Swan

The Rainbow Waters Playground in Ellenbrook is the biggest and first *free* outdoor facility in the Perth metropolitan area and provides Ellenbrook residents and the wider community with a play space that encompasses a range of accessible facilities. This unique concept incorporates innovative environmental and sustainable elements, an interactive and mentally stimulating play experience and is an attractive and creative space where physical play is complemented with passive recreational space.

The playground was designed to provide three forms of stimulation and experience:

- Physically: through active movement, coordination and challenges.
- Mentally: by inspiring the imagination of children and adults with visual and tactile experiences.
- Passive spaces: by providing secure and relaxing places complementary of the other facilities within the reserve.

Speaker profile: Rachel is a Facilities Planner for the City of Swan and has Project Managed the construction of this unique playground.

The City of Swan, located 13km north of the Perth CBD, is the largest metro council within Perth. It is a unique council, comprising heritage, viticulture, tourism, urban and rural areas and is one of the greatest growth corridors.

DAY ONE – SESSION THREE

Public Open Space

Auditorium

Play City

Brett Wood-Gush, TPG Town Planning and Urban Design

This presentation explores the artificial boundaries between the city and the playground created by 20th Century approaches to design. It will look at the design of good playgrounds and good cities and reveal how they are, in many ways, at their best when a reflection of each other.

The presentation will outline the urban design principles being used to restore the role of the City as a place of delight and interaction. The relationship between these principles and good playground design will then be explored based on the presenter's experiences and observations travelling with his young daughter through Oceania's cities and playgrounds. If you are wondering how to make the city a place of play and how to use play to build healthy communities, this presentation may provide a starting point.

Speaker profile: Brett is Principle Urban Designer/Associate at TPG, committed to improving the quality of the built environment and promoting active living. He is uniquely qualified, holding degrees in Architecture, Town Planning and a Masters in Urban Design and is also an experienced facilitator. He has worked on a wide range of progressive projects and with some of the leading experts in this area including Danish Professor Jan Gehl, author of *Life Between Buildings*, Evan Jones, the mastermind behind Liveable Neighbourhoods and Billie Giles-Corti, an inspiration.

Restorative Landscapes: The healing potential of our public parks

Dr Wendy Sarkissian

There's ample research about what people need from parks to help restore and nurture their health and wellbeing and Wendy's exploration of restorative landscapes begins with the premise that *nature has always been acknowledged as the great healer*. It is her belief that while our urban public parks hold the potential for such healing, that potential often remains unrealised.

Urban parks can also serve many other important functions for the children, families and adults that make up our communities – places to meet, places for peace and quiet, places for action and adventure – but they often do so poorly.

Wendy's presentation will discuss how understanding the needs of different users of parks can contribute to a better fit (*or congruence*) between the park environment and its users. Importantly, she firmly believes, it need not cost more to maximise the beneficial psychological impact of nature.

Speaker profile: Wendy is an award-winning author of six books and passionate about the future of work, housing, communities and community engagement and is committed to finding spirited ways to nurture and support an engaged citizenry. She built a career as a social planning consultant when there was no such discipline and pioneered innovative planning and development approaches in an astonishing variety of contexts. She has worked with senior managers and advisors to government and private enterprises in the urban, community, housing and development sectors.

From Opportunity to Reality

Laya Baker, City of Melville

The City of Melville is transforming the Old Melville Primary School site into an iconic public open space with an innovative playscape, parkland and natural bush garden areas at a cost of approximately \$3.7 million. Completion is expected in September 2010, with the Playscape area of the Park likely to be available in May 2010.

Step through the journey from opportunity to reality and share lessons learned along the way. Laya will highlight key elements of the process; what went well and in retrospect, what could be done differently. This will be an opportunity to share with other organisations the challenges faced and the decisions made along the way; and an opportunity to share the creation of a truly unique place for everyone in the community.

Speaker profile: Laya is Project & Contracts Coordinator with the City of Melville, a diverse and multi-cultural community which enjoys a rich built and natural heritage, a blend of retail and business precincts, an abundance of opportunities for physical and social activity and a unique natural landscape. It is the third largest city in Perth, but also one of the most liveable and sustainable communities, winning Gold at the UN-endorsed International Liveable Communities Award in 2009 and receiving the Community Sustainability award across all population categories, ahead of 46 finalists from 18 countries.

