

Play Network Strategies

Enhancing Community
Connections

Tract
Landscape Architecture
Town Planning
Urban Design
Media



Enhancing Community Connections

Meet Clare Della Bosca, Play Space Design Strategist

With a background in play theory, child development, and over a decade of hands-on experience, Clare joins Tract to bring an innovative approach to play space and community design. Her focus is on creating environments that connect people, build lasting community value, and support both social and ecological resilience.



Clare Della Bosca
Play Space Design Strategist

If you'd like to explore how play strategies can enhance your new community, please get in touch.

✉ CDellaBosca@tract.net.au

Why Invest in a Play Network Strategy

Research shows that a comprehensive approach to play space design builds stronger, healthier, and more connected communities. Our play network strategies go beyond isolated spaces to address connectivity, childhood development, biodiversity, and inclusivity.

Empowering Community Needs

A comprehensive play strategy allows us to create interconnected, vibrant spaces that become focal points for social interaction, recreation, and shared legacy. Thoughtfully designed green spaces enrich lives and meet the evolving needs of today's communities.

Moving Beyond Traditional Place Spaces

- **Community-Centred Design** We engage diverse voices to create spaces that reflect the needs of all.
- **Greenspace Evolution** Our designs ensure green spaces provide recreational, ecological, and social value, adapting to the needs of growing communities.
- **Holistic Play Networks** Intergenerational play, nature elements, sensory experiences, and respite zones promote well-being, accessibility, and connection.
- **Multidisciplinary Approach** By blending expertise across planning, urban design, and landscape architecture, we create integrated, adaptable spaces that meet diverse needs. This approach ensures that both the built and natural environments work together to foster a harmonious, sustainable, and vibrant communities.



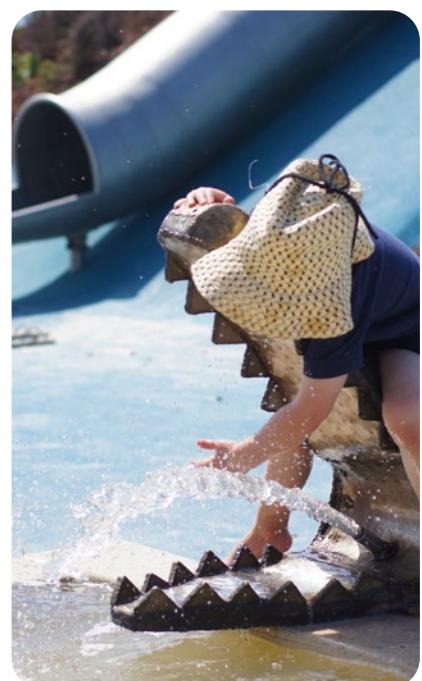
Patchwork Park, Fabric, Altona North, VIC



Mambourin, Wyndham Vale, VIC



Salt Water Coast, Point Cook, VIC



Play Network Strategy

Community-centred design

Who is your community now?

Who will they be in 5, 10 or 15 years?

Communities are constantly evolving, and designing spaces that adapt to these changes is the key to creating a lasting legacy.



Starting with 'who'



By taking a community-centred approach, we prioritise empathy and insight, using research, data collection, and stakeholder engagement to uncover the diverse and dynamic needs of each unique place.

This process allows us to design play spaces that are not just for children but for everyone—serving as social hubs, promoting well-being, and providing spaces for cultural expression and identity.

When we start by understanding 'who' we are designing for, we build spaces that grow with communities, ensuring they remain relevant, inclusive, and meaningful for generations to come.

Who

Each community is unique. Designs should foster evolving & diverse needs. Who are we designing for?

- Young families
- First home buyers
- Retirees
- Multi-generational households
- Diverse cultural communities, with new and established family networks.

