



# Engagement and Impact 2018

The University of Western Australia

UWA12 (CAH) - Impact

## Overview

### Title

*(Title of the impact study)*

The benefits of Child's Play

### Unit of Assessment

12 - Built Environment and Design

### Additional FoR codes

*(Identify up to two additional two-digit FoRs that relate to the overall content of the impact study.)*

17 - Psychology and Cognitive Sciences

11 - Medical and Health Sciences

### Socio-Economic Objective (SEO) Codes

*(Choose from the list of two-digit SEO codes that are relevant to the impact study.)*

92 - Health

95 - Cultural Understanding

90 - Commercial Services and Tourism

97 - Expanding Knowledge

96 - Environment

### Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) Codes

*(Choose from the list of two-digit ANZSIC codes that are relevant to the impact study.)*

89 - Heritage Activities

91 - Sports and Recreation Activities

30 - Building Construction

**Keywords**

*(List up to 10 keywords related to the impact described in Part A.)*

Children

nature

play

playground

family

school

social

nurture

skate

adolescent

**Sensitivities**

Commercially sensitive

No

Culturally sensitive

No

**Sensitivities description**

*(Please describe any sensitivities in relation to the impact study that need to be considered, including any particular instructions for ARC staff or assessors, or for the impact study to be made publicly available after EI 2018.)*

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research flag**

*(Is this impact study associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content?*

*NOTE - institutions may identify impact studies where the impact, associated research and/or approach to impact relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nations, communities, language, place, culture and knowledges and/or is undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, nations, and/or communities.)*

**Science and Research Priorities**

*(Does this impact study fall within one or more of the Science and Research Priorities?)*

# Impact

## Summary of the impact

*(Briefly describe the specific impact in simple, clear English. This will enable the general community to understand the impact of the research.)*

Insufficient physical activity by children are associated with poorer physical and mental health. The Child's Play project, led by Associate Professor Wood and Dr Martin at the UWA School of Population and Global Health has generated community engagement with nature-play spaces in Western Australian schools and local communities. The researchers collaborated with Healthway, Rio Tinto, Kings Park Botanic Garden and Parks Authority, the WA Department of Education, Nature Play WA, Kidsafe, urban planners and architects, as well as local councils and schools to identify play space designs that were preferred by children and supported play. Collaborators have used UWA research to inform their strategies around open spaces and evaluate their new and existing parks and playgrounds.

## Beneficiaries

*(List up to 10 beneficiaries related to the impact study)*

The general community (e.g. parents and children, local residents, open space user groups)

Educators (e.g. Teachers and school support staff)

Govt agencies (e.g. Local Governments & Councils, WA Dept of Sport and Recreation, WA Dept of Education, NaturePlay WA, NaturePlay Qld, schools)

Providers of education: schools, day-care centres & early learning centres, Playgroup Association and NGALA

Health Promotion bodies (e.g. Heart Foundation (Healthy Spaces and Places initiative), Kidsafe Australia)

Advocates (e.g. Australian Research Alliance on Children and Youth, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Australian National Data Service)

Industry: PlaceScape, Playce, landscape designers, urban planners, school architects, Educational Infrastructure Services Australia,

Professional Associations: Planning Institute Australia, Parks and Leisure Australia, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

## Countries in which the impact occurred

(Search the list of countries and add as many as relate to the location of the impact)

## Details of the impact

(Provide a narrative that clearly outlines the research impact. The narrative should explain the relationship between the associated research and the impact. It should also identify the contribution the research has made beyond academia, including:

- who or what has benefitted from the results of the research (this should identify relevant research end-users, or beneficiaries from industry, the community, government, wider public etc.)
- the nature or type of impact and how the research made a social, economic, cultural, and/or environmental impact
- the extent of the impact (with specific references to appropriate evidence, such as cost-benefit-analysis, quantity of those affected, reported benefits etc.)
- the dates and time period in which the impact occurred.

NOTE - the narrative must describe only impact that has occurred within the reference period, and must not make aspirational claims.)

Physical inactivity in children is associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes. Before 2010 most playgrounds in Australia comprised plastic or metal equipment. Research from The University of Western Australia's (UWA) Child's Play project demonstrated these had limited appeal, and that nature-based play spaces stimulate more active play whilst supporting mental and physical development. Child's Play has collaborated with Healthway, Rio Tinto, Kings Park Botanic Garden and Parks Authority (BGPA), the WA Department of Education (DoE), Nature Play WA, the Council of Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI) and local councils and schools to help them request funding and then design and develop nature play areas in WA.