Workshop One

Undercroft

The Value & Values of Children's Outdoor Playspaces

Dr Marie Martin, Learning Conversations

With the increasing political and media focus on literacy and numeracy, the development of children's play skills is being marginalised. While schools may be the only institution dedicated to the intellectual development of children, there is a plethora of research indicating that whole class, didactic, teacher-centred, teacher-initiated, teacher-directed methods are not and should not be the only way in which children are expected to learn.

Do you value the habits of mind, dispositions and metacognitive skills that are essential for literacy and numeracy? Are you actively using the outdoor learning environment to develop initiative, curiosity, independence and learning? Does your outdoor environment reflect or undermine your values? In this interactive and participatory workshop we will explore our values and the value of children's play and develop our understandings of some ways in which:

- Playground experiences can help children to develop important habits of mind, dispositions and metacognitive skills.
- The design of playgrounds and the learning experiences provided in them can support (or undermine) educators values.

Speaker profile: Marie is a teacher by birth, training, archetype and experience and is an advocate for early childhood. She has taught children aged 18 months to 18 years and currently 'walks beside' teachers as they reflect on their teaching and learning programs and seek ways of igniting children's curiosity and passion for learning. Learning Conversations, a company that facilitates professional learning, organisational development, community development and curriculum development through conversational processes.

Nature Based Play

Multi-Purpose Room

Naturally Better

Fiona Robbé, Landscape Architect

*Happy hearts and happy faces, Happy play in grassy places,
That was how, in ancient ages, Children grew to kings and sages,* R L Stevenson

This paper will explore the real benefits that design can offer in creating natural play settings in a great variety of environments. Research outcomes, design principles and specific project outcomes will be provided. Additional topics such as risk benefit analysis and maintenance will be explored and elements of good practice for environmental play provision from Australia and overseas will be summarised.

Speaker profile: Fiona has worked as a Landscape Architect for 25 years and specialised in the design of innovative outdoor children's environments for the past 10. Her work involves public playgrounds in parks (local and state government), as well as play areas in schools, preschools, churches, museums and anywhere children play outside!

Her passion is to create play environments which are challenging, evocative and delightful, with a thoughtfulness that assists communities to feel welcome and comfortable in the resulting spaces. She believes that design should balance ethics and aesthetics for the good of society, and that caring playground design is a worthwhile investment in the future: *our children*.

Power of the Natural Play Environments

Catherine Lee, the Point Preschool

The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia states that "outdoor learning spaces are a feature of Australian learning environments. They offer a vast array of possibilities not available indoors." Engaging children in outdoor play is part of every early childhood service's day. Many of us working with young children feel confident providing spaces and play experiences that meet the young child's physical needs, but how do we also nourish their spiritual wellbeing and connection with nature. This presentation will investigate how we can do this through the power of the environment while also developing a deep connection with nature.

The audience will be encouraged to look beyond equipment and stretch their view to the power of the environment to identify places of inspiration, strength, wonder, nature, peace and beauty in their services and discuss ways to adapt existing outdoor environments and experiences. Examples of play spaces that engage, inspire and empower young children will be shared.

Speaker profile: Catherine has been teaching in the early childhood field for over 25 years in a diverse range of early childhood settings, sharing her passion for education for sustainability. She is currently Director/Teacher at the community, not for profit Point Preschool in Sydney and in 2008 was awarded the NSW Community Child Care Co-operative Cee Cee Award for The Director with Vision.

The preschool's commitment to sustainability has been rewarded with the 2006 NSW ECEEN Award for outstanding commitment to sustainable practices; 2007 Sutherland Shire Small Business of the Year – Outstanding Child Care Service and 2008 ABC Gardening Australia, Gardener of the Year Australian Runner Up. The playground at The Point Preschool is also a WIREs certified wildlife haven for native animals.

The Child's Voice in Creating a "Wild Space"

Gillian McAuliffe, Bold Park Community School

Five and six year olds at the Bold Park Community School have worked with staff to design a 'Wild Space' in a small and secluded part of the playground. Staff consulted with the children to establish how they regarded play; what it was they loved to do and what they believed a 'Wild Space' is. As a result, a neglected area is being transformed into an interactive natural playground which will evolve and grow over time.

Concerns of safety and risk are addressed through *Benefit Risk Assessments* and *Hazard Risk Assessments* which are undertaken by staff and children thus engaging the children in processes which teach them how to play safely and consider risks before they encounter them.

