



The Play Sanctuary ‘Joomunjie Land’: It’s so much more than ‘just’ a play space

Sara Branch



Communities for Children-Logan (Griffith University)



Hyahno Moser and Jordan Hill

The Australian Institute of Play



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

The Australian Institute of Play and Communities for Children – Logan would like to thank the children, their parents, and school personnel from Eagleby South State School. Without them sharing their stories and experiences of Joomunjie Land there would be no report.

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For more information please contact Hyahno Moser.

Authorship Roles:

Sara Branch – Analysis, Sense making and Writing

Hyahno Moser – Data Collection, Sense making and Writing

Jordan Hill – Sense making and Writing

"I mean like it's a fun place to go to and it's a community backyard... not a backyard where you just run around ... it's a mysterious place" Child4

"Well it changed my life. Yeah cuz now I feel much happier ... I like to read over there, yeah and come peaceful." Child2

"On the days that I don't [go to Joomunjie Land] I'm just sitting at home doing like doing random things ... if I'm at Joomunjie Land, I'm having fun and um and running around and just having fun and not just sitting at home doing boring stuff...yeah it's just made me um much more happier and just because before Joomunjie Land... I was just really bored and tired ... I just didn't feel like walking, running around or anything." Child4

"It just it changes my day because I'm not always on my phone and I have something interactive to do cuz being on your phone or on your tablet or anything electronic sometimes just makes you [makes a brain dead face] go like" Child2

It means more than just a place to play, it means something where they've had voice and agency and choice. And they've worked together really hard to make it happen.

So it's a matter of pride and achievement and it's a place where they feel that they are welcomed in a way that is rarely something they've experienced. They feel that Joomunjie is a place for them.

And it's a place for them and so they enter it with a great respect for it and an enjoyment of it, that we probably don't even understand.

So, the fact they've had a lot of voice in making it happen and they've engaged in all that hard work and the committees and the marketing and the planning um has been great for them. And it's valued by them ... deeply valued.

Principal

Summary

Known as Queensland's first "Community Backyard", Joomunjie Land is a loose parts playground situated at Eagleby South State School, Queensland. Begun in 2022, Joomunjie Land was developed through the efforts of students and student leaders at Eagleby South State School, with some guidance from grown-ups. Leaders representing each year level, met with staff from the Australian Institute of Play (AIP) to name, design, and build the space as well as plan and deliver a 2-day event launching Joomunjie Land. While initially it was for students at the school it has been made available to children within the local community after school and during school holidays. The 'Playworkers' or grown-ups who work in Joomunjie Land support child leaders who supervise and uphold the rules developed by the student population.

At the end of 2023, with 18 months passed since Joomunjie Land opened, it was considered an appropriate time to evaluate what has been the children's experience and impact of Joomunjie Land on children/students, parent/carers and the school. Towards the end of the school year in 2023 children/students, parent/carers and school personnel were invited to participate in an interview-survey study conducted by the Australian Institute of Play. Following content analysis by an independent researcher, Playworkers from the AIP and the researcher reflected together to better understand the identified themes and provide context and meaning to the data.

This evaluation has highlighted that Joomunjie Land has many applications and benefits for the children/students, their parent/carers, local children, school and community. Eagleby South State School first developed a small loose parts play area within the school in an attempt to address behavioural issues being experienced across the school. Due to the positive changes in behaviour within the school they expanded the use of loose parts into the much bigger 'Joomunjie Land'. According to school personnel even without achieving its original purpose the additional benefits to children/students and the school would have made implementing Joomunjie Land worth it. Any concerns adults had in relation to injury due to perceptions of '*risky play*' have been overcome through '*carefully thought about, designed and monitored*' actions by the children/students and Playworkers.

Children/students, parent/carers and school personnel indicate that Joomunjie Land is an opportunity for children/students to see their friends and make new friends who they normally wouldn't play with. It is a space where children/students appear to be able to grow, develop and improve wellbeing, belonging and demonstrate courage. Children say that this space is somewhere they feel safe, have the freedom to do whatever they want and most importantly have fun! But this fun has a serious side as loose parts play appears to help children develop healthy ways to navigating life, such as social skills, problem solving skills and self-regulation. Joomunjie Land offers children the chance to '*look after themselves and look after others*', '*improve their judgement of danger*', '*become more confident*' and '*show other kids and staff what they can do*'. This is in line with the theory of compound flexibility (Brown, 2003). Joomunjie Land (and loose parts within the school) appears to provide children/students the opportunity to transform the environment to suit their needs (Brown, 2003), thereby, helping them develop skills and address issues that may be happening for them.

Similarly, Joomunjie Land allows adults (parent/carers and school personnel) to view children more positively in terms of their capacity and resilience and has helped adults understand the importance of risky play to children's positive development and wellbeing. Parent/carers also report because of

Joomunjie Land their children have built social confidence, physical capacity and grown their community connections. School personnel also share that the students who visit Joomunjie Land, demonstrate an increased ability to apply themselves during class time, have improved emotional regulation and decreased behavioural issues across the school. In summary, Joomunjie Land appears to be a unique environment that enables children to develop not only their social and problem-solving skills but also their physical and mental health or general wellbeing.

A range of critical success factors to creating a true ‘community backyard’ like Joomunjie Land were highlighted throughout the evaluation. These aligned with those identified in a recent systematic literature review related to psychological sense of community¹ (PSOC; Littman, 2024) and indicate why the implementation of Joomunjie Land has been a success. Critical success factors identified appear to be: good practical advice about how to do this safely; professional development that develops an understanding of and supports ‘risky play’; physical and psychological safety developed and provided by children/students and grown-ups; appropriate supervision delivered by children and grown-ups; consistent structure developed by children and grown-ups; processes that support positive social norms and belonging; a wide range of opportunities for skill building and a coming together of families, school and community. These success factors are underpinned by ‘Relationships’ which drives success in all areas. Importantly, by building relationships with and including children/students in the development and maintenance of Joomunjie Land the grown-ups increased children’s voice, agency and choice about a space they manage and value highly. This value is evident in the high return rates of children who come to this play space and call Joomunjie Land *‘their backyard’*. To quote one six year old girl from this study *‘Joomunjie Land is the best and we are on our land’* or this quote from a nine year old boy *‘It is like, your house ... [where] you can up-grade your activity and creativity’*. Thus, while Joomunjie Land appears to have achieved the original goal set by the school to reduce problem behaviour in the school, more importantly it has helped all involved learn, grow and be healthier.



¹ Psychological sense of community is an emotional mechanism where people feel connected to each other within a specific setting or generally. (Littman, 2024)

Introduction

Opportunities for children to grow and develop within our society have been hampered by adults who seek to make spaces safer for children through minimizing risks and providing structure (Gray, 2020; Rorabaugh, 2019, Haidt, 2024). This approach views children as empty vessels in need of filling by grown-up's. As a result, children are often underestimated, not consulted and marginalized as active community citizens. During the Childhood Summit in 2023, (a dedicated biennial event and platform to support local children aged 5 to 14 years to tell grown-ups 'how they are doing'), the 43 child keynote speakers talked about issues such as: getting off your screens; wanting more quality time with carers; understanding how to respond better to neurodiversity; negative parenting; pressures on children; and mental illness, to name a few. Importantly, these same speakers indicated the solution to these issues needs to come from changes in themselves, their families and those in their immediate communities. Play, connection to culture, more time with family, listening more to children, and growing opportunities for healthy child agency were all solutions to the many of the issues/challenges children raised. Indeed, the evidence within this evaluation demonstrates that Joomunjie Land offers children the chance to address several of the issues they raised at the Childhood Summit.

