



MOUNT BARKER
DISTRICT COUNCIL

1 December 2023

Media Release

Keith Stephenson Play Space Unveiled

A new play space designed by JPE Design Studio and constructed by GreenInc (Bedford Group) was officially opened in Keith Stephenson Park on Saturday.

The need for renewal of existing equipment in Mt Barker's premier park, and the community's desire for an inclusive space fueled the decision by the council in 2022 to endorse a major upgrade.

The total project cost of \$1.32 million has been fully funded from the Australian Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) grant.

Mt Barker Mayor, David Leach, said, "Employing GreenInc staff to build this all-ability access play precinct demonstrates Council's commitment to partner with people who understand the diverse needs of all members of the community."

Phil Burton, General Manager Infrastructure added, "The delivery of this play space is a credit to our design partner JPE, and our construction partner GreenInc who are locally based in Mount Barker. The quality of this outcome is a credit to them."

Over 200 people provided ideas for the upgraded play space in a council survey and many more gave feedback at a family fun day at the park in April.

Shade structures and fencing around the children's playground were the two most common suggestions from the community. Both suggestions, along with natural shade from mature trees, new plantings, and large shelters were included in the final design.

Councillor, Samantha Jones who strongly advocated for fencing around the entire play space said, "It's important to have well-designed, fun and safe places in the community that can be enjoyed by all. The fencing surrounding the play area and additional shade was a priority."

Other suggestions included in the new play space are water play features and seating that can accommodate multiple group gatherings in the park.

A group consisting of community members with lived experience of disability regularly met with the design team providing feedback around access and inclusion to the play space.

“There was a strong desire from this group for a variety of different play features and experiences so that there was something for everyone,” Mr Burton said.

“The playground boasts ground surfaces ensuring accessibility, thoughtful consideration of heights and openings, and a variety of sensory zones.”

Another feature of the new play space are three sculptures - a brown tree frog, long-necked turtle, and a river rat.

Earlier in the year, the council ran a competition to name the creatures. Councillor Jones announced the winners and revealed the names at the grand opening on the weekend.

Suggested by Zara Desborough, the long-necked turtle is named *Stretch*, Evany and Merrick Nunn proposed *Monteeth* for the river rat, and Chloe Capri came up with the name: *Snoop Frog* for the brown tree frog.

“We wanted fun names fitting for a children’s play space. The creatures with their new names reinforce that the playground is a place for fun and enjoyment,” Councillor Jones said.

"Keith Stephenson Park is a gem in Mt Barker's crown: a beautiful nature setting, places to play, explore, relax and enjoy!"

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