### WA'S MOST POPULAR PARK

From 2010 to 2012, BGPA commissioned Child's Play to run focus groups on play environment preferences and nature play attitudes to inform the development of the \$9 million Rio Tinto Naturescape in Kings Park, Perth and then undertook an observational study to gauge how children interacted with nature and each other in the parks that were designed using feedback from the focus groups. Since opening in 2011, Naturescape has attracted 80,000 visitors each year and delivers education programs to about 30,000 school children annually. UWA research helped shape the BGPA Naturescape policies. UWA collaborated with urban designers around safety issues. "The project will play a part in addressing the growing body of research and the view of many child development professionals that the opportunity to engage in outdoor play is vital for a child's health physical, mental, emotional and social development. ...I congratulate Kings Park and all its partners and volunteers on this achievement." Bill Marmion, WA Minister for Environment 2011.

### NATURE PLAYGROUNDS IN SCHOOLS

Pre-2012, WA's Government school playgrounds could only be refurbished using a limited set of tenders. UWA engaged with the DoE to amend the tender process so that from 2012 it included natural playgrounds and funding for their development. DoE then invited UWA to develop user-friendly, evidence-based play space guidelines. These were adopted as a procurement guide to help schools build play areas. The Play Spaces Guide included input from school children and staff in the Public, Catholic and Independent school systems. The Guide was rolled out to school communities in 2013 and is available on the DoE and Nature Play WA websites. In 2009, 15 schools in WA had nature-based playgrounds. Nature Play WA estimates that by the end of 2016, at least 20 per cent of WA primary schools had nature-based play areas (at least 140 schools). "Childs Play has instigated a re-think into how school playgrounds contribute to the development of the child in authentic settings. Architects are becoming more attuned to incorporating meaningful spaces outdoors to complement traditional indoor learning. The flow of learning from internal to outdoors spaces has been enhanced by the Child's Play research findings." Council of Educational Facility Planners International President, 2014.

### CITY OF SUBIACO

In 2013, Child's Play and PlayScape architects developed WA's first dedicated, local government Playspace Strategy for the City of Subiaco. The evidence-based strategy has been used as a tool for planning and design in the development and redevelopment of play spaces across Subiaco, with a strong focus on increasing nature-based areas for older children. In 2014, the City of Subiaco asked UWA, PlayScape and Nature Play Solutions to help evaluate the redevelopment of the Theatre Gardens, which in 2015 won the Parks & Leisure Australia Award for a major play space. "In line with the Strategy, the playground has been designed in a way which allows for cognitive, physical, social, emotional and sensory development for children of all ages. ...Climbing walls, water play and sand provide a challenging and stimulating environment for play." Stephen Tindale, CEO City of Subiaco,

2014.

### ADOLESCENTS

In 2011, the City of Subiaco asked UWA to study skate park use, after their research found that adolescents were not being catered for. UWA's research showed skate parks encouraged pro-social behaviours. In 2012, the City of Stirling commissioned UWA to review local skate parks in collaboration with design company, Convic. Extensive media coverage generated community interest in skate parks in WA. "This education process has been long and arduous with no validation of anecdotal evidence supporting us, until now. Dr Wood has assisted us greatly in our work, providing evidence as a powerful tool to educate local government and communities. The positive impact of this paper on our field cannot be overstated and should be mandatory reading for all local government officers in the recreation field." Simon Oxenham, Convic, Board Member SkateBoard Australia, 2013.

Wood's involvement with the City of Stirling Skate and BMX Facility Strategy proposal and their community engagement strategy which included endorsing the City's YouTube Strategy video. Launched 27 August 2013, by year end the video had 2427 views. The Strategy was passed by Council in 2013 and a 14,000sqm youth hub and skate plaza was operational by October 2016. From 2011 to 2016, Wood featured in 11 media articles and the documentary 'Skater's City'. Industry collaborations with Convic, PLAYCE and Enlocus landscape architects occurred. "We commended UWA for the research completed to date. It is one of the few examples of research of this kind which looks specifically into behavioural considerations and social capacity as a consequence of skateboarding and the provision of wheeled sports facilities for young people. Enlocus wholeheartedly supports further applied research into 'youth centered design' and specifically research which identifies the value and benefit of facility provision and cultural precincts to young people." Jason McNamee Director Enlocus