'Play' is a word that we use often in society, but 'what is play' and why is it so important to children? As highlighted in the following quote play is complex and driven by choice, internal drive and creativity:

"Play is any activity that is (1) self-chosen and self-directed, (2) intrinsically motivated (done primarily for its own sake rather than for some goal outside itself), (3) guided by mental rules (structured by concepts in the players' minds that delimit what is appropriate or not within the play), and (4) imaginative and creative (players think of themselves as stepping out of the real world into an imaginary world, and the rules in play always leave plenty of room for creativity)" (Gray, 2020, p.39).

In addition to the fun children get from play, this definition highlights some of the benefits children obtain from play. Choice to decide what they do and how they do it, structuring play according to their passions and engaging in creativity and learning are all ways play can help children (Gray, 2020). The 'Playwork' concept of compound flexibility takes our understanding of 'Play' further by suggesting that children develop when they have an environment that gives them the chance to experiment and be creative, and an opportunity to transform the environment to suit their needs (Brown, 2003). A flexible space would be described as one that has parts that change and are movable, like the loose parts found in Joomunjie Land. A flexible space offers children the chance to develop self-confidence as they identify and manage risks and negotiate and address problems themselves at their pace and in their own way (Rorabaugh, 2019). However, flexible spaces are reducing as adults, for care and safety reasons, remove opportunities for independent learning by children by designing and structuring play spaces that have little flexibility and reduced risk. That is, children these days live very structured lives where risk has been minimized by adults even in playgrounds (Gray, 2020; Rorabaugh, 2019, Haidt, 2024). As a result, opportunities for children to learn independently through play, to assess risk themselves and develop a sense of their own agency² has been reduced. "Obsession with safety hinders children's development such that they do

² Agency could be considered to be a child's "level of control over their environments as well as their ability to choose what they do in them" (Rorabaugh, 2019, p.112).

not learn how to take risks, ironically, making them more vulnerable to danger” (Rorabaugh, 2019, p.114). This reduction in ‘risky play’ is amplified within regions where there could be a lack of play options, let alone a space where children can make it their own like Joomunjie Land. There can be perceptions on the part of grown-ups that parks are unsafe, concern for traffic, fear of strangers, and the distance children need to travel to play (Cox, 2020). But the payoff is clear, the more time children engage in free play and risky play, instead of more structured activities like sport, their executive functioning skills (eg., attention, and ability to regulate behaviour) are strengthened (Cox, 2020). Thus, evidence and knowledge about risky play and compound flexibility were foundational concepts that drove the design of Joomunjie Land.

Originally Joomunjie Land began due to behaviour problems within the school. A small loose parts play area was trialed within the school in an effort to address these behavioural issues. Due the positive transformation loose parts play had on the school and behaviour, the loose parts play space within the school was expanded and Joomunjie Land was begun. Joomunjie Land was only possible to build, with help from the student leaders at Eagleby South State School in 2022. Leaders representing each age group, met with staff from the Australian Institute of Play (AIP) to name, design, build, plan and run a 2-day launch event. Students still participate in the maintenance of Joomunjie Land’s amazing play space. Since its launch at the school it has been made available to students during play breaks, the local community after school and during school holidays two days per week. The adults who work in this space are known as 'Playworkers' and they work to conserve play for children in the area. They work to support child leaders who supervise and uphold the rules developed by the student population.

With 18 months having passed since Joomunjie Land opened it was considered an appropriate time to evaluate what has been the children’s experience of Joomunjie Land, what has been the impact of Joomunjie Land on children/students, parent/carers and the school, as well as how can this service improve or better serve the children’s growing needs. This review was conducted across 2023-2024, with data collection at the end of 2023 and analysis in the beginning of 2024.



Summary of data collection and Analysis Process

Interviews

At the end of the school year in 2023 children/students, parent/carers and school personnel were invited to participate in an interview conducted by AIP Playworker, Hyahno Moser. Most interviews were conducted with one individual although two children interviews were conducted in a pair and a small group of three. Children who participated included 11 girls and seven boys, ranging in age from six to 11. These children were reflective of the students who attend Joomunjie Land regularly with most of those who participated in the interviews stating they attend Joomunjie Land at least once a week or 'whenever it's open'. Some of the children interviewed had been coming to Joomunjie Land since it had opened, about 18 months, while others had been coming for one year. Recent attendees also participated with some only recently coming to Joomunjie Land in the last three months. Two parent/carers of children who attend Joomunjie Land and the principal of the school also participated in the interviews.

Prior to each interview, the reason for the interview, that participation was voluntary and that the interview could be stopped whenever they wanted, was explained to each participant. Consent from participants, including parental consent, was also received prior to conducting the interviews.

The interviews were video recorded and transcribed. The videos are publicly available at the Australian Institute of Play website.

- Children's Videos [Joomunjie Land & The Lost City of Play - A Community Backyard Children's Voice Tale \(youtube.com\)](#)
- Principal's Video [Principal Andrew Barnes Adopting Loose Parts Play Now A Life Long Advocate \(youtube.com\)](#)

Surveys

At the same time a survey, containing similar questions to the interviews was also administered by AIP. Five children/students, 20 parent/carers and 13 school personnel completed the survey (see Appendix A for a list of interview and survey questions). Consent, including parental consent, was received prior to surveying participants.

Child and Parent/Carer Respondents

Of the five children/students who completed the survey only one was a girl. Child respondents were aged between 9 and 10. Most children attend Joomunjie Land 'Every time it is open - Wed and Thurs' while one child attended 'Once every 2-3 months'. Three child respondents have been attending Joomunjie Land since it opened (approx. 18 months) while another had been attending for approximately 12 months and another for 3 months. Similarly, parent/carers reported that 12 children have been attending since it opened with others attending for about a year (=1), 9 months (n=3), 6 months (n=1), 3 months (n=2) and since the child had been at the school.

Six of the parent/carer respondents indicated that they had at least one child who attended Joomunjie Land while some had 2 (n=7), 3 (n=5), and 4 children who used Joomunjie Land. Parents indicated that their children ranged in age from 1 to 11 years old with most aged between 6 and 10 with a mix of genders.

School Personnel Respondents

The 13 school personnel who completed the survey included the principal, teachers and teacher aides who support all grade levels within the school. All school respondents had had some experience of the range of loose parts in the school including Joomunjie Land, the loose parts play in the middle of the school and loose parts play for the preps.

Sense Making

Following content analysis by the independent researcher of the interview and survey data, Playworkers from the AIP reflected on identified themes and provided context and meaning to the themes from their perspective. This sense making enabled the Playworkers', who have observed the behaviour in Joomunjie Land since it began, perspective to be included as well as go deeper into the meaning of identified themes and to check the appropriate labeling of the themes and explanation.

What does Joomunjie Land Look Like and Feel Like

Due to the nature of play, when asked **What happens in Joomunjie Land?** children had wide and varied individual responses. Similarities in responses tended to relate to *'make friends'*, *'play'*, and *'build'*. The building of *'bases'* at one point in the life of Joomunjie Land appeared to be an important part of play in Joomunjie Land. Children of all genders and ages built bases which were then transformed into houses, kitchens, maternity wards, garages, hotels, spas, and restaurants – or in other words ANYTHING. Similarly, *wrestling* also seemed to be something children of all genders enjoyed doing for a time in Joomunjie Land. The act of building and wrestling by children, however, is considered uncommon within many play spaces today due to the perception by adults that it is too risky (Gray, 2020; Rorabaugh, 2019). "It is quite unusual today for play structures to be built by children, or even for the children to be consulted before adaptation of the playground. Very few adventure playgrounds have tools or wood available for children's use" (Rorabaugh, 2019, p.113). In this regard, Joomunjie Land appears to be very unique. While building or wrestling has reduced recently within Joomunjie Land (due to children's change of choice of play activity, not because it was stopped by grown-ups) these are excellent examples of how Joomunjie Land offers children an adaptable space that provides them with what they need at that time, or in theoretical terms, it provides compound flexibility (Brown, 2003).