Speaker profile: Gillian is Director of Teaching and Learning of Bold Park Community School and has worked with children, staff and parents to develop a school community which engages with nature and develops a sense of place through a collaborative process. The school 'lives' a philosophy of engaging children in play, which encourages the development of resilience, empathy and sustainable living.

DAY ONE – SESSION FOUR

Workshop Two

Auditorium

Play Spaces – Special Places

Ric McConaghy, Ric McConaghy P/L

A journey through the methodology of planning and designing nature based play spaces including an extensive range of visual examples. The workshop will encourage an open dialogue to explore as many issues as possible.

Speaker profile: Ric is the regional Vice President of the International Play Association established under the aegis of the UN to advocate and promote Article 31 supporting the Child's Right to Play. Ric specialises in all ability nature based playspaces and early childhood spaces.

Workshop Three

Undercroft

Child's Play: Reinvigorating our Parks & Playgrounds

Dr May Carter & Dr Lisa Wood

This interactive session will draw out delegates' perceptions and experiences of 'good play spaces for children' and identify factors that facilitate or hinder development and reinvigoration of quality play spaces and playgrounds. The workshop will seek your views on how to counter some of the barriers (real and perceived) to providing more creative or nature based play spaces; and what strategies might be used to counter community and/or parental concerns relating to children's play in neighbourhood park settings.

Speaker profile: May's professional career spans 30 years. She works as a researcher, lecturer and community consultant and has a particular interest in relationships between people, place and health. She recently completed a PhD project that explored attitudes towards nature and natural environments, diversity and quality of urban green spaces, health and wellbeing.

Lisa has twenty years experience in health promotion programs and policy and is the Deputy Director of the Built Environment and Health in the School of Population Health at the University of Western Australia. Lisa has a strong interest and commitment to research that is useful and relevant to the 'real world', and when it comes to playgrounds, three active boys to put her research to the test!

Workshop Four

Multi-Purpose Room

Addressing the Challenge

Lianda Gibson, City of Subiaco

This workshop will showcase methods that the city has used to tackle what is perceived as the challenging task of conducting meaningful consultation with children and young people. It will include practical examples from the city's recent consultation with children and young people on council's draft strategic plan. Be inspired and challenged to think outside the box and actively participate in an interactive workshop to learn creative consultation techniques that can be applied to your own projects.

Speaker profile: Lianda is Senior Project Officer – Children and Young People at the City of Subiaco. In this role she has developed a range of consultation techniques to seek the views of children and young people on matters relating to the planning and development of the city. She has a Masters in Human Rights Education and has previous experience in using a range of methods for creative community education and community consultation.

The City of Subiaco is an inner metropolitan local government authority with children making up 16.5% of its population. The role of Senior Project Officer – Children and Young People was created in 2008 in order to implement the city's newly developed Child Friendly City Plan, developed after extensive research and in-depth consultation with a wide cross-section of children, families and young people throughout the city.

DAY TWO – SESSION ONE

Keynote address

Auditorium

The Nature of Play... Let's get dirty

Bernhard Kaiser & Terry Farrell

In discussing the nature of play let us make it, in the words of Denise Levertov, “an extended onomatopoeia” that which not only describes our ideas about play but seeks to develop “the feeling of the experience, its emotional tone, its texture.” Let us discuss play as that which transforms itself in a magical or surprising manner. This magical transformation that occurs in the act of play is a spring board to understanding the aesthetics of play where form making arises in the same manner as occurs in natural ecosystems: through a diversity of inter-relatedness, of interdependence of possibility, growing upon possibility. The aesthetics of play is life-enhancing and life-affirming, precisely because it ‘allows’. It allows a magical transformation. The aesthetic of play is open-ended. So where does the play environment design begin? “Form is never more than a *revelation* of content” (Denise Levertov). What is the content of play? Let us discuss that.

While inspiring us to create playgrounds filled with magic and wonder, Bernd and Terry will provide practical skills and strategies to help answer questions such as:

- What is the playground life-cycle costing?
- What is the potential for vandalism?
- What is the maintenance regime?
- How to evaluate the user benefit?
- How safe is it?
- Does it conform to all relevant standards?
- Can it be built within budget?

Special Announcement

Auditorium

Beverley Boland, Kidsafe NSW

Announcement of the Kidsafe National Playspace Design Awards

DAY TWO – SESSION TWO

All Inclusive Playspaces

Auditorium

Pia's Playground

Amy Hollins & Lynda Del Bianco, Next Challenge

Combining developmental understanding, disability knowledge, community needs, design elements AND funding can seem a daunting task. This presentation outlines the process taken to establish a community playground at Whiteman Park, WA. 'Pia's Playground' embodies a shared vision between government, private industry and the Lions Club.

