Benefits
A risk management approach addresses potential safety hazards and issues in the playground.

In the playground, danger is not the same as risk. Eliminating all risk in the playground runs the possibility of removing creativity, challenge, and discovery. Risk-taking opportunities on the playground can benefit a child’s health and learning in all the following ways:

- They improve children’s physical, social, and cognitive health
- Children who are allowed to take risks tend to be more physically active and have lower obesity rates
- A healthy level of risk develops cognition and helps instil a greater sense of self-assurance and resilience

Risk Benefit
Play providers can develop an approach to risk management that considers the benefits as well as risks of challenging play experiences (AS 4685.0).

A degree of risk in playgrounds is beneficial. Providing children with the opportunity to enjoy challenging, adventurous play, encountering hazards and taking risks will assist in their development and give them capacity to manage risks for themselves. The learning process is valuable.

Risk benefit assessment informs the appropriate action and implementation and may include taking into account the following:

- Local factors such as historic use and environmental conditions
- Purpose and likely users
- Precedents
- Role of supervisors (if appropriate)
- Specialised knowledge
- Management and monitoring

The following steps outline the risk management process outlined in AS/NZS ISO 31000 Risk management—principles and guidelines.

**STEP 1: COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION**
Successful assessment of risk depends on effective communication and consultation with stakeholders including:

- Identifying or assessing hazards or risks
- Making decisions on how to control risks
- Making decisions about procedures

**STEP 2: ESTABLISHING THE CONTEXT**
Identify the external and internal risk management issues and establish a context within which risks are to be managed.

**STEP 3: RISK IDENTIFICATION**
The standard recommends a systematic approach and use of a structured process to help identify any risk. Initially it is useful to ask the following questions in relation to a potential hazard:

- **What** can happen, **where** and **when**? Generate a comprehensive list of potential sources of risk
- **Why** and **how** can it happen? Consider possible causes and scenarios

**STEP 4: RISK ANALYSIS**
This will help you decide the best approach for dealing with the risk/s

- Evaluate the controls that are already in place, and consider their effectiveness
- Examine each risk in terms of ‘consequence’ (what could happen) and ‘likelihood’ (the probability of something happening). This will help when making the decision about treating risk/s
- Determine any risk benefit and skills to be learned

Continued following page
STEP 5: RISK EVALUATION
Use the information in Step 4 to make a decision about rating each of the risk/s. The matrix below can assist with this process. The risk rating can determine the appropriate action. Different risks require different levels of action. Note: If a risk is rated high, risk benefit would not be taken into consideration.

Below: An example of a risk level matrix from AS/NZ ISO 31000

STEP 6: RISK TREATMENT
There are a range of options for treating risks including:

- Removing or avoiding the risk entirely where practicable
- Reducing the likelihood of the risk by putting control measures in place, installing a barrier or relying on close supervision, and keeping children within reach
- Undertake a risk benefit assessment eg. If there is a moderate risk however the benefit of the experience is significant, the benefit may out way the risk and therefore determine how the risk is managed

STEP 7: MONITOR AND REVIEW
Regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of the risk treatment to ensure it is the most appropriate action.