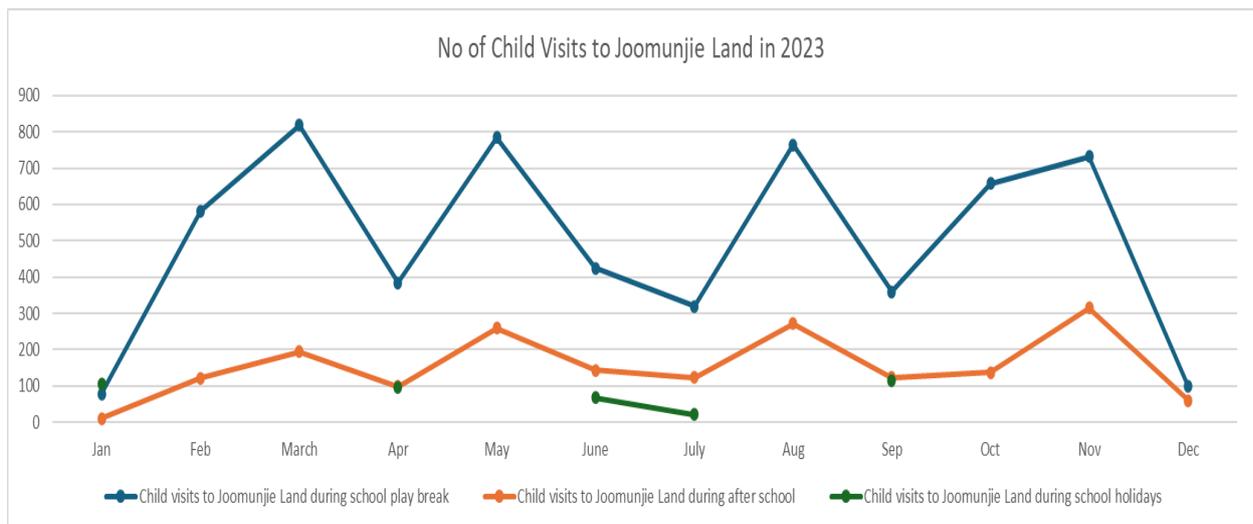
There are just over 504 students at Eagleby South State School. The 90 Prep students have their own loose parts play space they can access every day, and don't access Joomunjie Land during play break. Just over 410 students aged 5 to 11 years of age can access Joomunjie Land two days per week for 30 mins of play each session. Joomunjie Land is open after school and during school holidays, two days per week for two hours and 15mins per play session.

Joomunjie Land 2023 attendance data indicates that approximately 20% of the school body visit Joomunjie Land during school break. An average of 38 children attend each after school play session per week. Return rates of individual children was as high as 85%, with an average return rate of 45%. In total, the number of play sessions provided across 2023 included: 40 during school play break equalling 20 hours of high quality play; 40 after school play sessions equalling 90 hours of high quality play; and nine holiday play sessions equalling 20.25 hours of high quality play. Child visits (total number of children counted entering) to Joomunjie Land across 2023 totalled, 6,007 child visits during school play breaks, 1857 child visits during after school play sessions, and 407 child visits

during school holiday play sessions (see Figure 1.). It is clear from these figures that Joomunjie Land is well liked and used regularly by children at Eagleby South State School.

When asked in the interview or survey **what three words best describe Joomunjie Land** children overwhelming used the word **FUN**. Fun was used by 17 respondents (from 23 child respondents). The next most often used word was **AMAZING**, followed closely by **HAPPY** and **EXCITING** (5, 4 and 3 respondents respectively). Similarly, when parent/carers and school personnel reflections were included, **FUN** was still the most often used term (32 respondents from 51 responses) followed by **FREEDOM** (7 respondents), **EXCITING** (6 respondents), **AMAZING** (5 respondents) and **HAPPY** (4 respondents) (see Appendix B for the outcome of satisfaction questions).

Figure 1. Number of Child Visits to Joomunjie Land in 2023



Just like the children/students, **FUN** (15 of 28 respondents) was the most often used word by parent/carers and school personnel when asked **what three words best describe Joomunjie Land**. This was followed closely by the words **FREEDOM**, and **EXCITING** (6 and 3 respondents respectively; see Figure 2.). Children also used the term **FREEDOM** a lot when asked **What does Joomunjie Land mean to you?** This suggests that both children and adults see the benefit of Joomunjie Land in supporting children to have freedom to grow and explore. In this way, Joomunjie Land is a true community backyard that provides children ‘*mystery*’ and *freedom*, where they ‘*can just come play on the swings*’, ‘*play and build things and hang out with his mates and develop new relationships*’ and a sense of agency while still ‘*supervised and safe*’.

“Yeah it feels like I can just come here like pretty much all the time whenever I need to cuz it's pretty much open all week and we can just come play on the swings” Child1

“I mean like it's a fun place to go to and it's a community backyard... not a backyard where you just run around ... it's a mysterious place” Child4

“Freedom, means freedom to him and just the ability to express himself through play and build things and hang out with his mates and develop new relationships with kids that he otherwise probably wouldn't hang out with.” Parent/Carer2

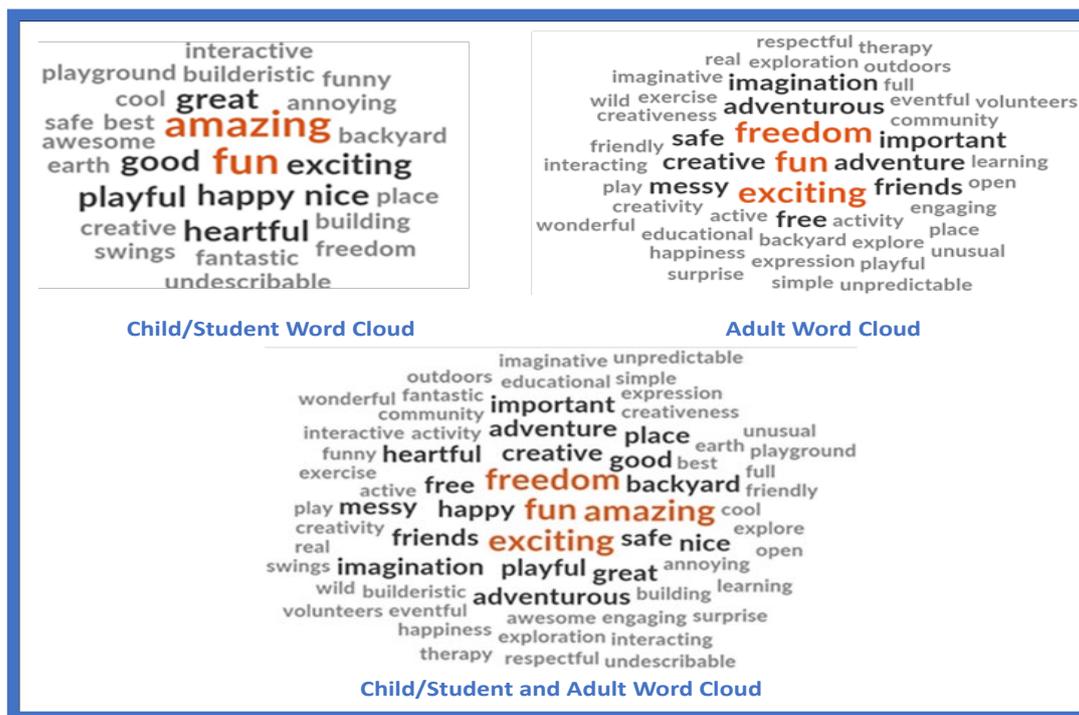
“I think it's great that the kids have just got a community place to come and play that's supervised and safe ... it enables kids to interact with each other they probably wouldn't otherwise interact with each other inside of school or outside of school. So I think it helps create like a local neighbourhood bond between kids.”

