



Girls Recreational Spaces

Project Report



The WA Government through the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport is a major supporter of Nature Play WA and this project in Western Australia.

About

Why this matters



Recent research from overseas shows:



Most parks have more facilities for dog waste than for teenage girls



94% of youth facilities are skate parks or BMX tracks, and between 88-95% of users are boys and men



Girls are three times more likely to use alternative facilities like swings, shelters and social seating when these options are available

In Australia:



Up to 90% of teen and tween girls aren't getting enough physical activity



Rising levels of social isolation and mental health issues are affecting this group

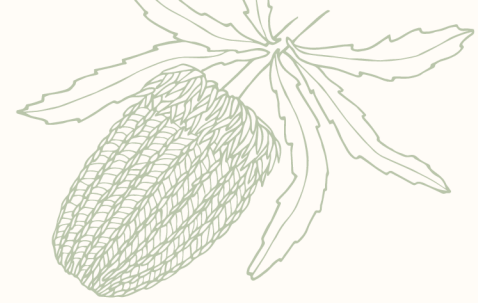
Our Aim

There is a void of research on how teen and tween girls are using Western Australian recreational spaces.

There is a clear need for research and consultation to:

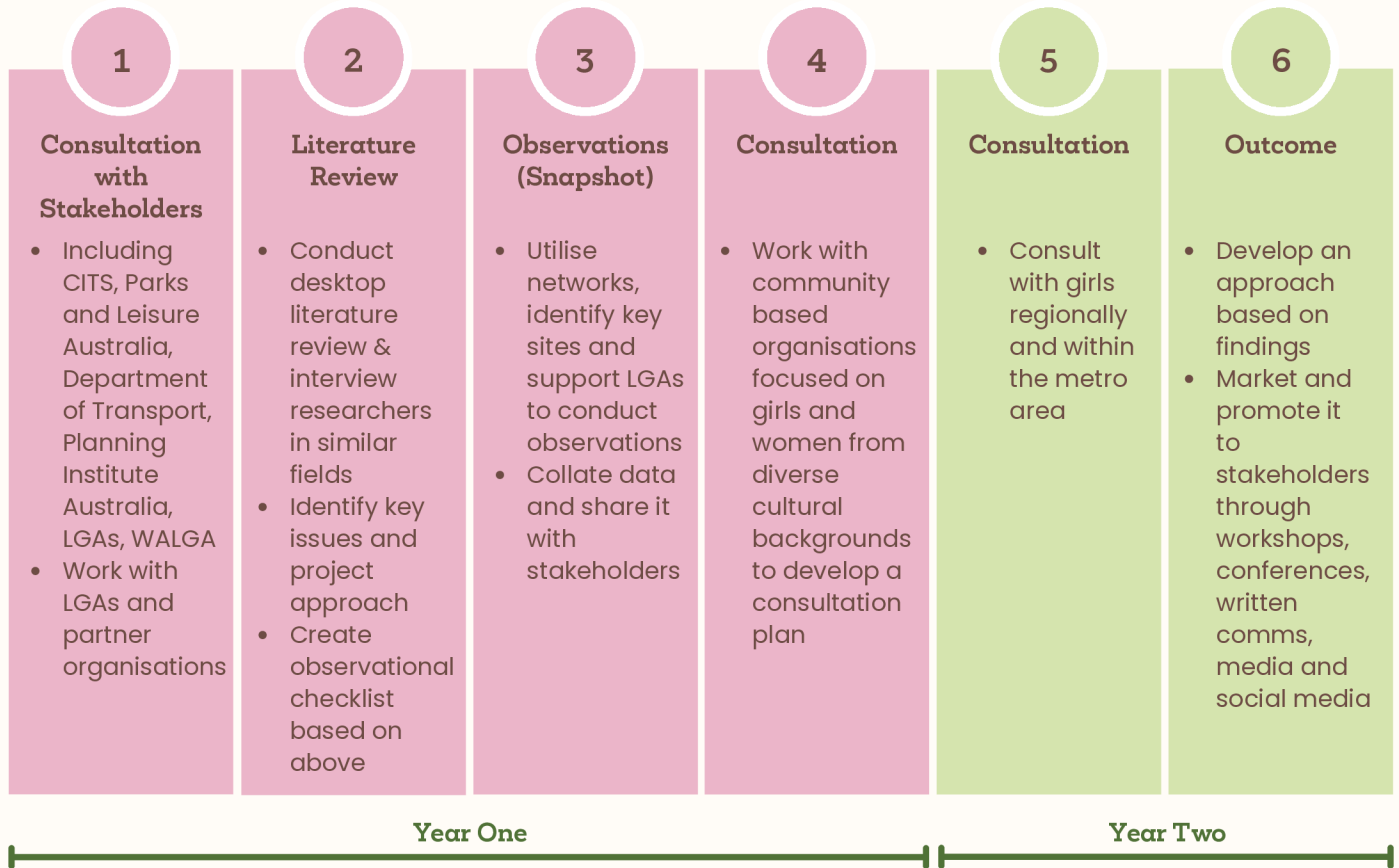
- Understand how recreational spaces are currently used (**Snapshot**)
- Learn what girls want in recreational spaces
- Support local governments, designers, developers, landscape architects, and State Government departments in creating recreational spaces that encourage and empower girls to engage in them



