

# *Camden Residents' Action Group*

*Incorporated*

*Camden – Still a Country Town*

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Attention: Elsie Yang, Recreation Planner Project Officer

9 January 2025

Dear General Manager,

**RE: ONSLOW PARK - PLAYSPACE RENEWAL**

Council Reference: SC13834

Thank you for contacting our group for input on the above project. We fully support the description and aim of the project as stated in your letter December 2024: *Onslow Park is situated in a strategically important location within Camden, and that proposed enhancements aim to improve the play experience and to align with the surrounding heritage and historical environmental character of the park.*

We note that the project page on Your Voice sets out what is not covered in the project and lists what it does involve as choice of play equipment and landscaping.

## **Choice of play equipment**

We understand that Australian Standards (in particular AS 4685 and AS 4422) apply to playground equipment and surfacing. Whilst safety is a first consideration, it would be counterproductive and does not need be at the expense of compatibility with the character of the heritage precinct.

New equipment and surrounding surfaces can be chosen to be sympathetic, with traditional shapes and colours. Non-traditional space-age designs with unnatural and over-bright or reflective coloured surfacing, intended to be stand-alone features in their own right, are not appropriate and would detract from old country character of the area. Whilst common choices of colours for playground equipment include bright modern colours such as hot pink and neon yellow, in a heritage area such colours detract

from its sense of place. Although Council's *Material and Colour Guide*<sup>1</sup> does not refer to playgrounds specifically, we feel it would be an excellent reference in designing the playspace.

Research indicates that inclusion of at least some natural elements and materials in the playspace is beneficial to children<sup>2</sup>.



Photo source: Kidsafe NSW<sup>3</sup>

The existing playspace already contains natural elements such as wooden tables and benches, lawn, large trees and other vegetation including substantial hedging.



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<sup>1</sup> Camden Council 2023 *Camden Material and Colour Guide* Available at <https://www.camden.nsw.gov.au/assets/Uploads/Camden-Council-Material-and-Colour-Guide-2023-17.06.23-Final-Version.PDF>

<sup>2</sup> Kidsafe NSW 2021 *Natural Playspaces* Available at <https://www.kidsafensw.org/imagesDB/documents/NaturalPlayspaces2021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Kidsafe NSW ibid

We suggest:

- rejuvenation of the existing lawn in a way that allows it
  - to grow well despite the large trees,
  - to connect seamlessly to safe and naturally coloured surfacing around equipment;
- addition of enhancing and interesting natural elements such as sandstone, boulders, tree logs and stumps;
- incorporation of extra suitable plantings around added natural elements to soften them and add interest.

## Landscaping

No additional fencing is proposed for this project.

The dense hedging along the northern and western edges is an attractive green border that helps create a welcoming play space oasis. The large trees provide significant shade and along with other plantings add interest and enhance its naturalness.



The tall trees at the interface with Cawdor Road and its footpath do screen the space to an extent. However, as shown in the photos above, the fencing installed along this southern edge, which is in keeping with the character of Onslow Park, does not provide full visual and acoustic screening. Also, whilst it is important for safety reasons that parents be able to see and supervise children within the playspace, we feel that it is not entirely desirable for children to be so close to and visible from passing vehicles and pedestrians.

As well as the above suggested additional natural play elements and plantings around them, we suggest:

- a bordering bed adjoining the fence along the southern interface;
- additional plantings along the southern interface to more effectively screen the playspace, but that do not compete with the existing trees;
- consideration of other additional plantings including jacarandas;
- strategically placed sturdy traditional wooden tables and benches of traditional design;
- plantings to create leafy seating areas;
- consideration of features that enhance the space and also provide shade such as a small wisteria walk and/or vine covered pergola with seating and views into the space to watch children;
- consideration of vine-covered archway.



Thank you for taking into account our thoughts and suggestions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenda Davis".

Glenda Davis

President