Parent2

“Absolutely! When our students play freely, they are developing autonomy and practice decision making skills in what often, is a highly scaffolded day for them. They practice critical thinking without the weight of cognitive overload.” School

Personnel – Survey

Figure 2. Three Words that Best Describe Joomunjie Land



Joomunjie Land appears to give children the unique opportunity and freedom to prove themselves while still being children. The flexibility inherent in Joomunjie Land offers children a space that is constantly changing that they manage, which in turn provides them with what they need, when they need it (Brown, 2003). As children recognize, it is a space where they *‘can just be kids’*, have something to look forward to as *‘there might be something new’*, and a space with rules that aren’t too restrictive just *‘the basics’*:

"I love that we can be just kids and be able to have lots of fun." Child-Survey

"It means something that's really happy for me because I can come every day and I can just play even if something bad's happened or something has made me upset I can just play and make friends ... it makes me feel excited cuz knowing that every day I can come and there might be something new." Child1

"Something really good about it is ... they have some rules but they don't have many and that's pretty much just the basics like don't trash the place don't hit don't swear don't hurt people don't steal things that people are using technically it is not stealing but don't try and use things that people are using." Child1

"If I'm having a bad day it makes me feel better to come to a place without having a lot of rules" Child12

Adults interviewed or surveyed also recognize how Joomunjie Land offers children flexibility and opportunity to play without the restrictions of rules or 'a lot of rules' where *'they just get to explore and have fun'*:

"Once you see the kids having fun and just finding random things and using their imaginations to play I think it's great I think they get to be kids and not worry about technology and not worry about rules they just get to explore and have fun." Parent/Carer1

"Imaginative play opportunity with less rules/rigidity. Opportunities to engage in play with different students than they normally gravitate towards. FUN!!! A chance to just be a kid in a fun and creative environment ... They enjoying having the opportunity to use their imagination, get outside and not have a bunch of rules thrown at them. It's a free space for them." School Personnel - Survey

As introduced earlier, Joomunjie Land was implemented due to behaviour problems within the school. Due the positive transformation a small loose parts play area had on behaviour within the school loose parts play was expanded within the school and Joomunjie Land was born.

"The Loose Part's Journey started from a place of us struggling to prevent or reduce violence, fights, difficult behaviours in the school playground. And I guess I was at loss as to what to do - we had many conversations and then I was in conversation with [AIP] who mentioned the fact that perhaps play might be of key importance here.

So back during COVID we got together some Loose Parts... I was rather reluctant and hesitant, a little bit anxious and I was assured that things would work out well and we stepped out and did it and it had an almost immediate positive effect on the behaviour and the playground ...

Even if it hadn't, the joy and the beauty of it and The Wonder of it for the children and the way that it helped them would have justified it. But it certainly had a positive effect on the difficulty that we were addressing.” Principal



According to the principal and personnel from the school Joomunjie Land has been successful in addressing the original issue – difficult behaviours. But as the principal states even without achieving its original purpose the additional benefits would have made implementing Joomunjie Land worth it. Importantly, any concerns the principal and parent/carers had in relation to injury due to perceptions of *‘risky play’* have been overcome through *‘carefully thought about, designed and monitored’* actions by the children/students and Playworkers.

“And my fears about injuries were unfounded. I was worried about stuff that looked a little bit risky, you know. It is carefully thought about and designed and monitored and checked for hazards but we certainly have had far more injuries on the man-made, um adult made, I should say.

We've had far more injuries on the adult constructed playgrounds in this school and on the foot paths and walkways and monkey bars, than we've ever had in Joomunjie or Loose Parts which have been relatively free of injury.” Principal

“My only positive surprise is like that there hasn't been more issues or injuries or anything like I thought with all the loose parts and bits and pieces and potentially dangerous things and um kids from all over the place different walks of life and whatever interacting with each other there is potential for disaster but none of that has happened” Parent2

As demonstrated by the previous comment it is common for adults to have fears and concerns about 'risky play'. Whereas “there is good evidence that children playing independently of adults are usually quite good at judging their own abilities, so serious injuries from such play are relatively rare” (Gray, 2020, p.42). Concern about risky play usually comes from adults wanting to protect children from harm, however, the danger in doing this comes from whether this risk is real or perceived. Adults often try to protect children from both real and perceived risk and in doing so reduce what children can do in most parts of their life.

In removing perceived risk, however, adults are removing the opportunity for children to explore and learn independently. Joomunjie Land, as a flexible space with loose parts, assists children to develop their problem-solving skills by identifying, assessing and managing risk themselves and in turn build their self-confidence and resilience (Rorabaugh, 2019). Indeed, “when children are not subject to rules or interventions from on high, they use their common sense to play in vigorous, thrilling, yet relatively safe ways” (Gray, 2020, p.43). In this regard, Joomunjie Land offers a unique environment for children that provides them what they need to play, explore and grow while also having influence in making the space safe.

While some adults expressed initial concern about risky play a number of adults reflected Joomunjie Land *'is like what children experienced years ago'*. They recognize and understand the *'freedom'* that spaces like Joomunjie Land offer children – as they experienced something similar when they were children. Furthermore, it provides an alternative way for children and their parent/carers to connect through sharing play experiences. Adult's experiences of play are reflected in their use of the word **FREEDOM** when describing Joomunjie Land.

“In Joomunjie Land, kids design and rule their play place, [it reminds] me so much of my childhood, a land of free play. Here I see creativity, risks, fun, leadership, teamwork, kindness, friendship, fearlessness... kids need these in their play.”
Parent2

“I want to thank you for bringing my childhood memory back. This is exactly how I used to play when I was a child. Now see my children and their friends play like how I used to play is just amazing. I can share my experience and my memories with them” Parent/Carer – Survey.

“Outside play, creative play and imaginative play, like children experienced years ago - I did!” Parent/Carer – Survey

Loose parts play and natural play give them the opportunity to work on problem solving and working together. I wish to see more of this type play around our community and neighbourhood. This type of play is much needed in this generation.” Parent/Carer – Survey

“I think most of us older people realize the value of it, we realize it's important, we realize that it is something we had in our lives perhaps that children don't have now, so therefore we see it's important.” Principal



As expected, and in line with the theory of compound flexibility (Brown, 2003), what appears to be happening is that the presence of Joomunjie Land (and loose parts within the school) has provided the children/students the opportunity to *'look after themselves and look after others', 'improve their judgement of danger', 'become more confident' and 'show other kids and staff what they can do'*. This in turn helps adults to view children differently or more positively in terms of their capacity and resilience.

“I see it is our society we've taking a lot of those opportunities [for risky play] away and I feel like Joomunjie Land is one of those rare places that offers children the opportunity...it's it like everything's not padded in foam and fenced off in a small area and it's given them that self-responsibility to look after themselves and look after others.” Parent2

“Watching them play creatively and explore different roles of playing – they negotiate to make things work, team leading, communicate more with other members – improve their judgement of danger as there are lots of unusual parts they don’t usually see ... I think it has helped him become more confident with a larger circle of friends and has helped him grow his sense of responsibility.”

Parent/Carer – Survey

“Yes. The students are wanting to spend time in there to help regulate themselves they get the opportunity to show other kids and staff what they can do.”

School Personnel – Survey

“Yes! Loose parts allows students to be creative and take risks which builds their confidence and self worth.”

School Personnel – Survey

Children/students also recognize the opportunity Joomunjie Land provides them to learn and grow.

“At Joomunjie Land you learn to be nice to everyone and it gives me ideas of things to do at home so I'm not bored.”

