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Minister for Transport and City Services

Minister for Skills

Special Minister of State

Member for Murrumbidgee

Mr Tom Duncan

Clerk

ACT Legislative Assembly

London Circuit

CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 2 December 2021 regarding petition 30-21, lodged by Mrs Giulia Jones MLA. The petition seeks for Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) to create a standard for fully fenced playgrounds incorporating the needs of families of children with autism; construct the playgrounds at Kambah and Throsby with at least 1.6m fences; repair all fully fenced playgrounds and create an equal geographic distribution.

The ACT Government recognises the critical role and value of play in enriching the lives of Canberrans of all ages. Our play spaces are highly valued across Canberra and we want to ensure they keep getting better as our city changes and grows.

There are over 500 public playgrounds located across the ACT. As each playground varies in age and condition, safety audits against Australian Standards are regularly conducted with more than 26,000 safety inspections undertaken on Canberra playgrounds last year. In relation to repair works, all play spaces are comprehensively audited, including through a Safety and Compliance Assessment. As issues are identified through assessments, they are risk assessed and ranked to form the basis of the annual works program.

The ACT Government recently released the draft ACT Play Space Strategy for community consultation. Feedback from this petition will be considered with other feedback received through that consultation to inform finalisation of the Play Space Strategy in 2022. The draft strategy identifies an intent to continue to expand the number of fenced playgrounds, to review implementation of safety inspection processes and to continue to incorporate relevant Australian Standards into the ACT Municipal Infrastructure Standards (MIS) (for example, MIS 21 – Recreation Facilities).

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The ACT Government is currently considering the proposal to adopt playground fencing standards into the ACT MIS that align with guidelines from Kidsafe Australia and the Building Code of Australia (BCA), which at a minimum comply with the BCA-SPSC standard/Australian Standard 1926.1 *Swimming Pool Safety – Safety barriers for swimming pools*.

The current approach by TCCS to consider fencing components in the rolling program of playground upgrades is a direct outcome of feedback from the 2018 Better Suburbs Play Spaces Forum. The forum emphasised the need to make playgrounds more inclusive, safe and suitable for families with special needs, in particular for children with Autism and Asperger related conditions, their parents and carers. In addition, achieving an equitable distribution of playground upgrades was also a key outcome of the forum and is an important consideration in the government's priority-setting process.

The new fences at the playgrounds at Kambah and Throsby have been constructed to be 1.2m high following TCCS discussions with Marymead and others in relation to specifications and requirements to meet the needs of children and families with special needs. At the current time the ACT Government's focus is on continuing to increase the number of fenced playgrounds across Canberra, rather than updating existing fencing at these particular playgrounds.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Chris Steel MLA
Minister for Transport and City Services

24 February 2022