

# Auckland City's Playground Expert

**G**etting stuck in the tunnel slide at a McDonald's playground was one of the more undignified moments of Philippa Bollond's career. And presenting a segment at the NZ Recreation Association's national Playground Safety Seminar counts as one of the more demanding.

But the biggest challenge of all, she says, is the ongoing commitment to providing safe and interesting playgrounds for children.

It's an area in which Philippa, of Project Services in the Recreation and Community Services Group, has specialised since installing her first playground in 1992. Since then she has overseen the installation of more than 30, and become the playground "guru" for the City.

She has a real interest in providing the best possible play equipment for children, and having a four-year-old daughter gives her added insight into what children, and their parents, want by way of play equipment and related facilities.

But even with this insight, nothing is assumed. One of the most important aspects of project managing a playground installation or upgrade is the work that is carried out beforehand to find out what local users want and need, says Philippa.

"Often this is done via a survey of local residents and users to establish user demographics, potential use and preferences in play equipment, colour schemes, layout and location." This feedback, collated and analysed, is used to decide on all aspects of the playground's development.

## Latest trends

Philippa works hard to keep up with up with latest trends, often testing the equipment herself - which is how she came to create a diversion at McDonald's when trying out the slide.



*Philippa tries out a slide at the new Mission Bay playground, her most recently completed project.*

Philippa has special expertise in safety aspects, both practical and academic. In 1996 she did a research paper on playground safety standards as part of her post-grad diploma in management. She is sought after as a speaker on the topic, and to comment on a range of issues to do with playground installation and safety.

## Popular

Playgrounds are more important today than ever before, she says. "With the trend towards smaller backyards and a

growing need for public recreational facilities, they are becoming increasingly popular assets."

Some people question whether it is the council's role to provide local playgrounds, or whether they should be provided by private organisations. Philippa believes a balance between the two works best, as each caters for different needs.

"Local playgrounds are not just providing play equipment, they also provide a place to meet and interact with other children, at no cost to the parents."