Child/Student – Survey

“Yea because I can figure things out by myself.”

Child/Student – Survey

While ‘playgrounds’ provide children the opportunity to play outside, Joomunjie Land offers chances for growth not available in these adult designed spaces. In essence, Joomunjie Land is a unique environment that enables children to develop not only their social and problem-solving skills but also their physical and mental health or general wellbeing. As indicated by a child in their survey response *‘because it’s outdoors and I get fresh air and it makes me feel better’* Child/Student – Survey.

“I don't just want to lay down. I want to go out and do things instead of just going (does a laying down action) all day ... yeah I feel like I'm just trying to do new things instead of just being too scared to do them.”

Child1

“I was just really bored and tired ... I didn't feel like um walking. Yeah I just didn't feel like walking, running around or anything but then [Joomunjie Land happened]

... [and] also with footy [it] helps.”

Child4

“I feel like I'm getting more fit when I go there.”

Child/Student – Survey

“More willing to play and explore, building and creating structures inside and outside.”

Parent/Carer – Survey

“It supports a whole range of development I believe – Problem solving skills – Physical development – Mental development – Creative thinking – Personal awareness – Autonomous play – Social play.”

Parent/Carer – Survey

Children/students, parent/carers and school personnel all commented on the benefits Joomunjie Land has had on children's mental health. As indicated by responses to the three adjectives question a number of children and their parent/carers reflected children are **HAPPIER**. Further, several children and parent/carers stated that Joomunjie Land helps them calm down as it helps wear children out. For some, however, Joomunjie Land offers children more than 'burning off extra energy', it helps them manage a range of complex issues happening for them, emphasizing even more so the value of compound flexibility in assisting children to thrive.

*"I have ADHD, really bad ADHD, and it [Joomunjie Land] really calms me down."
Child7*

"Well it changed my life. Yeah cuz now I feel much happier and I eat more because I eat in Joomunjie Land ... I go to my casual eating spot all the way over there, I like to read over there, yeah and come peaceful." Child2

"My son has a lot of mental health issues ... I believe Joomunjie Land is an amazing form of therapy. And I'm sure a lot of children who have a lot going on in their lives would benefit from the freedom of play it offers.

Freedom of play and creative play is amazing for a child's mental health and development. It's also amazing for their social development and problem solving."

Parent/Carer – Survey

"Yes it has helped his mental health drastically." Parent/Carer – Survey

"Loose Parts is used to support one of my high risk behaviour students as a place for him to engage in quiet curious play, when the classroom cannot support his needs. It is exceptionally beneficial to engage him in an activity where he is free to build, create and experiment." School personnel – Survey

"Yes, so we've had children come with known chronic, trauma, anxiety, withdrawal from social interactions. ... One in particular I'm thinking of couldn't even go into class. Spent a lot of the time screaming and distressed. Over the years it seems that that particular young [person] has developed not just the ability to get along with others and put up with things that go wrong... Disappointments, Loss of control over things... but um has become a leader and has become um a confident leader, and communicator. And so you know, I could name many stories. Some of them are merely the fact that the child was electively mute and began to speak in those places, in those playgrounds. Because what they're doing means a lot to them in those places and they had need of communication." Principal

Overwhelmingly children/students, parent/carers and school personnel reflected the importance of play especially in helping overcome boredom and offering children something different to do – mainly because Joomunjie Land keeps changing. Most children expressed that Joomunjie Land has assisted them to reduce boredom and the use of technology while increasing the amount of play outside of Joomunjie Land, for example '*ideas of things to do at home*'.

“Yeah loads there's like um I've been getting more like fun more creative... so much” Child8

“Yes, because at Joomunjie Land you learn to be nice to everyone and it gives me ideas of things to do at home so I'm not bored.” Child Survey

“Interviewer – how come you don't get bored with Joomunjie Land? Cuz new things happen every week like down there the swings been changed that thing the whole thing has been moved so it's been changed a lot so every time I come there's something new...yeah some sometimes I feel like bored when I'm coming down here cuz I think nothing's changed then there's like a whole new thing and it's crazy” Child1 Interview

“Just when I'm at school, I'm bored all day but then after school when I come to Joomunjie Land um I get to have fun and not be in boredom.” Child4

*“He's a very literal kid so imagination doesn't necessarily come as easily to him as it does to other kids but by coming to Joomunjie Land he's learned how to oh I'm going to take that bucket and it's going to be a helmet or it's going to be a sink or a slide you know yeah just opened his mind up to different things.”
Parent/Carer1*



When asked what they would be doing if they were not at Joomunjie Land children/students and parent/carers mostly said children would be at home bored and/or on technology. Indeed, children/students and parent/carers indicated that there were few play opportunities in the area let alone a play space that is a sanctuary for children full of flexibility and random things to play with.

For example, for Child4 their reflection was that Joomunjie Land helped them break out of boredom and get active:

“On the days that I don't [go to Joomunjie Land] I'm just sitting at home doing like doing random things or just um passing the footy with my dad or then if I'm at Joomunjie Land, I'm having fun and um and running around and just having fun and not just sitting at home doing boring stuff...yeah it's just made me um much more happier and just because before Joomunjie Land was open and um and I was at school and I was at home ... I was just really bored and tired ... I just didn't feel like walking, running around or anything.” Child4

“It just it changes my day because I'm not always on my phone and I have something interactive to do cuz being on your phone or on your tablet or anything electronic sometimes just makes you [makes a brain dead face] go like” Child2

As highlighted, the benefits of Joomunjie Land to the children/students and parent/carers appears to be wide ranging. From helping children to grow and develop a range of skills and friendships to parent/carers knowing their children are happy, having fun and are safe while also providing parent/carers an opportunity to work, study, or spend time with other children.

While some parent/carers said they were unsure about the impact at school when asked, overwhelmingly children/students and school personnel stated the benefits have been very positive to the school. As reflected by the school principal, school morale is up, the number of behavioural issues (the original reason for beginning Joomunjie Land) have reduced and his own sense of job satisfaction has improved.

“So I think we'd still be dealing with a churn of conflict in the playground, of negative, punitive behaviour management systems that don't really work and I think that staff morale wouldn't have I mean there's a lot of staff who have found this whole project extremely satisfying to be a part of and are proud of it ... I think it's generally made my job satisfaction better ... To have something like that to be a part of and to watch it grow has been very satisfying so it's helped me.”
Principal

Since beginning just over 18 months ago Joomunjie Land has become not just a central aspect in the lives of the children who play there, but also the school and the wider community. The strength of attachment and what Joomunjie Land means to children/students and school personnel is demonstrated by children returning to the space overtime and in their responses to the question **If Joomunjie Land was to close, what would this mean to you?** While some responded they would be sad, disappointed with the loss of building progress or that there would be less fun, others suggested more drastic efforts to reopen Joomunjie Land would be necessary including *‘I would ring up my lawyer’*.

“I would cry because this just makes me happy every day, though not every day, but like every time I come here, and yeah I'll cry” Child6

*“It would make me sad as there would be nothing to do after school”
Child/Student – Survey*

“Well I'd be really mad from all my progress. Interviewer - Progress, progress? What do you mean?... like this (Child15's complex cubby base) took me months to build. It might look easy but it wasn't easy. People destroyed it. Then we rebuild. Then we upgrade. Then they destroyed it. Then we rebuild.” Child15

*“I would be very sad and I would ring up my lawyer Interviewer: oh really what would you want the lawyer to do?... to stop them from closing Joomunjie Land”
Child4*

“um I would have to like hunt you down and make you, like I'd like force you to open it” Child8

Parent/carers and school personnel were also concerned if Joomunjie Land closed often citing the effect it would have on the children due to the lack of play and things to do for children. Parent/carers also reflected it would mean less time for them while their child is playing safely in Joomunjie Land. More widely, the principal expressed the difficulty in communicating the closure and what that would mean for the community as a whole and especially the children. In particular, school personnel and parent/carers expressed there would be disappointment in the loss of all of the children's building progress possibly mirroring disappointment in the loss of potential development for children if Joomunjie Land was not there. Responses to this question indicates that Joomunjie Land is seen as a community backyard that is valued by the children and the community. While attached to the school the community engagement and desire to keep it open suggests there is a sense of ownership by the whole community not just the school community.

