

yass valley council

the country the people



2017

Park & Playground Strategy

This Strategy guides the future development and maintenance of parks and playgrounds within the Yass Valley.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Yass Valley Council parks and playgrounds are some of the more essential recreational resources within the Local Government Area (LGA). Parks and playgrounds are more than places for children to play. They provide gathering areas for parents and carers, encouraging community interaction and providing children with opportunities for social and physical development.

Council aims to provide parks and playgrounds that are challenging, safe and fun for children of all ages. Currently, Yass Valley Council has 16 major parks and playgrounds, which are well distributed throughout the municipal area providing a range of varying play experiences. Other parkland and reserves exist throughout the LGA area, however are used for less organised leisure activities and generally contain no play equipment.

This strategy discusses not only play equipment, but also additional facilities that are an integral part of high quality play environments. Seats, picnic tables, bubblers, landscaping, surfacing material and edging not only make a playground more functional, but also make it an attractive and enjoyable place to be for parents and carers.

It is intended that this document is a revision of the Yass Valley Council's Playground Strategy 2014. Ideally this strategy should be revised after 5 years.

2. BACKGROUND

Since 2003 Yass Valley Council has been implementing planned upgrades to existing park and playground facilities including the installation of five additional playgrounds. This work has ensured that playgrounds in the Yass Valley LGA meet current safety standards.

For the purpose of this plan, the term playground encompasses play equipment and features directly related to the playground, including soft fall material. Playgrounds are designed primarily to cater for children between the ages of two and twelve. They are valuable resources within the Yass LGA, and have an important function in the social and physical development of children, along with implications for community welfare. Alternative options and facilities may also be made available within parks for children of an older age or to encourage families and communities to come together.

The usage a park and playground receives is primarily associated with its location and the standard of play equipment available at the site. It is not financially possible to provide extensive play equipment at all sites, and as a result this strategy identifies a hierarchy of parks which aims to provide varying standards of parks dependent on likely usage at each site. People are more likely to travel greater distances to an open space area that offers a wide range of activities and experiences, and location of such facilities in central, easily accessible locations, promotes the use of these facilities by both residents and visitors to the area.

It is important to ensure that Council's park and playgrounds are well managed and maintained in a manner that meets the needs and expectations of both residents and visitors to Yass Valley. Council has committed to the ongoing maintenance, enhancement and redevelopment of playgrounds within the Yass Valley, and this is assisted by the adoption of a hierarchy.

3. OBJECTIVES

The following are Council's objectives in the provision of parks and playgrounds:

- To provide a wide range of play opportunities within an accessible distance from urban residences;
- To meet the needs of children through all stages of physical development;
- To provide opportunities for both able and disabled children;
- To provide an opportunity and atmosphere conducive to families and groups being able to come together and socialise; and
- To ensure that equipment complies with current safety standards and is appropriately maintained at all times.

4. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This Strategy considers a long term policy and direction for:

- (i) Play equipment and associated facilities;
- (ii) The provision of adequate facilities for parents and carers supervising play activities;
- (iii) The aesthetic appearance of play equipment and the park as a whole; and
- (iv) Acknowledging and providing play experiences for persons with disabilities.

The strategy covers playground equipment and other activities, as well as features directly related to the provision of these activities including soft fall material, seats and tables, bubblers, fencing, lighting, pathways and landscaping.

4.1 Play Equipment

Since 2003 Yass Valley Council has made significant progress in the upgrading of old playgrounds and the installation of new facilities that meet current safety standards. Open spaces in Yass and the LGA are of high value to the community and attract much attention.

Council has a good reputation for the standard of its recreation facilities and to maintain this reputation, it is important to continue to plan for the replacement of aging playgrounds and address the changing needs of children, and to plan for new open space and play facilities to address future growth.

4.2 Associated Features

In association with the ongoing provision of playgrounds and other equipment across the LGA, it is recognised that there is a need to also install and maintain other facilities including amenities, seating, tables, bubblers, lighting, pathways, toilets and landscaping in open spaces areas.

Seating and Shelter: Facilities need to be made available to encourage the enjoyment of our park space by a large number of users. Seating plays an important part in these as locations to rest and enjoy the park and for adults supervising children using play equipment. Shelter provides important protection and respite from the sun or adverse weather conditions. Both these items are the highest priority for being in the vicinity of playgrounds. Seating, including shelter and picnic tables, need to be installed at playgrounds where facilities do not currently exist. The predominant type of seating (and table) facilities used are high quality anodised aluminium, which is both long lasting and vandal resistant. Any new table installations should take into consideration wheelchair accessibility.

Soft fall: Playground surfacing material has been installed in all Yass Valley Council playgrounds in accordance with Australian Standards. The standards relate to impact attenuation and fall zones, and require that soft fall is placed underneath and around all play equipment from which a child may fall, reducing impact. The preference is for playground bark, which provides a soft landing and is economical to install and maintain. However, alternatives may be used in higher wearing areas or in any other scenario deemed suitable.

