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Minister for Housing
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MEDIA RELEASE

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A NEW STANDARD FOR INCLUSIVE KIDS' PLAY SPACES

Playgrounds and play spaces across NSW will need to meet a new standard of design by catering for all people, including disabled and able-bodied children and their carers.

Minister for Planning and Housing, Anthony Roberts, said the NSW Government wanted to ensure everyone was able to enjoy these spaces safely and inclusively and would provide an injection of funding for councils to retro-fit all existing parks within five years.

“I want all playgrounds in NSW to be reviewed as part of an in-depth audit that will see them assessed and rated against universal design principles,” Mr Roberts said.

A retrospective review of the existing playgrounds across NSW will determine what work needs to be done to ensure people of all abilities have the same level of accessibility to play and will identify opportunities for improvements to play spaces.

“There are more than 1.3 million people in NSW who live with a disability or added needs. It is imperative that our open spaces and playgrounds in parklands are able to be enjoyed by every citizen regardless of their level of ability.

“We are a government that cares about its community and that’s why we want to ensure open space, parks, outdoor recreation areas and play spaces are able to be enjoyed by everybody equally.

“To make it happen, we are introducing a clear set of playground and park design guidelines for councils and developers to follow, that will provide facilities for kids with challenges and the elderly, parents, children and support carers access to any play spaces or parks in NSW with ease.

“This can be achieved, for example, by having wheel-on carousels for children using wheelchairs, or shaded seating areas for disabled parents and ramp access for elderly people using motorised scooters.”

The Department of Planning and Environment's recently appointed Commissioner of Open Space and Parklands, Fiona Morrison, said the NSW Government's initial contribution of \$750,000 would kick-start the initiative in regional NSW and Western Sydney as part of inclusive play spaces currently in the development stages, by the 'Touched by Olivia Foundation'.

After losing their eight-month-old daughter Olivia to a rare disease in 2006, John and Justine Perkins felt compelled to transform their tragedy into a positive for others and create a lasting legacy in their daughter's memory.

"During Olivia's sickness, the Perkins' realised that many children, including children with disabilities, are not always afforded the basic human right to play with others. They decided the cornerstone of Olivia's legacy must be born out of play for all, where everybody can belong, regardless of difference, through inclusive play spaces," Ms Morrison said.

"The Touched by Olivia Foundation is a wonderful organisation that is leading the way for world-standard inclusive facilities for children of all abilities and creating play spaces that all of the community can enjoy.

"We are delighted to support the fantastic work the Foundation is doing across NSW and Australia by contributing towards the development of 'Livi's Places' in Wagga Wagga and Warragamba. These are just two of the 25 playground projects the Foundation has already helped build."

Bec Ho, Director of Touched by Olivia welcomed the review and the establishment of a set of guidelines on inclusive play spaces.

"Every child deserves the opportunity to develop and play, irrespective of their ability or added needs," Ms Ho said.

"Playing is how children learn and grow and our play spaces are important places in our community that bring people together and contribute to our sense of belonging. Over 20 per cent of Australians are disadvantaged by not being able to enjoy the basic joy of visiting a playground freely.

"We are excited to see the NSW Government setting provisions to change this and providing the opportunity that will see every child can equally enjoy in their neighbourhood."

The Department will undertake preliminary targeted consultation with councils and industry stakeholders prior to seeking public feedback from the community before finalising its guidelines and policies for universally designed play spaces next year.

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