“Oh goodness... I'd be, I'd be devastated ... I hardly have an answer to that question. I'd be very upset. I'd be I'd be struggling to communicate that to the community and I think the community now realizes the importance of this ... They'd [the children] be devastated, yeah absolutely devastated. Not just because of the lack of play, but because of the work that they put into it and the thinking they've put into it and the love that they've put into it.” Principal

“um what would I do if it closed tomorrow? um I think I'd be really sad I'd probably look into the reasons why um I remember when they were asking for funding I was like oh my dad owns the business I should get him to like see if he'll pay some money sponsor it or something you know so yeah I would maybe get on a bandwagon and start asking someone to do that” Parent1

“Child4 would be devastated like he would be really really upset Interviewer - yeah and what would that mean to you then as a parent? um well him being upset maybe would make me upset you know would be really disappointed that he's missing out on something really fun that he enjoys doing and also like I said it just gives me that extra time to get things done on few afternoons a week and spend time with my daughter or do something with my wife or whatever so it takes away that other family time as well” Parent2



Discussion

If children/students, parent/carers and school personnel understand the importance of loose parts play why then is there so much concern about 'risky play'? It appears that apprehension about 'risky play' and children hurting themselves is overcome by adults understanding of loose parts play which in turn helps them understand risk better. Hence, just as Joomunjie Land has provided children with a space to grow, develop, improve wellbeing, and secure friendships and sense of belonging, as well as demonstrate courage, it has helped adults understand, and maybe remind them of the importance of free, risky play. This has in turn helped adults be more courageous and trusting in their children/student's abilities, as well as prioritise the benefits their children gain from this activity.

This may be due to a number of factors that could be considered critical success factors to creating a true 'community backyard' like Joomunjie Land. Critical success factors identified by the principal, when offering advice to other schools, included: good practical advice about how to do this safely,

professional development that supports 'risky play' and an understanding between different parties that authorizes the space.

But we [adults] still have some anxiety about actually putting it in place in schools and places like [Joomunjie Land], so I suppose the two things that have been a great help for us have been good information about the theory of play and the importance of play and advice, practical advice from the AIP [Australian Institute of Play] about how to how to do this safely and well, good professional development and also um the model that we have used with the Australian Institute of play of having Joomunjie ... under an agreement that works well in schools. And that's a model that can be replicated safely in other schools and I think it would relieve a lot of anxiety." Principal

Another critical success factor identified through this evaluation includes the building of relationships between Playworkers from AIP with children/students, the parent/carers and school personnel. The strengthening of relationships assisted the Playworkers to understand the children's individual needs and help children and grown-up's navigate the perceptions of danger related to risky play. For example, the relationship built between school personnel and Playworkers enabled trust to develop, which in turn supported school personnel as they embarked on developing Joomunjie Land. Reflections by Playworkers also suggests that through the building of relationships with parent/carers it has also assisted them to understand the needs of children and the wider neighbourhood, as well as the role of risk in supporting their children to grow resilience.

Similar critical success factors were identified in a recent systematic review of the literature related to psychological sense of community³ (PSOC), which can help buffer against negative outcomes that are often associated with social marginalization⁴ (Littman, 2024). Similar to the critical success factors identified by the principal, the systematic literature review highlighted the significance of particular program features that were found to be positively related to the development of PSOC. These were, "physical and psychological safety; clear and consistent structure and appropriate supervision; supportive relationships; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; support for efficacy and mattering; opportunities for skill building; integration of family, school and community efforts" (Littman, 2024, p.6). On each of these features, evidence exists from interview and survey data that indicates Joomunjie Land, as a program, is providing these to children/students, parent/carers and school personnel (see Table 1.).

Thus, it would appear that professional development, or skill building, that includes practical advice about how to engage in 'risky play' and the rationale for environments like Joomunjie Land assists in the success of such ventures. The creation of positive social norms, in the form of 'rules' that the children develop and maintain appear to create the physical and psychological safety required. This

³ Psychological sense of community is an emotional mechanism where people feel connected to each other within a specific setting or generally. (Littman, 2024)

⁴ "Social marginalization is defined as a systematic effort to push individuals and groups "to the side, to the edge, or even over the edge" in society, often including "subordination (to keep down), oppression (to weigh down), and exclusion (to keep out)" (Causadias & Umana-Taylor, 2018, p. 209)." (Littman, 2024, p.1)

in turn leads to consistent structure and appropriate supervision needed in such spaces. The integration of family, school and community (AIP and other partners) further leads to more opportunities to belong and grow a community backyard. Underpinning all of this are supportive relationships that help drive and guide everything within Joomunjie Land.

Table 1. Evidence of Program Critical Success Factors at Joomunjie Land

Program Feature	Evidence
Physical and psychological safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe, fun, good Child/Student – Survey • Yes in that helps her to enjoy the outdoors in a safe, supported environment Parent/Carer – Survey • It's a fun safe place for them to attend and play ... to be kids without the worries of random people causing issues Parent/Carer – Survey • Outdoor loose parts play in a culturally diverse and safe environment Parent/Carer – Survey • Yes less children on the streets playing as they have a safe place to play without having to worry about cars Parent/Carer – Survey • Unstructured, imaginative play is amazing for allowing students to express their ideas in a safe environment School Personnel – Survey
Clear and consistent structure and appropriate supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a big area to play in where he's safe and it's monitored. Parent/Carer – Survey • I love the fact that Joomunjie Land is open after school to allow our students a supervised and safe time to play and explore. School Personnel – Survey • I would definitely recommend these play areas in other communities. AIP have been absolutely amazing with their support and contribution to the success of this area ... [Playworkers are] perfect role models in so many ways School personnel – Survey • Great appreciation for the work of the Australian Institute of Play. [Playworkers] have worked indefatigably to make play arise and blossom in our school. Their support has been of great assistance, not only in establishing play and play spaces, but in enhancing the positive child-aware culture of the school; making it a more supportive and attractive place for families and children. School Personnel – Survey
Supportive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have fun with your friends and build stuff as well. Child/Student – Survey • Help build my friendship a little more Child/Student – Survey • That you have freedom to play with your friends without being nagged by teachers Child/Student – Survey • Yes, I have made new friends at Joomunjie Land I probably wouldn't have made at school Child/Student – Survey • Friend groups appear to be less set when in loose parts. Students tend to gravitate towards others that are working towards similar goals or willing to take the same risks, rather than sticking exclusively with their established friend groups School Personnel – Survey
Opportunities to belong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think it has an impact on families because Loose Parts provides a safe place to kids to play together in the neighbourhood (which is an important part of childhood) and it is also bringing outside people to the community which encourages opportunities to interact with a more diverse group of kids School Personnel – Survey