Fencing: Playgrounds in the Yass Valley LGA are generally not fenced off as they are considered part of the whole park space. Exceptions are where specific hazards have been identified which can be addressed by the installation of fencing.

There are currently three parks in the LGA that have fencing around or near the play equipment. Riverbank Park has a three sided fence to reduce immediate access to the river from the playground. Bowning Hall playground is fenced and Henry Lawson Park has a post and rail fence around the outside of the park space. Fencing of additional parks is on a case by case basis with due consideration of the hazards that exist. In main centres in the local government area fencing of one playground to provide for ease of supervision may be considered.

Fencing in the immediate vicinity of a playground must be in good condition and be constructed of materials that are appropriate for use with children. Fences near playgrounds must meet the playground standards and be included in the operational inspection.

Toilets: Toilets are designed for higher category parks. Toilet amenities have a high level of maintenance and are only provided to category 1 parks or village recreational sports grounds. Where toilets exist they will be serviced to an acceptable standard. Also they will be accessible to roadways, pathway and not obscured by any vegetation.

Landscaping: Landscaping features are integral parts of the overall design concept of a park. Landscaping can add another dimension to the park and playground by creating a visual appeal with specific effects including appealing fragrances, colours, textures and seasonal variations. Focus on parks within the LGA should be on drought tolerant plants that require only low maintenance. Native versus exotic plants shall depend upon the surrounding environment and community preferences. Where volunteer groups assist with landscape maintenance, they shall be consulted as part of any plans to undertake new landscaping works.

Bubblers: Category 1 parks, such as Riverbank Park and Coronation Park, have installed bubblers. Banjo Paterson Park also has a bubbler unit due to the close proximity to the CBD and childcare facility. Other sites are generally not considered for bubblers due to the lower level of usage and higher likelihood of vandalism.

Lighting: Council will aim to provide lighting for Category 1 playgrounds. Other sites will be assessed depending on potential risk and lighting considered on a needs basis.

Pathways: Pathways provide linkage within parks and openspace areas. They are mostly provided within high usage park areas. Pathways are required within all Category 1 park areas as they have toilets, car parking, accessibility for wheelchairs, fitness tracks, or other buildings i.e. Visitor Information Centre. Accessibility should be considered a part of routine auditing of park and playground areas.

4.3 All Abilities Play Equipment

In 2015 Council in partnership with community groups installed a Liberty Swing. A Liberty Swing is a purpose built swing for wheel chair access and provides opportunities for less able children to experience recreation opportunities, which are limited in regional areas.

In 2016 Council replaced the play equipment at Banjo Paterson Park to incorporate an all abilities playground. This playground provides wheel chair access via ramps to

both levels of play equipment, providing an opportunity for less able children to engage in recreational play with other children.

Council would like to continue to provide inclusive play experiences within its parks and playgrounds. It is recognised that this may not always be achievable due to funding constraints, however Council will strive to identify opportunities for more inclusive play equipment and attempt to source funding for its provision.



Image 1: Liberty Swing



Image 2: Banjo Paterson Park

4.4 Siting of Playgrounds and Equipment

The siting of playgrounds and other equipment within parks is an issue to be considered when existing facilities are upgraded. Usually Council playground areas are custom designed to suit the site. Refurbishment is an opportunity to carry out a thorough site evaluation to ensure that the playground or equipment is positioned correctly within the park. Some issues to be considered are:

- (i) Ease of access for all users from surrounding entrance points;
- (ii) Location in relation to public amenities;
- (iii) Views to all areas of the park and natural surveillance from surrounding areas; and
- (iv) Suitable distance from potential hazards such as roads or waterways, where possible
- (v) Accessibility of shade.

4.5 Vandalism

Whilst Council does not have a significant vandalism issue, parks are periodically the subject of vandalism and antisocial behaviour. There are a number of key strategies that can be used to assist in reducing vandalism in community parks and playgrounds including the following:

- (i) Encouraging community awareness and reporting of vandalism;
- (ii) Installation of playgrounds and other equipment in locations which are visible and achieve natural surveillance from surrounding properties or other adjoining areas;
- (iii) Actively seek to encourage community ownership of the playgrounds and facilities;
- (iv) Install lighting in locations prone to vandalism;
- (v) Prompt removal of graffiti; and
- (vi) Design and materials.

4.6 Masterplans for Villages

Master planning exercises have or will be undertaken for villages in the Yass Valley. Within these masterplans provisions for appropriate village passive open space need to be made.

In 2018 a master planning process will commence for Murrumbateman to identify land use. It is envisaged that a Category 1 Park and Playground (refer to part 5.1 for definition) will be identified within Murrumbateman, either within the existing village or in new development areas. The site should incorporate multi-use play equipment, fitness equipment, suitable amenities and open space.