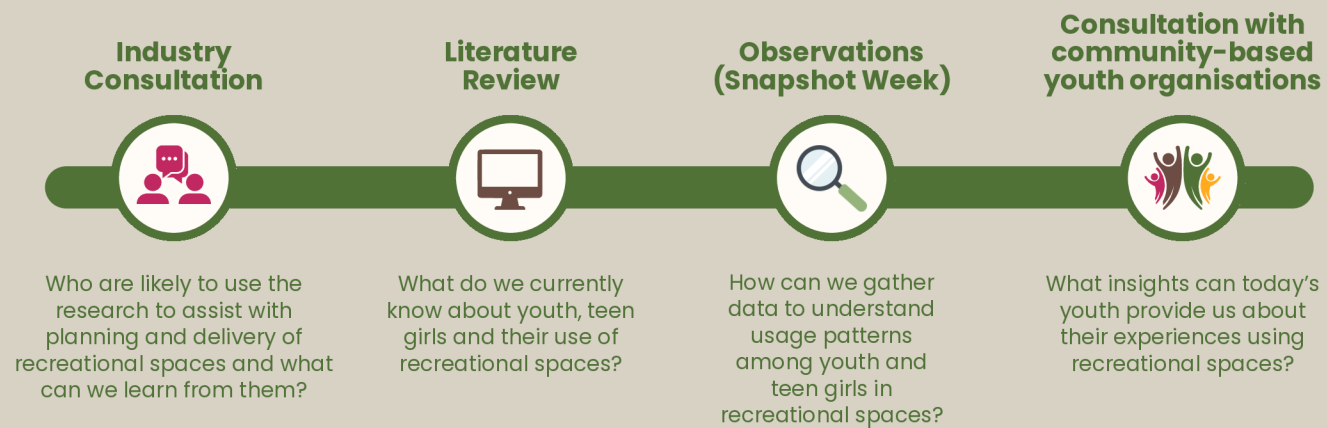


Project Plan

Years One and Two



Year One - Process



Industry Consultation

Year One



16

news stories
(details on the next page)



48

reports created and/or
updates shared



11

local governments
and WALGA were
consulted with



140+

expression of
interest sign-ups



5

keynote and
presentations



7

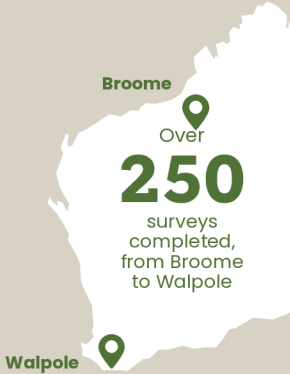
youth-focused
community organisations
were consulted with



Snapshot Data

Collated from 6 - 12 October 2025

A media campaign was undertaken which invited the community to observe local spaces and fill out a survey to capture who was using these spaces and how they were being used. Snapshot week was conducted during the October School holidays from morning (before 11am) to evening (after 6pm). We were thrilled by the community involvement which resulted in:



Key data findings

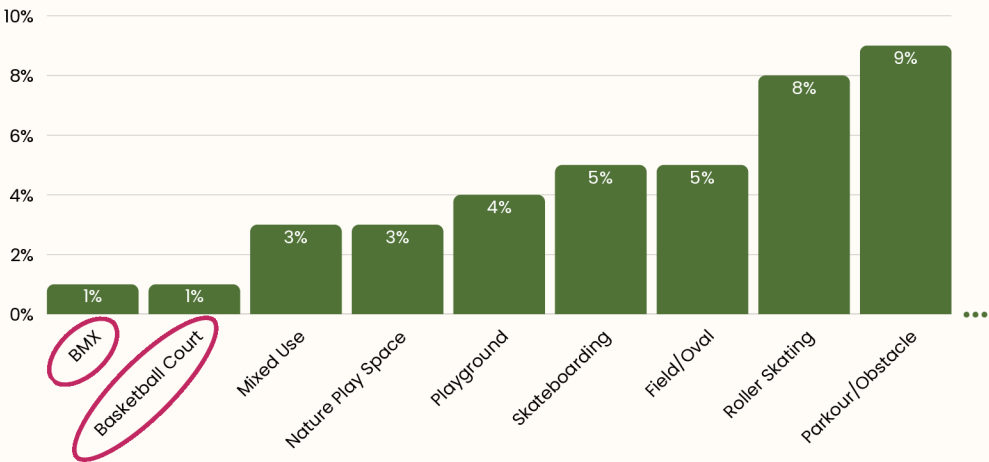
There has been a steep increase in the number of pump tracks (BMX), skateparks and basketball courts being developed in suburban areas in recent years.

