

Submission on Parks and Play Strategy DRAFT 2025 Yass Valley Council

We support the intent of the Parks and Playgrounds Strategy but believe it would be strengthened by clearer alignment with existing Council planning documents, particularly the Open Space Strategy. The draft Strategy relies heavily on town Masterplans to guide implementation; however, Murrumbateman does not yet have a Masterplan, creating a significant gap for planning, prioritisation and delivery in one of the Valley's fastest-growing communities.

While the document references inclusive design principles, it does not clearly articulate how these will be applied across Yass Valley, particularly in rural and village contexts where facilities are limited and distances between spaces are significant. Greater guidance is needed on how accessibility and inclusion will be practically delivered in these unique conditions.

We also note that First Nations recognition is included at the beginning of the document, but this is not meaningfully carried through. There is an opportunity to strengthen the Strategy by outlining how Ngunnawal heritage, knowledge and ongoing involvement will inform the planning and design of parks and recreation spaces, particularly where these overlap with areas of cultural significance such as the Yass River corridor.

The Strategy would benefit from clearer guidance for future development, including recognition of the importance of embedding recreation and open space provision early in new growth areas, rather than leaving this as a retrospective burden on Council. It also needs to recognise the lack of available public space, in Murrumbateman in particular, and the need to prioritise the opening up of new sites for future recreation.

Finally, "all-ages" provision must genuinely mean all ages — from babies through to seniors. In many communities, seniors and grandparents are primary carers for children, and parks and playgrounds must be designed to reflect this reality. Accessibility considerations should therefore extend beyond play equipment to include safe and continuous pathways, adequate seating, shade, accessible parking and toilets. Parks and playgrounds are vital community gathering spaces in rural areas and should support intergenerational use.

There is currently limited consideration of young people aged 12+ in this strategy, whose needs can often be met within existing parks through flexible, low-cost elements such as youth hang-out spaces, informal sports facilities, music or performance areas, and multi-use features (Goulburn provides some good examples of this). Contemporary research shows that youth engagement requires more than the traditional 1990s skate park or BMX model, which does not suit all abilities, genders or interests. Existing parks can be adapted to better support young people alongside their siblings, parents and carers, creating more inclusive and connected community spaces.

The MCA has submitted a detailed submission identifying specific areas of inconsistency and improvement to Councillors and Council staff.

