



# Playful Access

Amanda Sutherland introduces Brisbane City Council's newest playground

**B**risbane City Council's newest playground in the heart of the Brisbane CBD has officially opened and is quickly proving that accessible and inclusive playgrounds are a sound investment.

Nestled among the historic Moreton Bay figs, the Brisbane City Botanic Gardens playground and facilities have undergone a \$2 million renovation and transformation, making the recreational space one of Brisbane's foremost all-abilities playgrounds.

Officially launched in late June 2014, the playground redesign was led by Brisbane City Council's City Design team and leading all-abilities playground designers, Playscape Creations and delivers upon the Council's 'Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017'.

The Brisbane Lord Mayor Graham Quirk said the Council's objective to provide recreational spaces for children of all-abilities, regardless of physical ability, background or circumstance, is a sound investment for Australia's largest council.

Lord Mayor Quirk explained "it's about universal access and inclusion – so that everyone can easily use public parks and facilities, participate in Council programs and receive full benefits from our facilities."

Drawing on its heritage site for inspiration, the upgraded Botanic Gardens playground blends in to its botanic landscape, creating a family heart to the Garden's precinct. The recreational space is proving popular with locals and tourists alike for picnics, parties or just a day out walking and exploring the Gardens.

Lord Mayor Quirk added "the old playground in the popular

City gardens served the community well for the past 20 years, but I'm excited to see it transformed to meet the needs of our progressive and accessible city."

In addition to the new playground, the Brisbane City Botanic Gardens upgrade included new park furniture, drinking fountains, wider paving for wheel chair access and rubber soffit matting installed to make the space safe.

Playground designers Playscape Creations worked closely with the Council's City Design team to ensure the upgrade investment not only met the criteria of an accessible playground but exemplified how successful all-abilities spaces promote engagement.

The heritage green playground centerpiece provides double width wheel chair and pram access, allowing children of all ages and abilities the opportunity to play and engage with





peers and family. The main access ramp features sensory play panels, encouraging motor and sensory skill development for children of all abilities.

Playscape Creations Chief Executive Marcel Veraart states “engaging sensory play is the cornerstone of a good all-abilities playground, and the City Botanic Gardens playground is one of the best examples of this.

“The double width ramp provides versatility and interaction. It allows parents with prams to walk into the playground and interact with their toddler, and for children in wheel chairs to get among the fun. I have also seen many grandparents with limited mobility walk up and into the space with their grandchildren.”

Surrounding the playground’s centerpiece are an array of popular all-abilities play equipment such as family rockers and a wheel chair accessible carousel and sand pit.

The most popular item, however, is undoubtedly the roller slide within the centerpiece playground structure that draws lines of children of all ages eagerly waiting their turn during the park’s busiest times.

Veraart concluded “in all of our playground designs, we aim to engage each of the seven senses to give children an exciting and stimulating experience and to see children running to have another turn and then another on the roller slide shows that this playground has achieved our aim.”

The largest local government in Australia, Brisbane City Council has delivered all-abilities playground upgrades to 32 parks across Brisbane since 2011, with at least one all-abilities playground in each of the city’s 26 wards.

***Amanda Sutherland is Marketing Manager with Playscape Creations.***

Playscape Creations are regarded as one of Australia’s leading sensory playground designers and are actively involved with a range of community initiatives to improve accessibility and inclusivity for all residents. Their manufacturing partner, Landscape Structures, are world leaders in playground design, and their inclusive playground innovations support and promote all-abilities play for families.