Play, learning and fun will be inseparable in this playground that will combine historical and cultural elements in a playground that moves, changes, lights up and explodes with creativity. This will be a play space that fosters cooperation and activity and has been designed to get everyone moving.

'Pia's Playground' will become part of children's memories for years to come.

Speaker profiles: Amy is a Senior Occupational Therapist passionate about the potential of playgrounds and leads the Next Challenge playground consultancy team. In 2004, she was awarded a Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health (CUCRH) Fellowship to conduct an audit of playgrounds in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia. Amy worked alongside the local shire, therapists, community representatives and safety consultants to develop ideas to enhance the capacity of local playgrounds.

Lynda, also a Senior Occupational Therapist, has a keen interest in providing children with disabilities the same opportunities as other children. Lynda has been able to apply her expertise in disability, access and inclusion towards planning exciting play spaces for children of all abilities.

All Abilities Play Space Development

Wendy Seymour, City of Swan

This presentation will provide background, plans and indicative images for the new Swan Regional Riverside Park (SRRP) All Abilities Play Space and details of the Community Consultation Plan workshops, including one that focused on the needs of people with disabilities (with specialist advice from E-equal), questionnaires, and web information and discussion forum hosted by 'Bang the Table'.

Speaker profile: Wendy is a Landscape Architect with over 20 years experience. The last 8 years she has been at the City of Swan, responsible for running the Play Space Replacement Program, involved in the development of the City's Play Space Strategy, guiding proposals for new play spaces by developers working within the City and currently project manager for the new regional All Abilities Play Space, for the Swan Regional Riverside Park, Woodbridge.

The City of Swan is the largest and fastest growing city in Australia, with a population over 100,000, likely to double over the next 15 years. It has over 160 playgrounds and since adopting its Play Space Strategy in 2006 has replaced over 30 and endeavours to improve play provision and practices each year.

The Playground as a Microcosm of Society

Jenene Burke, University of Ballarat

Play, as a major social institution, influences the shaping of society. By gathering in playground environments learn about others, social values and the communities they live in and one of the features of an *inclusive* play environment is that children have the freedom to exert their agency.

Jenene will examine playgrounds as a microcosm of society and how they can be places that offer children with impairments opportunities to play freely and creatively -- or alternatively, where they experience restrictions through structural oppression.

The study reported on in this paper is drawn from a larger Australian Research Council Linkages Project that informs the author's Ph. D thesis. Data was collected from participant children who compiled personal photographic scrapbooks and were observed at play in playgrounds. Adults with impairments and parents of children with impairments also participated and shared their views in focus groups. Several broad sociological themes that emerged from the data will be discussed.

Speaker profile: Jenene is a lecturer and researcher in the School of Education at the University of Ballarat. She has a background as a secondary teacher, predominantly in the Health and Physical Education field. Jenene undertook a 3 year study on inclusive playgrounds for her Ph. D thesis as a Community Linkages Project with a grant from the Australian Research Council.

Workshop Five

Undercroft

Play Spaces – Special Places (repeated)

Ric McConaghy, Ric McConaghy P/L

A journey through the methodology of planning and designing nature based play spaces including an extensive range of visual examples. The workshop will encourage an open dialogue to explore as many issues as possible.

Speaker profile: Ric is the regional Vice President of the International Play Association established under the aegis of the UN to advocate and promote Article 31 supporting the Child's Right to Play. Ric specialises in all ability nature based playspaces and early childhood spaces.

Workshop Six

Multi-Purpose Room

Nature Action Collaborative

Helle Nebelong, Gillian McAuliffe & Fiona Robbé

Helle, Gillian and Fiona are members of the leadership team of the Nature Action Collaborative for Children and will present a very 'hands on' workshop about this group, which aims to connect disciplines and professionals who work in the community to engage children in nature based play.

There are NACC members all over the world who work to regain some of the wonder which nature can provide.

DAY TWO – SESSION THREE

Art & Sensory Design

Auditorium

Art & the Play Experience

David Stockdale, studioStockdale

Many studies have shown that nature has a significant impact on the physical, mental and emotional development of a child. Our playgrounds, playspaces and even public art become havens of nature and nature type experiences in today's urban environment for children. The design and implementation of our playspaces needs to be sensitive to these necessary experiences with an understanding of the ways in which art plays a very important role.