Why

Quality play spaces are fundamental for:

- Children's development & growth
- Fostering community cohesion
- Sense of place
- Social connection

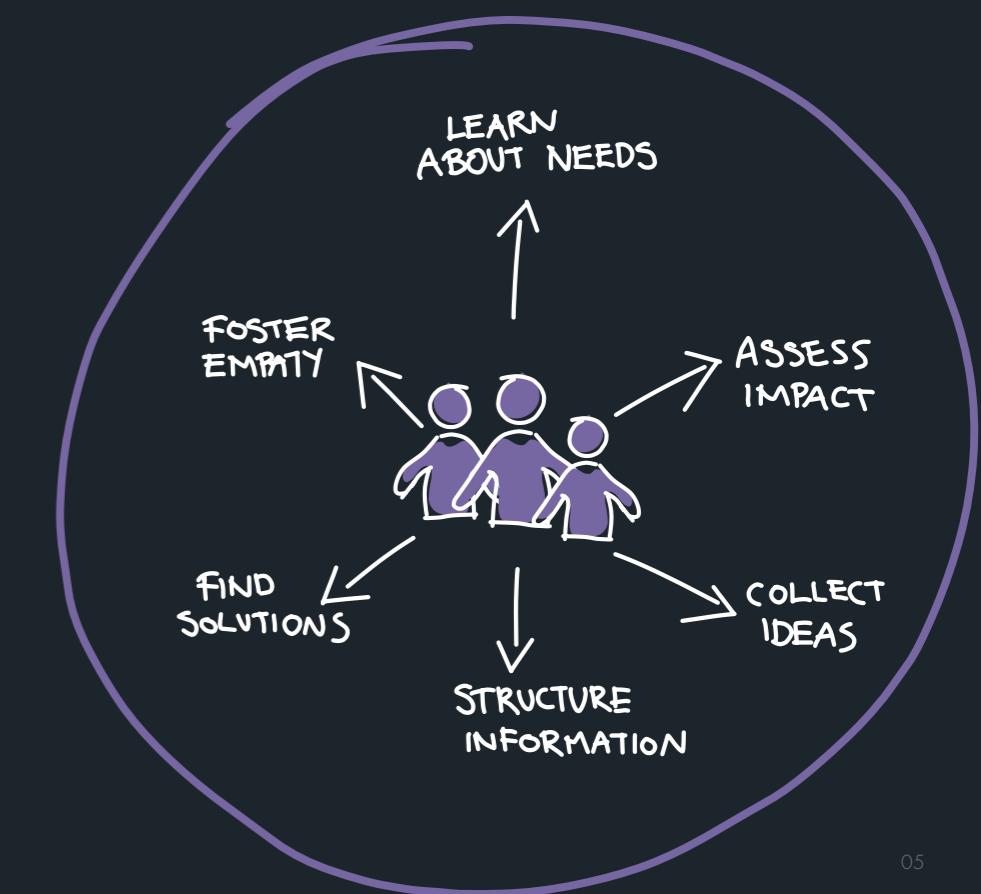
How

Use evidence-based tools, checklists, and strategies by reviewing the latest research and case studies on play space design.

Focus on best practices that improve community cohesion and long-term well-being.

What

Develop a network of playgrounds, green spaces, and social areas that encourage play, interaction, and a vibrant community atmosphere.





Play Network Strategies

How can we foster meaningful connections through play across our communities?

A 'Play Network Strategy' reimagines community spaces by creating layers of opportunities for exploration, interaction, and growth. These strategies aren't about making every play space everything for everyone. Instead, they focus on assessing the community as a whole, ensuring there are meaningful experiences and diverse opportunities for all.

By taking a holistic approach to design, we ensure everyone can engage in play. This strengthens community ties by encouraging inclusive and dynamic environments that bring people together.

We achieve this by focusing on three core aspects:

Playability

Encouraging diverse play opportunities that support exploration, development, and growth.

Connectivity

Integrating active transport, green corridors, and incidental play experiences to link spaces and reconnect people with nature.