This process should also consider the timing such a facility within Murrumbateman will be required based on population growth. Future updating of this strategy can occur to reflect the outcomes of the master planning process.

4.7 Community Consultation

Council will seek community comment & consult when developing or replacing playground or park equipment. This will ensure that the current needs for users are identified. Consultation may be through community associations, surrounding residents, schools or the wider community.

4.8 Inclusive Playground Experiences

Whilst the highest participation rates within parks and playgrounds are in the 0-12 years old range, it is increasingly acknowledged that parks and playgrounds are areas where community members meet and socialise. They are hubs to engage in not only play experiences for children but interactions for supervising parents, adults & carers. They are also can accommodate and engage older children and provide for opportunity to improve health and wellbeing.

Therefore opportunities should be looked at any time a playground is upgraded to incorporate associated activities which can engage all ages. Activities can comprise some of the following elements:

- Board games i.e. permanent large chess board which large chess pieces
- Flying foxes
- Concrete ping pong table
- Handball court, incorporating netball/basketball ring
- Climbing structures
- Skating/BMX facility
- Large open spaces dedicated to formalise games
- Party areas
- Circular seating enclaves for discussions
- Static or active fitness equipment

Mechanisms to enable consultation need to be considered to ensure all users are appropriately consulted as part of park upgrade programs.

4.9 Playground Style and Themes

Where possible playgrounds and park equipment should be developed so they are sympathetic to the surrounding environment. There is interest in the community for both modern and traditionally styled equipment and facilities within parks and playgrounds. The style incorporated into any given park should give due consideration to the surrounding built and natural environment and community consultation in the area.

In addition playground equipment may also incorporate a theme. This can be any type of theme which relates directly to the playground equipment i.e. pirate or flying/space theme for equipment. It could be the environment itself and may comprise a native plants or fauna theme, or demonstrate low water usage, waste education or history. Murals might be used to tell a story of the site or the village/town area. The themes can realistically be anything which the community indicates may represent the space, be relatively maintenance free and are safe for all users groups. When considering such themes reference to Council's 'Public Art Policy' should be made.



Image 1: Themed Playground

4.10 Education & Sensory Elements

Play experiences can assist with cognitive & physical development. It is acknowledged that activities which are educational and sensory should be utilised where possible to engage children of all abilities.

Activities that teach children can be either incorporated into the equipment or the surrounding park environment. Such activities may either be undertaken individually or in a team environment. These may include puzzles, interact non-static equipment, abacus frames, balancing beams etc.

Also items that are sensory should be implemented where possible. Sensory equipment appeals to multiple senses, such as touch, sight and hearing. There are many different ways to include sensory play in playground:

- Sight can be engaged with fun and colourful playground equipment in different shapes.

- Hearing can be engaged with playground musical instruments. Musical playground equipment, such as the Bongo Panel, will let children make noise. A Talk Tube lets children make noise and talk to friends far away on the playground developing listening and social skills.
- Touch can be engaged by utilising equipment with texture, which can help children engage the world through touch. Panels with grooves or even braille panels that can engage sight impaired users may be suitable.

4.11 Village Recreation Grounds

Village recreation grounds offer an array of recreation activities which include:

- Oval for active recreation
- Community buildings which may include halls, sheds or other building infrastructure
- Toilets
- BBQ's
- Playgrounds
- Some ground may have tennis courts, cricket nets or bike paths

As these facilities are multifaceted they require their own strategic plans, which also make reference of the Park & Playground Strategy. Opportunities exist at these sites to include other play/recreation elements as they are large, usually being over 2 hectares in size. Some of these sites should include diverse recreational activities to accommodate the needs of the local or wider community as they are local or regional hubs. These activities may include:

- Fitness equipment
- Skating, BMX or other 'extreme' sports equipment
- Netball courts
- Tennis practice wall
- Combination sports posts for rugby, soccer etc.

5. PARK CATEGORIES

5.1 Park Hierarchy

The need to provide and maintain play equipment means that careful planning and location of facilities is required. Council will consider whole of life costs in planning for new playgrounds and park equipment to ensure that any facilities are financially sustainable in the longer term.

The following table provides the park and playground hierarchy and typical facilities that will be provided for each category of park. The information on typical equipment and facilities to be provided in the various categories of park and playground is based on data obtained from community survey to determine priorities of residents. Within lower category playgrounds the community has indicated a preference for slides, climbing and swings.