Positive social norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Joomunjie Land, kids design and rule their play place, remind me so much of my childhood, a land of free play Parent/Carer – Survey • Creative and fun play opportunity. Flexibility and dealing with change, due to [Playworker’s] ongoing hard work in keeping the place fresh with new equipment and play areas. The students look forward to their time in Joomunjie Land as [Playworkers] and other staff always make kids feel welcome and supported in a fun, non judgmental way!! Super important to our neurodiverse kids and kids with special needs. School Personnel – Survey
Support for efficacy and mattering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a play advocate, I have always had great expectations for our loose parts play areas. I guess for me, it's when we observe some of our students who have some really complex needs, and I am literally holding my breath waiting to see what happens, if something will go wrong, and it doesn't. These are the moment where perhaps we are reminded to always assume competence School personnel – Survey
Opportunities for skill building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, because at Joomunjie Land you learn to be nice to everyone and it gives me ideas of things to do at home so I'm not bored. Child – Survey • Yea because I can figure things out by myself Child – Survey • Problem solving skills as students are encouraged to work things out for themselves School personnel – Survey • Many students have improved their social skills. It allows children or staff to support them and come up with a solution that everyone can be happy with the outcome School Personnel – Survey • Yes, not only does it help parents get the kids outside it brings parents back to their childhood and to 'let go' a little School personnel – Survey • Kids are more resilient especially when they may hurt themselves, they are more calm and helpful to others School Personnel – Survey
Integration of family, school and community efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the beginning of the development of Joomunjie Land, like through student council through the school um since the beginning of that entire process I think he's [child] really taken on a community citizen sort of role like he's got more of an interest in wanting to contribute more into society and how everything works and just is more interested in how things work and how to make things better and more comfortable and just yeah rather than just focusing in on what directly affects him ... similarly I think it's opened my eyes a little bit to the wider Community a little bit rather than just being focused on what my kids are doing and what we're doing it's also just being aware of other kids in the area and keeping an eye out and feeling a bit more of a community connection with people Parent2 • Let us know how we can help as parents Parent/Carer-Survey • Please let me know how I can help to let this kind of play becomes normal and everywhere in our community. It will help so many kids with their mental health, which is such a burden right now for youth. Mental health age is getting younger and younger, they need play place like this to help them find themselves again. Where they won't be judged or excluded by the society. Please don't give up what you are doing, I can see hope to help our next generation! Parent/Carer-Survey • Yes! I have used Joomunjie with my own children and have invited friends who live on the Gold Coast to come up with their kids to play. All children and families love loose parts, especially the freedom to get dirty whilst having fun! School Personnel – Survey

What Next?

When asked about **What would improve Joomunjie Land?** a number of children/students and parent/carers commented *'It is fine the way it is'* Child – Survey.

'By doing nothing' Child8

'It works great the way it is' Parent/Carer – Survey

'I think you guys are doing great. I hope you get funding to improve the facility or open it more etc.' Parent/Carer – Survey

'It's already pretty awesome' Parent/Carer – Survey

'I'm not sure. But the people that run it are amazing they do a great job'
Parent/Carer – Survey

'I think I'm happy with the free service, like it's great where do you get free after school care um I just think my son needs to be better at signing in so then I know that you know he's here' Parent1

Another child suggested the need for more Joomunjie Lands elsewhere:

'Make some more things like this [Joomunjie Land] even if it's just a lot smaller just make something little like and then just put in a bunch of donated things and that just makes kids happy cuz they don't have to play on a playground that just never has something new to it and with this with things like Joomunjie Land it can be add more things can be added and added taken away then added back bigger' Child1

Surveyed children suggested a range of improvements including the need for a *'Bit more tools, just like nails and stuff'*, *'Water play'*, *'Make it BIGGER, make the whole school Joomunjie Land'*, *'Get some animals'*, and *'Continue to add new things'* (Children – Survey). Some children suggested the building of a treehouse:

'Yes make a tree house (Child7); yeah make a tree house (Child5); yeah make an actual tree house (All); like you can make a tree house and that two trees over there (Child6); or from that one tree all the way to that tree what have a big tree house fit all these kids in there (Child7).'

Children when interviewed raised the issue of the rope swing that was removed because it was not safe. Parent/carers also mentioned the need for another rope swing.

'But also one of the things that made me really sad is that over there - the swing (Child5); the swing that we made (Child7); Interviewer - everyone loved that swing ... yeah the branch it was attached to was not safe it's going to snap ... we built that one to try and make it up for it; that one hurts a lot (Child7).'

'You used to have a swing here but I think it fell down in one of the storms. So maybe there's an improvement there you could have a rope swing again' Parent1

Indeed, Child2 when interviewed was very clear with the need for more swings – *'Well if there was like more swings around the place'*.

When surveyed parent/carers most often referred to being *'open more days'* or more often. Longer opening hours was not mentioned by many children except for Child15 who stated: *'add more time like 6:00pm and more stuff so making Play sessions longer and more things'*. Also mentioned were references to having an *'animal nursery'* or *'animals'*. There was a suggestion to have food or *'afternoon snacks provided'*. Parents also expressed a desire to help and wanting to know how to help.

'Open more days; more play place like Joomunjie Land across different suburbs; let us know how we can help as parents'

'Open more days please'

'More hours, maybe extend out a bike track or an animal nursery'

'Keep it open until 5:30pm'

'Weekend play opportunities'

'Open more often, possibly more staff, afternoon snacks provided? I know my kids come home starving'

Other parent/carers suggested having *'Maybe some field space included so the kids can safely run around in an open space'* (Parent/Carer – Survey). Some children also mentioned the desire to use the sporting field next to Joomunjie Land.

'I think there should be someone that can supervise like people playing soccer and touch and stuff just on the oval. Because some kids might get tired of being in Joomunjie Land for like if you're in Joomunjie Land for about 30 minutes sometimes you get a little bit tired so you so you might want to go on the oval but then you're not allowed to because you're coming to Joomunjie Land' Child4

'Being open more days obviously that would be an improvement that would be great and um possibly including utilizing the oval where we can for the kids to run around and play Touch footy or soccer or just throw a ball around or whatever throw frisbees whatever ... [I] often watch the kids want to go out there and play yeah yeah if there was just a bit more open grass space for them to be able to just safely run around and utilize' Parent2

Parent/carers also indicated that some parents were not aware that Joomunjie Land was open after school. Communications to and from parent/carers appears to be one way in which Joomunjie Land could be improved.

'Perhaps making more people aware it's open after school'

'Didn't realize you were open after school hours'

Finally, when asked Child12 suggested someone could fix her base by adding *real walls*, having *real food* and *lasers*:

'They could fix my base make it a real floor, have real walls have real food and make and make sure there's laser so no one comes in Interviewer - Not surveillance cameras? no you need lasers and cameras ... and if you touch the lasers you die' Child12

Joomunjie Land continues to evolve and grow with the needs of the community and in this regard is growing in value and strength as a community resource. The concept of loose parts play and risky play is growing within the wider region. Recently two local Playworkers were employed to work at Joomunjie Land. The employment of two local Playworkers draws on localised knowledge and awareness as well as continues the play-capacity building within the Eagleby South community. Another community backyard and loose parts play area is being constructed in Yarrabilba. Joomunjie Land is a source of inspiration for other schools, who are seeking support to start their loose parts play journey. Thus, increasing the benefits of this type of play for the wider Logan region.

Conclusion

In conclusion, when reviewing the interview and survey responses it is possible to conceptualise Joomunjie Land as more than just a play space, rather it is a rich source of joy, fun, adventure,



imagination, ingenuity, activity, creativity, freedom and agency and of course physical activity where children get *'to do whatever we want'*. It is a space where children get to challenge themselves and master a wide range of problems and tasks while also building up friendship, connection and camaraderie. Skills developed include social, communication, problem solving and language skills. It is a space that is safe and calming. It is a place of belonging, where positive identity, ownership, responsibility, pride in achievement (and

failure) and resilience can be developed. The space provides empathy, caring and a place of healing for positive mental and physical health and makes children happy. For some children it is *'part of my*

family or *'smells like nature'*, while for another it is *'the world to me'*. Clearly it is *'more than just a play space'*.

