



Mills Park

Nature play space

What is nature play?

Nature Play was once considered everyday play being outside playing with items found in the garden, creating imaginary worlds, building cubbies, riding bikes and climbing trees. Significant research shows that modern children are exposed to these experiences in decreasing levels and that children are now spending less time outdoors than ever before.

In the transition of just one generation, there has been a marked change in childhood activity away from outdoors to indoors. Potentially this has been driven by a number of factors including the popularity of screen-based entertainment technologies and the advent of a risk-averse culture. Consequently, society is witnessing increasing rates of 'childhood obesity, depression and behavioral disorders'.

Studies indicate that free or unstructured outdoor play is essential to childhood development:

"Nature play is, of itself, an intrinsic good and from it flow benefits in health, cognitive, social and emotional development and in the building of resilience and creativity. Opportunities for outdoor play and immersion in nature are essential to the health and wellbeing of children, helping them to develop to their full potential. Participation in nature play has the ability to enhance children's cognitive flexibility and creativity, boost self-esteem and improve resilience." (Nature Play S.A.)

Nature play incorporates free play and can include transitory elements such as bush walking, swimming, tree climbing and bike riding or hobby based events such as gardening and insect watching and having interaction with a natural world as well as the traditional swing and slide sets.

Experience in nature as a child also leads to 'natural activism or as environmental stewardship' or learning to value and protect their natural environment that can continue throughout their lives.

Nature play opportunities at Mills Park

The new Mills Park play area has been designed as a nature play space. Children will have access to water play, trees to climb, climbing logs, stepping stones, cubby house building areas, two flying foxes, swings, paths for walking and riding, sand play, wooden and rope climbing structures, grass and garden space, picnic areas and shade shelters. Adjacent to the playground are barbeques, viewing platforms and a café / coffee shop so parents and carers can relax whilst little ones play nearby.

Visit Nature Play WA's website on how to make the most of playing outdoors

<http://www.natureplaywa.org.au/>