David will showcase examples of innovative creative local and international playgrounds and public spaces and show how art plays a role in, not only aesthetics of design, but also in improving the play experience for children. Alternative principles in working with playground development will be discussed including how easy it is to have child centred playground/playspace design. There will be an overview of the needs of the developing child/human and how 'playspaces' can address this need.

Speaker profile: David has an extensive background in the building industry with his successful carpentry, renovation and maintenance business, being a HIA member and Greensmart Professional. More recently David has studied Visual Arts and Sculpture in the UK with particular interest in Pedagogical studies for working with art in relation to children and education. studioStockdale works with form and sculpture for private commissions, public art and commercial applications.

A Sensory Garden with Opportunities for Play

Lisa Shine, City of Stirling

Comparing two different 'play' designs and their subsequent built outcome, influenced by their specific location, brief and budget. Topics covered will include:

- Site analysis, extent of community consultation.
- Inspirations
- Design process
- Implications OF Australian Standards on the design and construction
- In retrospect, what worked/ what didn't work/ what needs work.

Speaker profile: Lisa commenced working at the City of Stirling in 2004, while completing her Bachelor or Architecture degree. She was the City's first urban designer while in the position of strategic planner. In her current position of Landscape Architect, Lisa has more direct involvement with projects that encompass construction. The City has approximately 330 playgrounds. Seven are classed as regional playgrounds, 35 major playgrounds and the remaining are local playgrounds.

Plants in Play Spaces

Tess Michaels, Tessa Rose Playspace & Landscape Design

Plants have had a bad reputation in early childhood settings which has often led to their absence from children's play environments. This paper aims to look at the types of plant materials that have shown to be effective in children's playspaces, the benefits of using plant materials for scented and sensory exploration and other varied uses plants offer in the outdoor playspace.

Plant materials that may pose a hazard to young children will also be discussed, as well as an examination of specific plants which have been overused with poor results. Finally, there will be a number of recommendations on how to effectively use plant materials in children's playspaces.

Speaker profile: Tess holds a Diploma in Horticulture (Landscape Design) from Ryde TAFE NSW and is a member of the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers and Managers (AILDM) and the Australian Institute of Horticulture (AIH). She also possesses a Diploma in Teaching (Early Childhood) and has been involved as an educator for over 15 years in a number of capacities including teacher, director, university advisor, manager and training co-ordinator. She is currently a natural playspace designer with Tessa Rose Playspace and Landscape Design.

Workshop Seven

Undercroft

Play, density and community safety for children ages 6-12:
reconciling these aspects in residential neighbourhoods

Dr Wendy Sarkissian

Planner and author Wendy Sarkissian will lead a hands-on workshop in which you will first identify the issues related to Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and children's play in medium-density and higher density residential neighbourhoods.

She will then offer some site-planning and design guidelines based on research and experience.

Finally, the workshop will strengthen participants' capacities to engage effectively with residents, regulatory authorities, designers, landscape architects, CPTED practitioners, police and planners so that the "Kidscape" of residential neighbourhoods is not reduced to a flat, featureless landscape capable of adult "surveillance" from a distance.

Speaker profile: Wendy is an award-winning author of six books and passionate about the future of work, housing, communities and community engagement and is committed to finding spirited ways to nurture and support an engaged citizenry. She built a career as a social planning consultant when there was no such discipline and pioneered innovative planning and development approaches in an astonishing variety of contexts. She has worked with senior managers and advisors to government and private enterprises in the urban, community, housing and development sectors.

Focus on Early Childhood

Multi-Purpose Room

Exploring Outdoor Spaces in FDC

Laurinda Jones, Bright Futures Family Day Care Scheme

In this presentation the audience will be introduced to, and have glimpses into the lives of three Family Day Care Providers who have, or are in the process of creating inspiring outdoor play and learning spaces for children. **Tammy** has a Montessori Diploma and is currently working on a long-term project to transform part of her garden into a natural sensory garden; **Lisa** is creating a sustainable garden and won in the small business category at the City of Cockburn's "A better Tomorrow Sustainability Awards"; and **Kathy**, with her husband Dave, has transformed their small block into a magical play space.

Conference delegates will also benefit from the expertise of a garden design consultant, Kate Biondo of Gecko Blue Designs and through a [post-conference email forum](#) delegates can continue to learn from these inspiring women and have an opportunity to raise other issues.