We live in a time where childhood is highly structured and governed by adults, with most opportunities for risk-exploration by children removed. Where children's ability to connect with local friends after school has been significantly reduced. In a time where childhood trends towards rising anxiety, depression, stress, sedentary screen-based play, and negative life trajectories seem to be rising (Haidt, 2024). The experience of children/students, parent/carers and school personnel suggests that Joomunjie Land is bucking this trend acting as a 'sanctuary for a positive childhood' through protecting child-led play.



Starting and maintaining a space like Joomunjie Land takes a lot of work on the part of children and adults. However, in taking the approach to addressing behavioural problems, the school, the

Part of my family



Australian Institute of Play, adults and most importantly children have been able to contribute to creating a 'community backyard' that is assisting children/students, parent/carers and school personnel to come together and grow safely and meet many of their needs. Indeed, many of the issues identified at the Childhood Summit in 2023 were discussed by children, parent/carers and school personnel

throughout the interviews and surveys. Joomunjie Land has assisted children to get off their screens, even when not at Joomunjie Land. It also appears to help children manage the pressures on them; and seems to be positively assisting children who are experiencing a wide range of factors related to mental health. As suggested by the 2023 Childhood Summit child keynote speakers, play, listening more to children, and growing opportunities for healthy child agency, as offered in Joomunjie Land, appear to be addressing the issues raised at the 2023 Childhood Summit.





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Appendix A
Survey Questions

SCHOOL	PARENTS	CHILDREN
ATTENDANCE AND WHEN Joomunjie Land SHOULD BE OPEN		
	What best describes how often your child attends Joomunjie Land?	What best describes how often you attend Joomunjie Land?
	What best describes how long your child has been coming to Joomunjie Land?	What best describes how long you have been coming to Joomunjie Land?
	How often SHOULD Joomunjie Land be open? (tick all applicable boxes)	How often SHOULD Joomunjie Land be open? (tick all applicable boxes)
EXPERIENCE, SATISFACTION AND USE		
How satisfied are you with the loose parts play spaces	How would you rate YOUR experience of Joomunjie Land?	How would you rate your experience of Joomunjie Land?
How important do you think Loose Parts Play is for your School?	How would you rate how important Joomunjie Land is for your children?	How would you rate how important Joomunjie Land is for you?
What do you use Loose Parts Play spaces for?	Why do your child/ren choose to come to Joomunjie Land?	Why do you come to Joomunjie Land?
If the kids talk about their time in these Loose Parts Play spaces, in your classrooms, what are they saying?		What is best thing about Joomunjie Land?
	What 3 words would you use to describe what Joomunjie Land is for your child/ren?	What 3 words would you use to describe what Joomunjie Land means to you?
WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF NOT IN Joomunjie Land/ CANNOT DO ELSEWHERE/ IF Joomunjie Land CLOSED		
	What would your child/ren be doing if they were not playing at Joomunjie Land?	What would you be doing if you were not playing at Joomunjie Land?

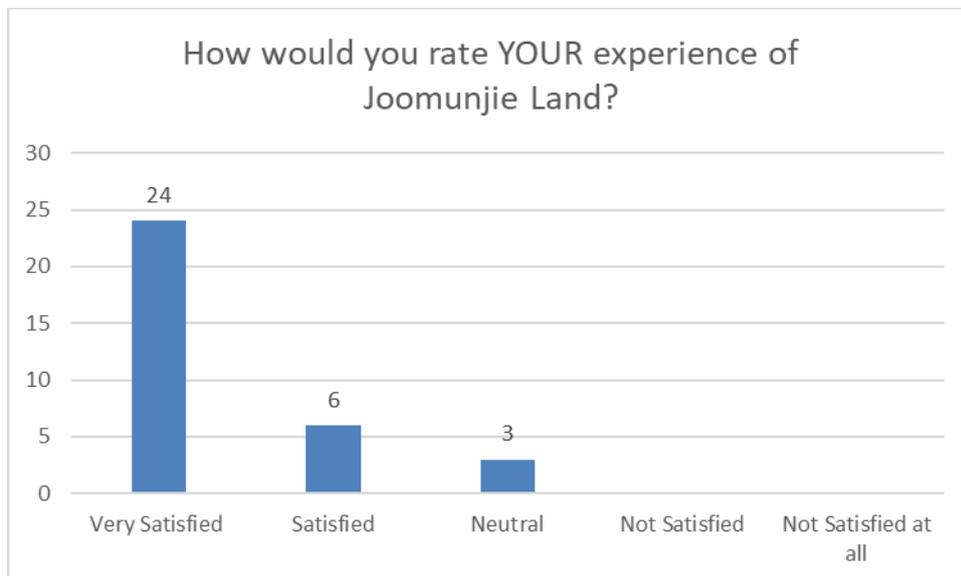
SCHOOL	PARENTS	CHILDREN
	What happens in Joomunjie Land for your child/ren that they can't do anywhere else?	What happens in Joomunjie Land that you can't do anywhere else?
If Joomunjie Land was to close, what would this mean to you?	If Joomunjie Land was to close, what would this mean to you?	If Joomunjie Land was to close, what would this mean to you?
BENEFIT AND IMPACT OF Joomunjie Land		
	When your child/ren get home after a Joomunjie Land, how are they different than on other days?	Do you feel different on days you don't come to Joomunjie Land?
If any, what benefits are the students getting from Loose Parts Play?	Has there been any benefits for you, as a result of your child/ren attending Joomunjie Land?	How does Joomunjie Land change your day?
Do you think Loose Parts play is having an influence on families and community? (please explain your answer)	As a result of your child/ren attending Joomunjie Land, have you noticed any changes at home?	Do you think coming to Joomunjie Land, is helping you at home? (please explain your answer)
Do you think Loose Parts Play continues to have an influence on the school? (please explain your answer)	As a result of your child/ren attending Joomunjie Land, have you noticed any changes at school?	Is Joomunjie Land helping you at school? (please explain your answer)
Have you noticed any unexpected outcomes from as a result of introducing Loose Parts Play?	As a result of your child/ren attending Joomunjie Land, have you noticed any changes in your neighbourhood?	Is Joomunjie Land helping you in your neighbourhood? (please explain your answer)
	Is Joomunjie Land supporting your child/ren's development? Please explain your answer.	Is Joomunjie Land helping you to be healthy? (please explain your answer)
		Is Joomunjie Land helping you in any other ways? (please explain your answer)
		Has there been any other benefits for you as a result of attending Joomunjie Land? (please explain your answer)

SCHOOL	PARENTS	CHILDREN
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND RECOMMENDATION		
What type of training would best help you to learn more and support the play practices in Loose Parts Play?		
How confident would you feel spending time with a class in these Loose Parts Play spaces?		
How likely would it be for you to recommend Loose Parts Play to another school?		
What is going well in and/or with Loose Parts Play?	How could we improve Joomunjie Land or our service?	What improvements do you think we could make to Joomunjie Land or what we provide in Joomunjie Land?
Is there any other feedback you would like to share?	Is there anything else you would like to share?	Is there anything else you would like to share?

Appendix B

Satisfaction

Overall, the 33 adults who responded to the survey reflected high satisfaction with the loose parts play spaces within the school, with 30 of the 33 respondents indicating they were either satisfied or very satisfied.



Similarly, four children stated that they were 'very happy with' their experience of Joomunjie Land while another said they were 'happy with it'.

When asked '**How important do you think Loose Parts Play is for your School?**' most respondents (including children) indicated either Very Important (31) or Important (2) (two respondent were neutral). Similarly, when school personnel were asked '**How likely would it be for you to recommend Loose Parts Play to another school?**' all said they were either very likely (12) or likely (1) to recommend loose parts play to other schools. These positive survey results are reflected in the interviews with the principal and parent/carers.