### Associated research

*(Briefly describe the research that led to the impact presented for the UoA. The research must meet the definition of research in Section 1.9 of the EI 2018 Submission Guidelines. The description should include details of:*

- what was researched
- when the research occurred
- who conducted the research and what is the association with the institution)

The Child's Play research team has examined the evidence and knowledge gaps relating to the contribution that parks and open space can make to the health and wellbeing of children and young people. The research has demonstrated that society benefits from having communities rich in social capital and that children can promote a sense of community. Child-friendly communities have subsequently become a key area of research within the UWA School of Population and Global Health. Outputs from this research include the 'Action for Young Australians Report – Parks and Open Space: For the health and wellbeing of children and young people', commissioned by the Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY) in 2009. Additional research led by Associate Professor Lisa Wood and Dr Karen Martin, as well as Dr Hayley Christian and Dr May Carter, has focused on social capital and the urban environment and highlights the exclusion of adolescents from public places. Their research calls into question the stereotype of the adolescent loiterer and provided empirical evidence that skate park settings were associated with pro-social behaviour among young people. This research resulted in practical recommendations to guide local planning and the engagement of young people in the design to minimise perceived problems associated with skate parks.

### FoR of associated research

*(Up to three two-digit FoRs that best describe the associated research)*

12 - Built Environment and Design

11 - Medical and Health Sciences

17 - Psychology and Cognitive Sciences

### References (up to 10 references, 350 characters per reference)

*(This section should include a list of up to 10 of the most relevant research outputs associated with the impact)*

Martin, K, Wood, L (2014) "We Live Here Too"... What Makes a Child-Friendly Neighborhood? Wellbeing and the Environment: Wellbeing: A Complete Reference Guide. Cooper, R., Burton, E. & Cooper, C. L. (eds.). United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, Vol. II, p. 38 (Wellbeing and the Environment

Wood L, Carter M, Martin K. (2014). Dispelling stereotypes... skateparks as a setting for pro-social behavior among young people. *Current Urban Studies*.

Carter, M, Wood, L, Martin, K, et al. (2013). *City of Subiaco Playspace Strategy*. City of Subiaco, Perth, WA.

Carter M, Wood L. (2014). *Theatre Gardens Nature Play Space: Park and Play Space Assessment*. Report No 1.

Francis J, Wood L, Knuiman M, Giles-Corti B. (2012). Quality or quantity? Exploring the relationship between public open space attributes and mental health in Perth, Western Australia. *Social Science & Medicine*. 74(10), pp.1570-1577.

Martin, K, Wood, L, Carter, M, Sansom, J. (2011). *Rio Tinto Naturescape at Kings Park Observational Study*. Centre for the Built Environment and Health, the University of Western Australia, Perth, WA.

Wood, L, Ryan, K, French, S, Carter, M. (2011). *Nicholson Reserve Subiaco Skate Park – A review of current usage patterns and users' views of future development*. City of Subiaco. Centre for the Built Environment and Health, the University of Western Australia, Perth, WA.

Wood, L. (2009). *Action for Young Australians Report – Parks and Open Space: For the health and wellbeing of children and young people*. Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth.

Sugiyama T, Villanueva K, Knuiman M, Francis J, Foster S, Wood L, Giles-Corti B. (2016). Can neighborhood green space mitigate health inequalities? A study of socio-economic status and mental health. *Health & Place*.

## Additional impact indicator information

### Additional impact indicator information

*(Provide information about any indicators not captured above that are relevant to the impact study, for example return on investment, jobs created, improvements in quality of life years (QALYs). Additional indicators should be quantitative in nature and include:*

- name of indicator (100 characters)*
- data for indicator (200 characters)*
- brief description of indicator and how it is calculated (300 characters.)*

#### Name

Research used in Parliamentary Report: The State of West Australia's Children & Young People, Ed 2

#### Indicator Data

In 2014, at the request of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (WA) UWA compiled data on children's access to playgrounds and parks.

#### Indicator Description

The evidence was tabled in WA Parliament and showed significant variations across local government areas in the availability of amenities for young people, adding weight to calls for local councils to pay greater attention to the issue.