Speaker profile: Laurinda is a Carer Support Officer with Bright Futures FDC Scheme, sponsored by the Town of Kwinana, the largest Scheme in WA. She holds a Bachelor of Teaching degree and has worked in child care, outside school hours care and Kindergarten in Melbourne. Bright Futures, together with the Town of Kwinana, believe in investment in the early years on the premise that all children and young people are of vital importance to the health of their community; and work hard to fulfil their vision statement: "A Bright Future For Every Child".

Back to Nature for Early Childhood Centres

Jennine Primmer, Illawarra Children's Services

Increasing regulatory and compliance requirements over the years have seen early childhood professionals struggle to provide environments for children that are both safe and educationally sound. Safety surfacing and 'drag out' plastic climbing equipment have become commonplace as "the norm", with children offered little challenge, risk or opportunity for creative play.

ICS, heeding research from UNICEF on child friendly cities and the work of Sue Elliott (RMIT) and Dr Karen Malone (UOW), embarked on a journey to transform their outdoor environments into natural playspaces. Outdoor learning environments have been transformed into places of exploration and wonder by incorporating trees, shrubs, dry and wet creek beds and boulders.

Topics will include, how we started, why we are committed to the change, how we achieved our intended outcomes, the challenges that we faced along the way (our staff and parents reticence to embrace 'the vision', for example) and observations by three of our early childhood directors on how the children's play and learning has developed and altered as a consequence of the changes made.

Speaker profiles: Jennine studied early childhood education and arts education and holds a Masters degree in visual arts from UNSW. Returning to the childhood education sector in 2001 after working in arts education, her focus is on the importance of creativity in learning. She has worked for Illawarra Children's Services since 2006. This not-for-profit, community-owned organisation operates preschools and child care, outside school hours care, and a range of inclusion support programs.

Spaces & Places in NZ Early Childhood Settings

Cheryl Greenfield, Manukau Institute of Technology

A presentation of research undertaken with New Zealand early childhood centres in relation to what spaces/places are perceived as optimal to have in early childhood settings. Research data was gathered through photographs of the space and/or place and responses to a questionnaire completed by teachers. Some of the questions asked were: Why do you see this as an optimal space/place? Why do you consider this aspect of the outdoor environment to be so valuable in terms of children's holistic development? What is it that you think the children like about it? What do you think contributes to this space/place being so appealing, inviting and/or well used?

Speaker profile: Cheryl is widely published and her booklet *Outside is where we need to be: A guide for providing optimal outdoor environments*, published with the support of the Early Childhood Outdoor Reference Group (which she coordinates), is proving to be highly useful for early childhood teachers and centre management groups. The reference group advocates for children's right to freely access optimal early childhood outdoor environments through symposiums and publications. This group consists of landscape designers, researchers, playground manufacturers, recreation planners, centre owners and movement specialists.

DAY TWO – SESSION FOUR

Summation Panel Discussion

Auditorium

Can a Playground be Too Safe?

Panel Members –

- Helle Nebelong
- Wendy Sarkissian
- Bernard Kaiser
- Dr David Eager
- Francis Burke
- Wendy Seymour

Delegates will be encouraged to join the debate and express their views in relation to balancing safety considerations with children's learning and development needs and most importantly – their need for fun and play.

Conference Dinner	Duxton Hotel
<p>In celebration of two days of thought-provoking presentations and stimulating discussion, we have a sumptuous 3 course banquet at the renowned Duxton Hotel.</p> <p>Pre-dinner drinks from 7pm in the downstairs lobby and dinner from 7.30pm.</p>	

OUR CONFERENCE SPONSORS & THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Kidsafe WA would like to acknowledge the wonderful individuals and organisations that have provided assistance in bringing this exciting event to life.

Our Sponsors

- Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of Health
- Department for Communities
- Parks & Leisure Australia, WA
- Australian International Institute of Workplace Training
- Earthcare
- Playground Solutions
- A-Play
- Sifting Sands

Our Conference Planning Committee

A sincere thank you for the generous, energetic and enthusiastic assistance and guidance of our conference planning committee, comprising representatives from –

- Kidsafe WA
- Earthcare
- City of Swan
- Playground Solutions
- Office of Youth & Children & Family Services Division
at the Department for Communities

The Nature of Play

Australian Government Department of
Education, Employment and Workplace Relations



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