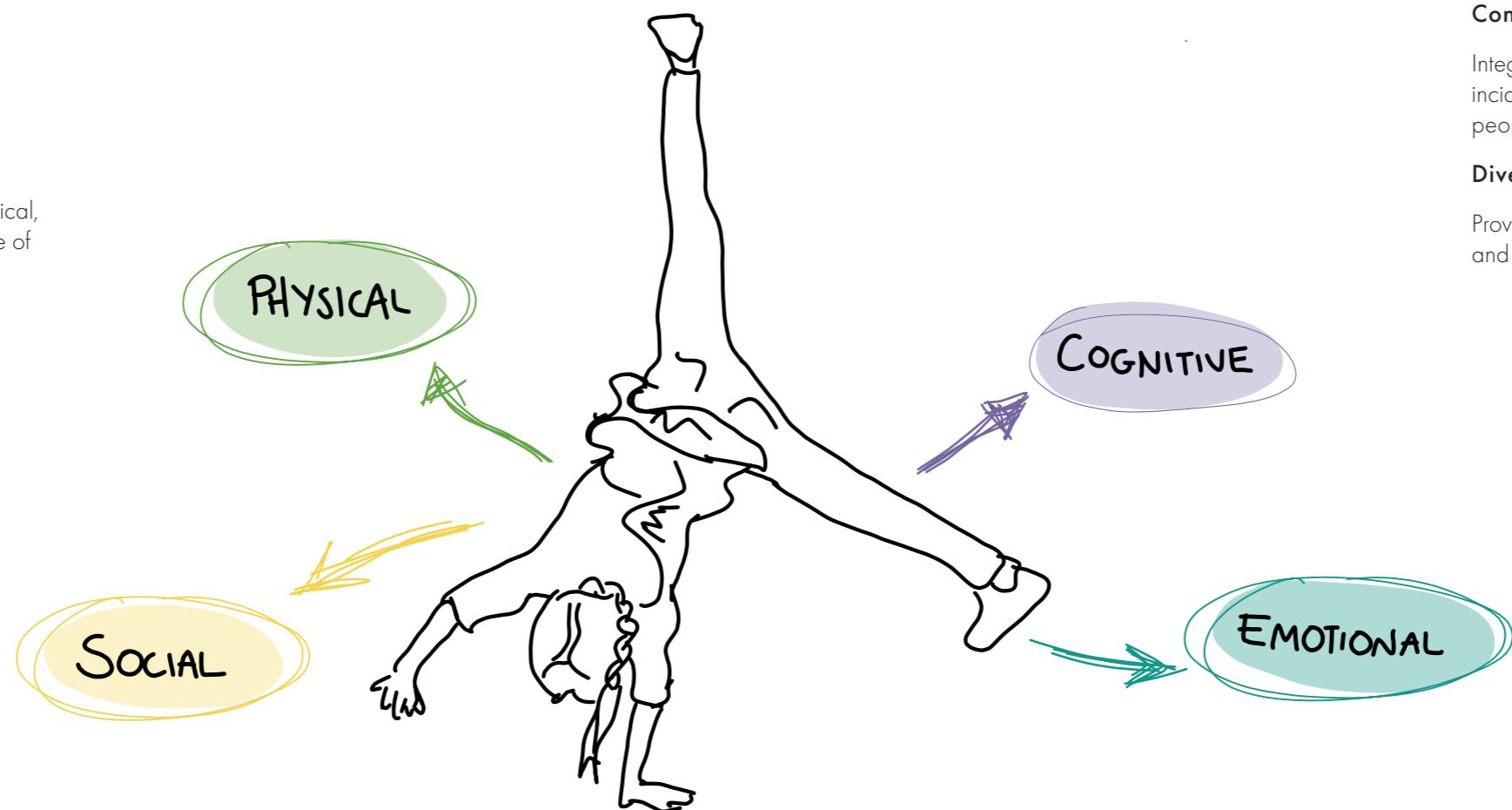
Diversity

Providing activities that reflect the varied needs, abilities, and interests of all community members.

Why is play important?

At Tract, we understand that play is essential for physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth – for people of all ages, especially during childhood development.

