



### **Item 7.1 Petition Response – Request for Sunshades for Port Melbourne Playgrounds**

A Petition was received, containing 159 signatures.

#### **The Petition states the following: -**

*Our community is asking Port Phillip Council to audit and address the lack of shade at some playgrounds and parks around Port Melbourne, especially the "tram park" - the playground across from the skate park under the Graham Street Bridge.*

*The lack of shade at this park is a health and safety issue and makes this wonderful playground unusable for most of the hot, sunny summer months. The metal equipment gets hot enough to burn the kids playing on it. In addition, with the UV levels in Australia, playing at this playground for any length of time without shade poses an unnecessary skin safety risk.*

*We are petitioning for the council to add sunshades to the "tram park" and to also do a call-out to residents of Port Melbourne to audit what other playgrounds our community feels are lacking in shade during the summer months.*

#### **OFFICER COMMENT**

##### **Centenary Reserve**

Centenary Reserve is a small local public space located on Centenary Drive in Port Melbourne and has a play space, table tennis table, community garden beds and grassed areas. Centenary Reserve was upgraded in September 2016. As part of the upgrade seven existing trees that were identified as in poor health were removed, and over 20 new trees were replanted. Unfortunately, these trees have not matured enough, and it is estimated it will be between 10 - 15 years until these trees provide the projected full shade for the play space.

##### **Council's policy on shade**

Council's *Play Space Strategy* sets the vision, policy context and framework for the management of existing, and delivery of new, play spaces in the City of Port Phillip. The *Play Space Strategy* includes the following considerations for providing shade in Council's play spaces, including:

- Undertake shade tree planting in and around play spaces; where practical, shade should be provided by trees
- Consider planting short lived, quick growing trees to provide shade in the short term whilst slower growing trees are maturing
- Where shade cannot be effectively provided by trees due to site conditions (e.g. difficulty in establishing trees in exposed foreshore locations, or space constraints), the provision of shade from built structures may be considered
- Installation of natural shade structures using creepers and vines, as well as shade sails, can be considered where shade from trees is not an option.



While shade structures have the benefit of providing immediate shade, Council's *Play Space Strategy* notes that the use of shade sails is less desirable for the following reasons:

- Built structures are visually less sympathetic in public open spaces
- Built structures are relatively expensive to install compared to trees, and the installation of shade sails may mean less funding for investment in other play space infrastructure
- Built structures can attract vandalism and require regular maintenance
- Built shade structures do not provide season specific shading (e.g. more shade in summer and less in winter) that can be achieved using deciduous trees
- Built shade structures do not normally provide play potential, where-as trees can provide a range of play opportunities.

### **Considerations for increasing shade in Centenary Reserve**

In determining the most suitable option for increasing the provision of shade in Centenary Reserve, Council must consider:

- Funding and impacts on Council's budget
  - The estimated total project cost for installing a shade sail may range between \$50,000 - \$150,000
  - Shade sail structures have an estimated asset life of between 10 – 15 years
  - The Department of Health and Human Services has a Shade Grants Program. The next round of funding is due to open in mid-2021, and Council officers could apply for funding for a shade sail for Centenary Reserve. The Shade Grants Program also provides funding for the planting of trees.
- Maintenance obligations
  - The annual maintenance costs for a shade sail would be approximately \$1,500
  - Shade sail structures require regular inspections, a structural assessment which is undertaken as part of Council's annual Playground Safety Audit and cleaning as required.
- Ongoing policy for the installation of shade sails
  - Council has existing shade sails in play spaces in Catani Gardens, St Kilda (State public open space), Plum Garland Memorial Playground, Albert Park (regional public open space) and Edwards Park, Port Melbourne (neighbourhood public open space)
  - Catani Gardens and Plum Garland are both regional play spaces and the location of these play spaces on the foreshore makes it difficult to establish shade trees



- Centenary Reserve is a small local public open space and does not meet the current guidelines to install a shade sail
- Garden City Reserve and RF Julier Reserve in Port Melbourne have play spaces which are well shaded by established shade trees.
- Environmental and amenity considerations
  - Using trees for shade contributes to Council's canopy cover targets and to reducing the urban heat island effect
  - Further assessment would be required into whether shade sail structures would impact on the existing vegetation and trees in Centenary Reserve
  - Shade sail structures do not provide season specific shading that can be achieved using trees
  - The play space in Centenary Reserve is located adjacent to existing residential dwellings and the visual amenity impacts from shade structures or additional trees will require further assessment by Council officers.
- Consultation with residents adjacent to Centenary Reserve
  - Consultation will need to be undertaken with the community members living directly adjacent to Centenary Reserve prior to Council commencing any works in the Reserve.
- Council's obligations for providing shade
  - While there are no legislative requirements guiding the provision of shade in play spaces and public spaces, the Cancer Council Victoria have produced Shade Guidelines which can be used by local governments
  - The Shade Guidelines support Council's position as outlined in the *Play Space Strategy* that vegetation is one of the most effective ways of providing shade, and can cool an area by reducing the air temperature in summer by up to 30%.

## Options

There are three options available to Council to respond to this petition:

1. Increase the planting of shade trees; or
2. Install a shade sail structure.
3. Do nothing.

The first option, to increase the planting of shade trees, is Council officers' recommended response to this petition. If Council wishes to increase shade in the Centenary Reserve play space, it is recommended Council continues to follow the current recommendations in the *Play Space Strategy*, which recommends that trees are used to shade play spaces due to the natural benefits, maintenance costs and the expense of installing shade sails.

The second option is for Council to install a shade sail in the Centenary Reserve play space. If Council wishes to consider this option, the direct cost to Council would be between \$50,000 to \$150,000 for installation, \$1,500 for annual maintenance and the useful asset life

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would be between 10 - 15 years. Funding could be applied for from the Department of Health and Human Services' Shade Grants Program or allocated through the Council budget process.

## **OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Thanks, the community for the Petition and acknowledges their concerns about the provision of shade in Council's public open spaces and play spaces.
2. Notes that the existing trees in Centenary Reserve have not matured enough and it will be between 10 - 15 years until these trees provide projected full shade for the play space.
3. Notes that Officers have considered Council's policy on providing shade in public open spaces and play spaces.
4. Notes that Council's policy, as outlined in the *Play Space Strategy*, is that shade should be provided by trees, unless it cannot be effectively provided due to site conditions.
5. Resolves to increase the planting of shade trees in the Centenary Reserve play space due to the environmental benefits, maintenance costs and the expense of installing shade sails.

**TRIM FILE NO:** F21/7

**ATTACHMENTS** Nil