Park Category	Description	Typical Playground Standard	Typical Park Equipment	Locations
Category 1	Centralised park with diverse major play equipment (population >5000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large playground unit Multiple pieces of equipment to cater for diverse age ranges Softfall attenuation area to 250sqm Wheelchair accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table & seating Signage Lighting Formalised gardens Toilets Formalised pathways Tree plantings Bins Irrigation Bubbler BBQ Facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coronation Park, Yass Riverbank Park, Yass
Category 2	Neighbourhood park with varied equipment (population 1500 – 5000 and Village population >100).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small playground unit Set of swings Singular piece of equipment i.e. spring rocker Softfall attenuation area to 150sqm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table & seating Bin Lighting where applicable Signage Tree planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Henry Lawson Park, Yass Banjo Paterson Park, Yass John O'Brien Park, Yass Sutton Rec Ground Gundaroo Rec Ground Binalong Rec Ground Bowling Hall Hercules Street, Murrumbateman Hatton Park, Yass New Development areas at Morton Ave (Yass), Fairley Estate (Murrumbateman) and Hamilton Rise (Yass)
Category 3	Local park with a set of swings and spring rocker or equivalent (population <1500).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set of Swings Singular piece of equipment i.e. spring rocker Softfall attenuation area to 100sqm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seating Signage Tree planting Bin where applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jones Park, Murrumbateman Bookham Rec Ground Boree Log Park, Yass Townsend Place, Yass

Table 1 – Park Hierarchy

5.2 Park Locations

The approximate location and the relevant hierarchy category of each park is shown in Figures 1 to 8 below:

Figure 1 – North Yass

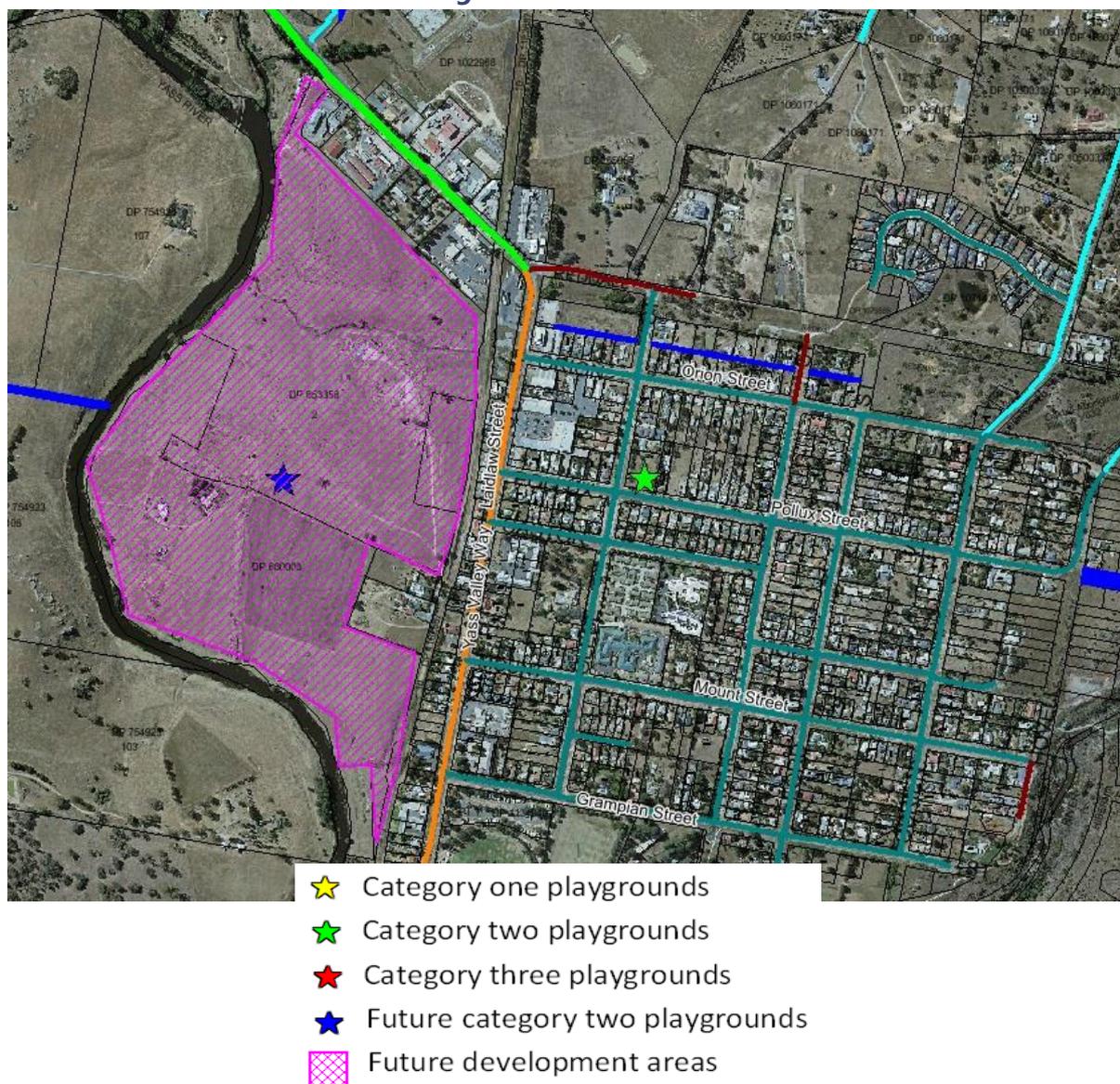
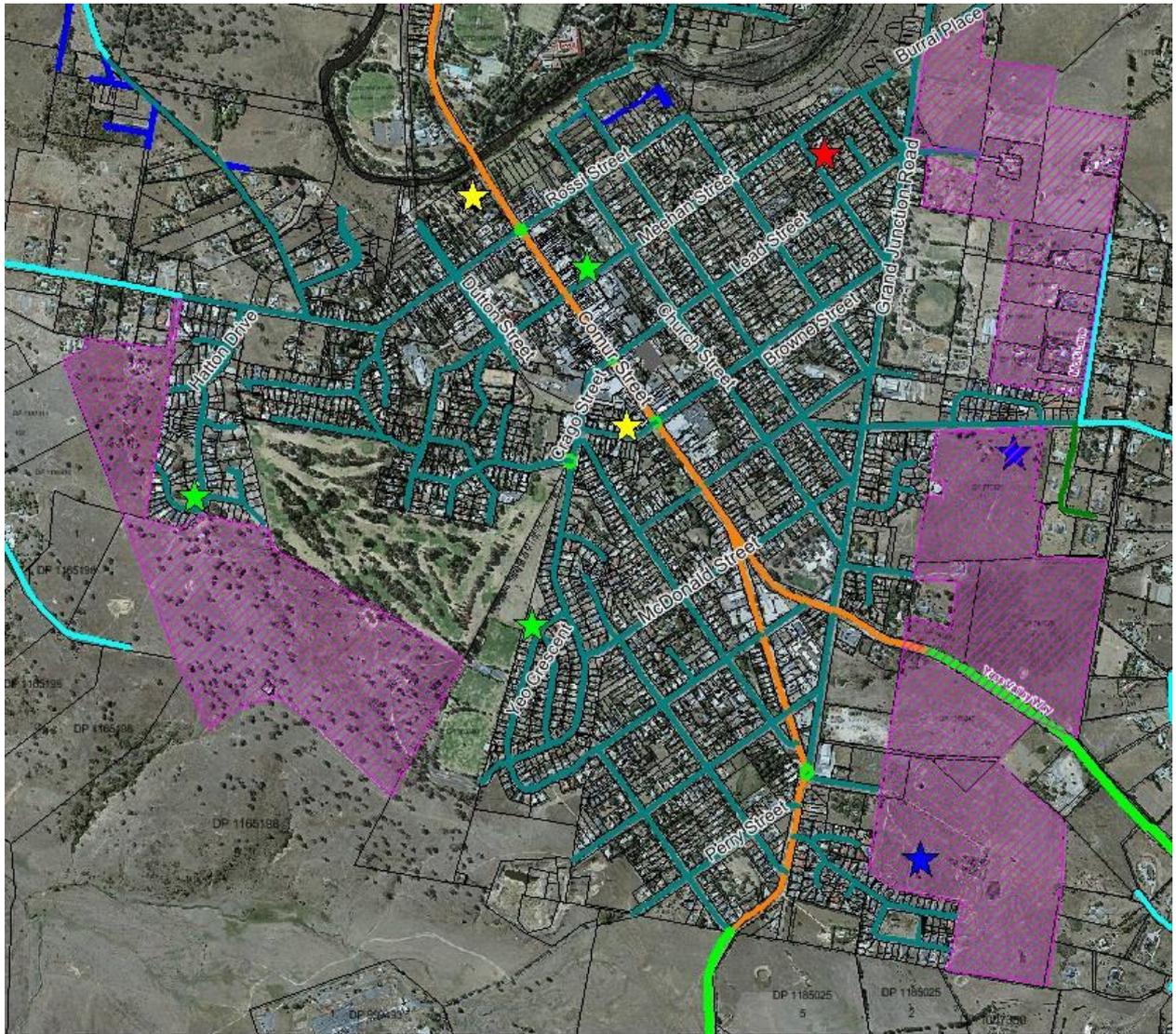


Figure 2 – South Yass



- ★ Category one playgrounds
- ★ Category two playgrounds
- ★ Category three playgrounds
- ★ Future category two playgrounds
- ▨ Future development areas

Figure 3 – Murrumbateman



-  Category two playgrounds
-  Category three playgrounds
-  Future category two playgrounds
-  Future development areas