When we recognise the profound impact of play, it becomes clear that our environments should support opportunities for connection, creativity, and development. In rapidly evolving urban areas, designing spaces that prioritise play helps individuals and communities thrive, fostering health, well-being, and resilience across generations.



Play as an invitation

When we view play as an invitation, it becomes a platform for children to explore, grow, and connect.

Planning for play should be viewed as an opportunity to support diverse development — an open door to exploration, creativity, and connection.



Whether it's the simple act of sitting on a swing or the thrill of climbing a structure, play invites us to experience the world differently, to interact with our environment, and to connect with one another in meaningful ways.

It's not just about the activity itself, but the opportunity it creates for shared moments, personal discovery, and collective enjoyment. Play invites us to pause, be present, and embrace the possibilities within our communities.

Leaving a legacy

How do we measure success?

The success of a play space goes beyond usage rates or equipment condition—it's about leaving a lasting legacy that enhances the community.

By assessing factors such as increased social interaction, improved mental health, environmental impact and enhanced community engagement, we can better capture how a play space contributes to the overall well-being and cohesion of an area. In addition to these long-term impacts, it's important to remember that even small design interventions can lead to significant changes.

A thoughtful addition like a shaded seating area, a subtle change in landscape, or the placement of a unique sensory element can transform a space from underused to vibrant. These small adjustments often make a profound difference by enhancing accessibility, inviting diverse age groups, or encouraging more spontaneous interactions. When combined with a clear understanding of community needs, these interventions can increase the area's social value, creating a more inclusive and engaging environment.

It's the thoughtful details that often make the most lasting impact, proving that success can be found in both big and small strategic design choices.



10

Tract



Social Value

Enhances community cohesion by providing shared spaces for interaction, fostering a sense of belonging, and improving social bonds among diverse groups.



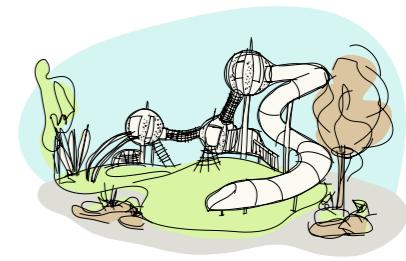
Health & Well-being

Supports physical and mental health by providing spaces for active play, relaxation, and social interaction, reducing stress and promoting overall well-being.



Climate Resilience & Liveability

Contributes to environmental sustainability by integrating green infrastructure, improving biodiversity and enhancing the adaptability of spaces for future generations.



Identity & Place Making

Strengthens local identity by reflecting cultural values and history, transforming spaces into meaningful landmarks that resonate with the community.



Connection to Nature

Encourages a deeper connection to the natural environment, promoting outdoor activities and environmental stewardship through accessible green spaces.



Community Engagement

Involves local residents in the design and ongoing care of the space, ensuring it meets their evolving needs and fostering a sense of ownership and pride.

Play is the thread that weaves communities together, creating spaces where connections are made, relationships grow, and a sense of belonging thrives.



Salt Water Coast, Point Cook, VIC

The Power of Play

Play is more than an activity—it's a connector that strengthens communities, fosters relationships, and builds cultural identity. In urban environments where separation can often occur, play can be a bridge for shared experiences.

By linking parks, playgrounds, and green spaces, we create opportunities for interaction and collective enjoyment. These spaces go beyond destinations, becoming vital social infrastructure that supports well-being, inclusion, and community.

Each play space becomes part of a larger ecosystem that encourages spontaneous interactions and fosters engagement. Play networks do more than offer recreation; they strengthen the social fabric, nurturing lasting connections and a shared sense of togetherness.



Walter Gors Park, Dee Why, NSW



Mambourin, Wyndham Vale, VIC



Salt Water Coast, Point Cook, VIC



Melbourne
Wurundjeri Country

North Sydney
Gamaragal Country

Brisbane
Turrbal & Yuggera Country

Adelaide
Kaurna Country

Geelong
Wadawurrung Country

 @tractconsultants

 Tract Consultants

tract.com.au