

Shade in Playspaces



Need for Shade

In Australia, UV radiation levels remain high throughout most of the year. Adequate shade in areas where children play outdoors minimises unnecessary exposure to UV radiation, and reduces the risk of skin cancer later in life. Comfortable and effectively shaded play areas promote physical activity which can contribute to long term benefits in addressing a range of important health issues.

Shade is essential for all playspaces. If an area feels hot or is glary it may not be used. Shade provision should be made available for both users of the play equipment and carers visiting the playspace.

Shade and sun protection may be achieved in a variety of ways:

- Locate playgrounds adjacent to the shade canopy of trees. Trees provide the best natural shade quality and assist in lowering the temperature of the area.
- Construct purpose built shade structures or sails over the equipment or erect shelters adjacent to equipment as a refuge for users or carers.
- Consider the movement of the sun and its effect on the creation of shade when planning shade structures and shelters. Equipment should be located to maximise shade during the hottest part of the day.

Natural Shade

Shade from trees can be one of the most effective and aesthetically appealing ways of providing shade. The use of vegetation for shade has a number of environmental benefits such as:

- Reduced use of non-renewable resources (used in manufacturing building materials).
- Energy saving when compared with built shade systems, which often have high embodied energy.
- Fewer disposal problems, as plants generally return nutrients during decomposition.

Other environmental benefits can be gained by using indigenous (or local native) plants for natural shade such as habitat for native birds and animals.



Built Shade

Constructed shade systems can be used when natural shade is not available or during establishment. Structures may require the approval of local council prior to being constructed.

Built shade includes:

- Permanent structures made from a variety of materials. These need to be robust and well maintained.
- Adjustable shade systems such as louvered, cantilevered or retractable umbrellas and canvas awnings. These allow flexibility of use by being adjustable throughout the day or season to get the best shade. This type of system may not be suitable for public playspaces.



Conduct a Shade Audit

A shade audit is an essential first step to ensure your site has adequate shade to protect children and adults from over-exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

A shade audit assesses the quality, location and amount of existing shade. It compares shade with the usage patterns at an outdoor site (the timing, duration and location of outdoor activities). It determines whether some activities could put people at risk of over-exposure to UV radiation and proposes ways in which the risks can be reduced.

Considering the specific needs of your site, a shade audit can assist you in providing appropriate and cost-effective protection from UV radiation by:

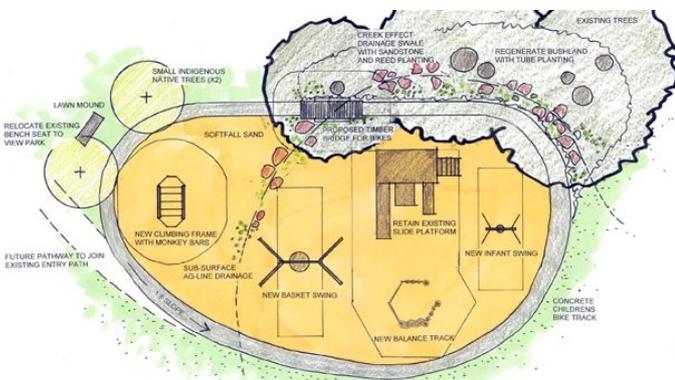
- making better use of your existing shade;
- changing the way your site is used by rescheduling and/or relocating activities;
- only creating new shade if it is really necessary;
- locating shade structures and planting trees where they are really needed; and
- creating effective shade that really works.

A shade audit can assist you in:

- demonstrating the need to improve the level of UV protection;
- seeking support and funding to carry out a shade project;
- planning long-term landscaping and capital works to achieve improved shade; and
- preparing a development application, if required.

You can engage a professional shade planner or purchase shade audit software. For information on conducting a shade comparison check go to:

<http://www.sunsmart.com.au/shade-audit/>.



MUST DO's for successful shade outcomes

- **DO** a shade audit - make sure your shade is really needed and is in the correct position.
- **DO** consider whether trees or a built structure will give you the best result.
- **DO** make sure the shade will fall where and when you need it by mapping the shadow projections of the proposed shade structure.
- **DO** ensure that the shading material used offers a minimum 94% UV blockout.
- **DO** think of ways to reduce indirect UV radiation - reducing reflectivity or increasing the shaded area are both good strategies.
- **DO** consider how comfortable your area will be in the cooler months and whether you need to consider 'warm' shade.
- **DO** ensure shade sails are 2.5m from highest foot support of a play structure to prevent access by climbing.



KIDSAFE NEW SOUTH WALES Inc.
Playground Advisory Unit

P: 02 9845 0893
E: schn-kidsafe@health.nsw.gov.au