Figure 4 – Sutton



★ Category two playgrounds

Figure 5 – Bowing



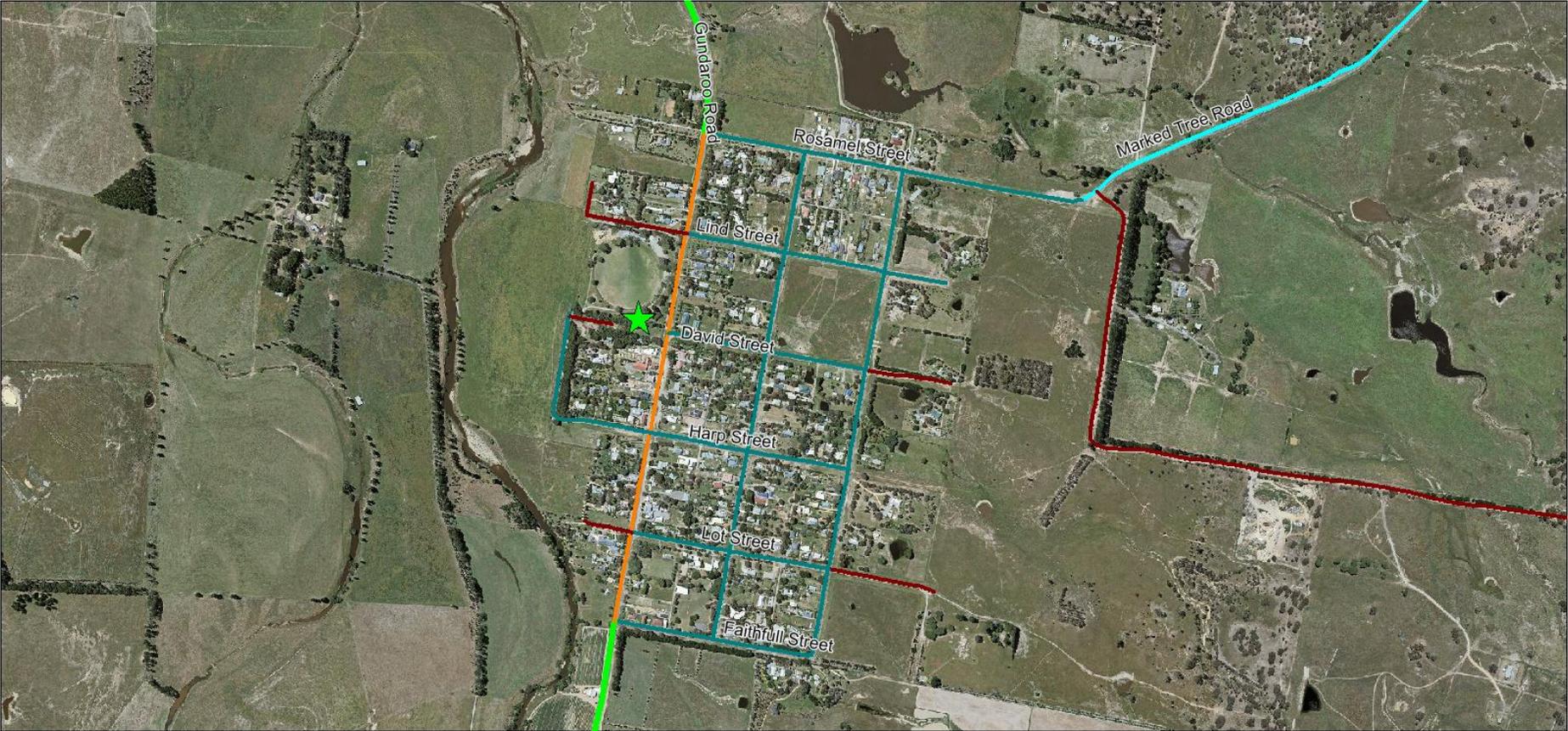
★ Category two playgrounds

Figure 6 – Binalong



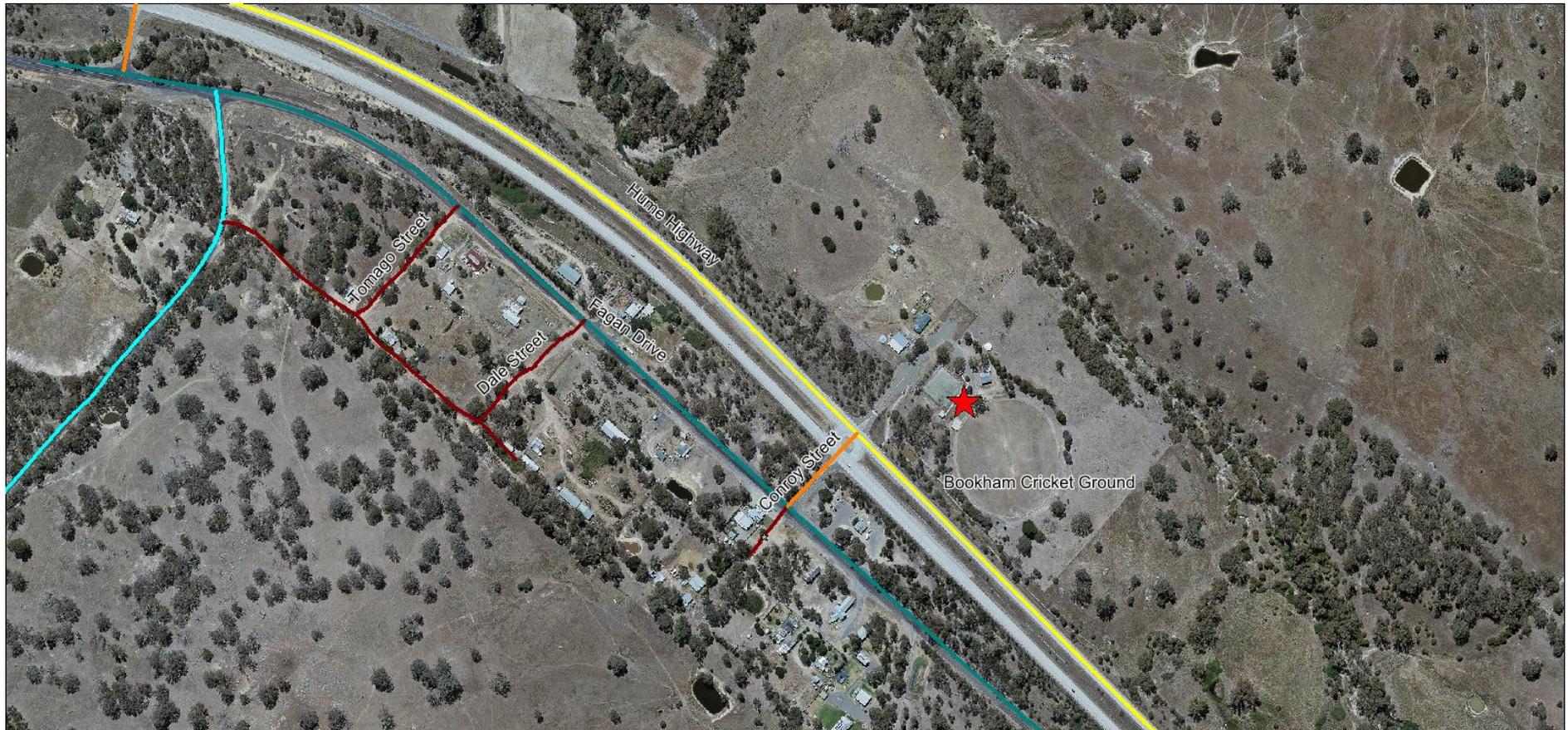
★ Category two playgrounds

Figure 7 – Gundaroo



★ Category two playgrounds

Figure 8 – Bookham



★ Category three playgrounds

6. INSPECTIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Under the Australian Standards (AS/NZS4486) for playgrounds and playground equipment it is a requirement for Council to document an inspection and maintenance program. There are four different types of inspection as detailed in the table below. For each of these inspections, the scope, complexity and frequency of the inspection vary. The frequency of each inspection is dependent on the type of park category. Council will ensure all playground inspections are undertaken by competent inspectors who are suitably trained and experienced.

Inspection Type	Frequency	Scope
Routine	Weekly Monthly	This level of inspection identifies general maintenance issues associated with normal wear and tear, cleanliness, vandalism, or other routine maintenance requirements.
Operational	Quarterly Biannually Annual	This inspection checks the operation, stability and wear of equipment.
Comprehensive	Biennial	This inspection checks the compliance of equipment with the safety standards, the overall safety of the equipment, foundations and surfaces. This inspection also assesses the compliance of any repairs, added or replaced components and any new playground installations.
Reactive	As required	Reactive inspections are conducted when issues are reported by the general public or Council staff.

Table 2 – Park Inspection Schedule

Audit of accessibility may also be considered in conjunction with the comprehensive inspection. This would consider factors such as;

- Pathway linking to park
- Paths within park
- Lighting
- Car parking
- Amenities

Maintenance of playgrounds and public safety is a high priority for Council. Inspections of parks and playgrounds will be undertaken in accordance with the identified inspection frequency and will be recorded into Council's electronic maintenance management system, "Reflect". Maintenance will be programmed based on the assessed risk of specific issues identified during an inspection and also recorded in the Reflect system.

7. PARK AND PLAYGROUND UPGRADE PROGRAM

The playground upgrade program is separated into two separate components as follows:

- (i) Existing playground facilities; and
- (ii) New playground facilities.

The priority for upgrading existing playground facilities is reassessed annually, and takes into consideration a number of factors including:

- The age of the playground;
- Inspection condition reports;
- The level of use; and
- Community interest in the facility.

New playground installations relate to new development areas and are required to be provided/funded by developers. The location and category of any playgrounds in new development areas will be determined based on the likely number of properties in any new development, and the proximity to existing playgrounds. Ideally Council aims to provide a playground within walking distance of each residential property where achievable.