BMX tracks and basketball courts were the two types of facilities that were **least likely** to be used by girls, according to the snapshot data. In instances where girls were observed in these types of spaces, they were almost never using the facility. Instead, they were observed sitting, standing, or walking nearby.

This data highlights issues in public spending with the assumption that facilities are equitably used, when they are not.

The graph below presents the data on the % of teen girls observed in different types of spaces.

Recreational spaces with the **lowest** % of teen girls observed



Snapshot Data

(continued)



Regardless of the type of facility or space, teen girls were most commonly observed:



Walking/walking dogs

22.58%



Sitting and chatting

21.51%



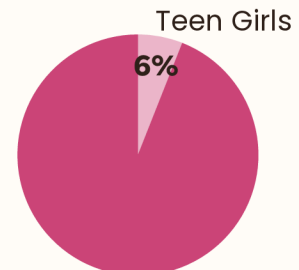
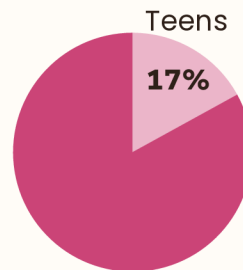
Swinging

21.51%

Top 3 recreational spaces with the **highest** % of teen girls observed

- Jetty
- Grass or open area
- Seating

Overall % of people observed in the space



They were often observed in the space, but not necessarily using the facilities.

Observations

When completing the snapshot survey, respondents were asked to make general observations about how the space was being used (or not).

“I do see teen girls skating here at times, but for the half hour I was there today, there were no female users skating or scooting at all”

Esplanade Youth Park, Fremantle

“Exclusively boys on the pump track”

Lake Monger Pump Track

“Girls are sitting on wide seating facing each other talking”

Scarborough Youth Hub

“Lots of younger children on scooters, all boys, except one young girl skateboarding”

Walliabup Skate Park

“Very few teenagers in the space at this [time]. Those that were teen girls were either sitting with their family, walking on the fringes, waiting for the swings or in the sheltered seating area”

Duncraig Adventure Hub

“All users were male, ranging from 6 years to adults. Only female observed was a mum sitting on the edge of the skatepark”

Coolbellup Skate Park



Media Stories

495,226 reached across socials (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), our website and newsletter.



Date	Media outlet	Topic
March 2025	Parks and Leisure Australia Journal	Designing spaces for girls
30th Mar 2025	The West Australian (print)	Designing spaces for girls
30th Mar 2025	The West Australian (web)	Designing spaces for girls
31st Mar 2025	9 News (TV)	Designing spaces for girls
1st Oct 2025	9 News (TV)	Snapshot week
2nd Oct 2025	6PR (radio)	Snapshot week
7th Oct 2025	ABC Regional (radio)	Snapshot week
20th Feb 2026	Sonshine FM (radio)	Snapshot results
23rd Feb 2026	The West Australian (print)	Snapshot results
23rd Feb 2026	The West Australian (web)	Snapshot results
23rd Feb 2026	The West Australian (Facebook)	Snapshot results
23rd Feb 2026	ABC South West (radio)	Snapshot results
23rd Feb 2026	PerthNow (web)	Snapshot results
23rd Feb 2026	ABC Perth (radio)	Snapshot results
23rd Feb 2026	6PR (radio)	Snapshot results

16 media appearances, with a total audience of **1,658,579**



Next Steps

Year 2 and beyond



Consultation with youth to help inform design



Activation of existing recreational spaces



Crime prevention and safety

A consistent theme across the literature review, snapshot observations and industry consultation is the need to place girls and young women at the centre of the design process.

1. Consultation with Youth

The next stage of the project prioritises engagement with teen girls to better understand their preferences, barriers to participation and perceptions of safety within recreational spaces.

Engagement methods may include:

- Workshops and co-design sessions with girls
- Surveys and digital engagement tools
- Focus groups facilitated through youth organisations

2. Informed Design

Insights gathered through this process may inform a set of evidence-based design recommendations that local governments, planners and landscape architects can apply when developing or upgrading recreational spaces.

These recommendations could form part of a practical toolkit developed by Nature Play WA to support stakeholders in creating environments that feel welcoming, inclusive and socially comfortable for girls.





Project next steps

(continued)

3. Activation of existing recreational spaces

While design improvements are important, the research also indicates that how spaces are programmed and activated can significantly influence whether girls feel comfortable using them. Many recreational areas already exist but are underutilised by girls due to social dynamics, perceptions of ownership by boys, or a lack of activities that appeal to them.

Future stages of the project could explore opportunities that help to activate existing spaces through targeted programming. Engaging with sporting organisations or community groups could support initiatives that encourage girls to engage with recreational environments in ways that feel safe and inclusive.

4. Crime prevention and safety

Perceptions of safety play a critical role in whether girls choose to use recreational spaces. Both the literature and consultation with industry demonstrate that girls' participation is also influenced by environmental cues relating to safety, visibility and social comfort.

Future stages of the project could look at exploring crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles into planning and upgrades of recreational spaces.