Lifecycle asset management principals are utilised for park and playground equipment. This means that playgrounds that are installed are appropriately funded for maintenance and replacement over their 15 year lifespan. In some cases playgrounds that are in good serviceable condition after 15 years may be retained if no deterioration or safety concerns are recorded. Due to the significant lifecycle costs of park and playground equipment they can only be installed where specified. These include within a 1km radius of most residents within Yass and village areas

7.1 Existing Playground Facilities

The following table provides a list of current play equipment as at December 2016:

Park	Location	Category	Equipment Type	Year Installed
Coronation Park	Yass	1	Playspace modular unit and swings	2005
Riverbank Park	Yass	1	Forpark modular unit	2009
Banjo Patterson Park	Yass	2	Forpark modular unit and swing	2016
Henry Lawson Park	Yass	2	Moduplay Unit 2014 Spring Rocker and swings	2014
John O'Brien Park	Yass	2	Forpark swings, spin pole and rocker	2009
Caravan Park	Yass	2	Forpark modular unit	2004
Hatton Park	Yass	2	Forpark modular unit and swings	2016
Townsend Place Park	Yass	3	Forpark stand-alone slide, swings and rocker	2013

Boree Log Park	Yass	3	Spring Rockers Equipment Age unknown	2017
Hercules Street Playground	Murrumbateman	2	Forpark modular unit	2009
Jones Park	Murrumbateman	3	Swing set	1999
Binalong Rec. Ground	Binalong	2	Forpark modular unit	2005
Bowling Hall	Bowling	2	Forpark modular unit	2007
Bookham Rec. Ground	Bookham	3	Playspace swing set	2005
Sutton Rec. Ground	Sutton	2	Playspace Unit & swings	2012
Gundaroo Rec. Ground	Gundaroo	2	Forpark modular unit and swings	2016

Table 3 – Existing Play Facilities

7.2 Park and Playground Priorities for Asset Replacement

Yass Valley Council's park and playground priorities will be reviewed annually as part of the Operational Plan process and updating of asset management plans. This will take into consideration the priority list identified in this document, condition of existing equipment, demands from new development and community input. The following table provides a prioritised list of projects for Council consideration as and when funds are available:

Priority	Playground Site	Estimated Cost	Comments
1	Jones Park, Murrumbateman	\$8,000	Swing replacement
2	Coronation Park	\$40,000	Replace Miracle Slide
3	Caravan Park	To be determined. Alternate funding source (Victoria Park Precinct reserve)	Playground renewal.
4	Henry Lawson Park	\$2,000	Park seating renewal
5	Coronation Park	\$40,000	Playground renewal
6	Binalong Recreation Ground	\$40,000	Playground renewal
7	Bowling Hall Replacement	\$40,000	Playground renewal
8	John O'Brien Park	\$20,000	New equipment/location. Time related to lower Walker Park improvements
9	Bookham Playground Replacement	\$20,000	Playground renewal
10	Riverbank Park	\$12,000	Irrigation for openspace near playground equipment

Table 4 – Park & Playground Priority List

Those parks identified for provision through development in future years include:

Priority	Playground Site	Estimated Cost	Comments
High	Fairley Estate, Murrumbateman	\$0	Category 2 – Timing related to development of area. Funding and construction by developer.
Medium	New site Murrumbateman.	To be determined	Category 1 – Council to investigate a site for a new Category 1 Playground as part of the village. Timing related to expansion of Murrumbateman to meet Category 1 criteria
Medium	Hamilton Rise Estate	\$40,000	Category 2 – timing related to development of area
Medium	Morton Ave area	\$40,000	Category 2 – timing related to development of area

Table 5 – Park & Playground Provision through Development

8. LEVELS OF SERVICE

It is important that our parks and playgrounds are adequately maintained to ensure an acceptable service standard. The following table lists the targeted maintenance activities and frequency to be undertaken within available resources:

Type of maintenance activity	Category 1 - Park	Category 2 - Park	Category 3 - Park
Mowing of grass	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly
Edging/Whipper snipping of hard landscaping	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly
Irrigation in summer	Weekly	N/A	N/A
Weed spraying	Monthly	Quarterly	Quarterly
Fertilizing	Quarterly	As required	As required
Garden maintenance	Weekly	As required	As required
Sweeping/blowing hard pavement	Weekly	N/A	N/A
Rubbish removal	Weekly	Fortnightly	As required
Topping up softfall	As required	As required	As required
Cleaning of equipment	Weekly	Quarterly	Quarterly

Table 6 – Maintenance Service Levels

Type of Inspection	Category 1 - Park	Category 2 - Park	Category 3 - Park
Routine	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly
Operational	Quarterly	Biannually	Annually
Comprehensive	Biennially	Biennially	Biennially
Reactive	As required	As required	As required

Table 7 – Inspection Service Levels