



PLAY32

PLAY32: An Olympic and Paralympic Games legacy for Children's Play and Voice

Position Paper

This paper presents the case for embedding children's play as a core pillar of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games legacy. Framed within the Queensland Government's Elevate 2042 20-year strategy and aligned with the implementation agenda outlined in Delivering 2032, we call for play and youth voice to be formally recognised and invested in as foundational elements of a lasting, inclusive legacy of a healthier, more active and inclusive society for all Australian children.

This is an open invitation—backed by research, grounded in community, and designed to engage a wide audience. It's a call to imagine what could be possible when we put children at the centre of our Olympic legacy. Include their voices. Feature their ideas. And start early.

Ava, 10 years old



I want to be involved in...
1. Desine stadium
2. transport for athletes
3. food for guests

Wherever, Whenever,
We're together



Arya, 9 years old

What is Play32?

The Play 32 Collective is a Queensland-based cross-sectoral coalition of Australian leaders, organisations, practitioners, academics and collaborators working together with the shared purpose of advocating for children's play and voice to be a lasting, inclusive legacy for all Australian children aged from birth to 24, as an accelerated outcome of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The founding members of this Collective (in alphabetical order) include Australian Institute of Play, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), Design Institute of Australia, Little Athletics Queensland, Liveworm, Play Australia, Play Matters, Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership, and University of Southern Queensland.

Images and ideas included in this Position Paper created by primary school students from Matthew Flinders Anglican College, Buderim when asked "Why is the Olympics/Paralympics in 2032 going to be amazing?" and "How would you like to contribute to making 2032 the best Olympic and Paralympic Games ever?"

What is play?

Play should be protected, valued, and embedded wherever children live, learn and grow.

Play is how children make sense of the world—it is how they learn, express themselves, connect with others, and build a sense of belonging. High-quality play is child-led: it is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated, and driven by curiosity and imagination. It is active and real—engaging all the senses, often involving movement, exploration, and social interaction. When children play, they make decisions, take risks, solve problems, and negotiate meaning. It's through these everyday moments—building, designing, pretending, running, tinkering, storytelling—that children grow the skills, confidence, and identity they need to thrive.

Why play?

All athletes begin as children who played. Without play, there is no pathway to sport, and without investment in children's play, we risk missing the most powerful, preventative, and equitable legacy the Games could leave.

Play is a biological necessity. It is the foundation of every child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. It is also the beginning of physical and visual literacy—the competence and confidence to move, explore, and participate actively in life.

The deep biological drive and participation to play is critical for healthy development. While humans are not the only species who play when young, we are the only species who actively removes these opportunities to play through poor planning and oversight of our built environments and social systems.

The case for legacy investment in play

The Science of play

Play is not an optional activity—it is a developmental essential. Extensive scientific research shows that play supports brain development, physical health, mental wellbeing, and social skills. Outdoor play increases physical activity, enhances motor skills, and fosters resilience, curiosity, and problem-solving. Play-based experiences contribute to school readiness, emotional regulation, and lifelong learning.

Play also strengthens social bonds—our earliest lessons in communication, empathy, democracy, and collaboration begin in play. When children play, communities benefit: stronger relationships, better learning outcomes, and more resilient futures.

Play as a universal right

Play sits at the heart of children's health, learning, creativity, and connection to others and place—and it is also central to their participation in civic life. Children are not just future citizens; they are citizens now. Guided by Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), play must be recognised as a universal right of all children, including those living with disability and from diverse cultural and social backgrounds. Through play, children explore identity, express creativity, and shape their worlds—not only through sport, but in the arts, technology, and community life.

Embedding play in Olympic and Paralympic legacy planning means listening to children and including them in designing the future—reflecting democratic values and building a legacy with children, not just for them.

Equity through play

Not all children have equal access to quality play. A legacy that prioritises play can disrupt cycles of exclusion and inequality, creating opportunities for connection, inclusion, and wellbeing from the earliest years.

Inequitable access to play is a systemic barrier. Schools, communities, and public spaces are not always designed with children's right to play in mind. We can change that by embedding play into policies, planning, and investment strategies in delivering the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics.

Building social cohesion through community play

Community-led play initiatives strengthen relationships across generations, cultures and neighbourhoods. In times of change or challenge, play has the power to bring people together—to connect, heal, and thrive.

A pathway to sport and active lives

Play is how children develop fundamental movement skills like running, jumping, climbing, catching, and throwing. These are the building blocks of physical literacy and health and wellbeing. A child who plays is more likely to be physically active throughout life. Play is both the start and the spark of a sporting nation.

Importantly, consistent research shows that past Olympic Games have not significantly increased long-term sports participation, and in some cases (London 2012) have seen sports participation decrease. Brisbane 2032 is a chance to change that narrative—by starting earlier, in childhood, and embedding play as the true foundation for an active engaged life.

Creating playable communities

Embedding play into urban planning and infrastructure contributes to healthier, more connected, and resilient communities. Designing for play means investing in safe, green, inclusive public spaces; activating neighbourhoods with opportunities for informal and structured play; and ensuring that homes, schools, and community spaces are play-rich environments.

The Delivering 2032 implementation framework offers a key opportunity to ensure this happens. Playable cities and neighbourhoods can be embedded in urban renewal, transport design, and infrastructure delivery—ensuring play is planned for, not added on.

Core Principles

- Play is an investment in human potential—and in thriving communities play benefits all generations.
- Play is a biological necessity and a contributor to social cohesion.
- Children's voices and ideas must be embedded in the legacy from the beginning. Design with and for children.
- Opportunities for play should be provided from infancy into adulthood, with an emphasis on the early and middle years, due to the importance of developmental milestones.
- Families, neighbourhoods, communities, planners, educators, policymakers all have a role to play in ensuring children have time, space and permission to play.
- Equity and access must be priorities, so all children can benefit from play.
- Play supports environmental sustainability through nature-based design and engagement.

Embedding play into the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Play contributes directly to multiple legacy outcomes:

- Sport, health and inclusion by promoting active, healthy lifestyles for all children, laying the groundwork for lifelong wellbeing.
- Connecting people and places by building playable communities that foster walkability, inclusion, and joy in everyday spaces.
- A better future for our environment through nature play and green spaces building environmental awareness and connection.
- Economy of the future through investment in play creating employment across education, health, design, recreation, and community services.
- Delivering with purpose by embedding play through community wellbeing, participation, and placemaking.
- Embedding children's voice ensures the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics represent all citizens.

Ruby, 11 years old



I would like to be involved in designing the olympic training arenas. This design is efficient [being able to access all arenas in one], flashy [to attract tourists and a great look for the brisbane 2032 olympic

Call to Action

This is just the beginning—we are ready to work alongside decision-makers, communities, and delivery partners to bring these actions to life. We are actively developing a strategy to support each call to action and welcome others to join us in shaping a legacy for every child.

We call on Governments at all levels, the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Organising Committee, and community leaders across Australia to champion play as a legacy priority. Your leadership now will determine whether this once-in-a-generation opportunity creates lasting, equitable change.

Taking action means:

- Embedding play in legacy strategy, infrastructure and policy
- Investing in community-led, culturally grounded, and inclusive play initiatives
- Ensuring co-design with children is central to all legacy projects
- Strengthening the workforce across early childhood, health, education, and community sectors
- Making equitable access to play a measurable and visible legacy outcome.

This is our chance to do something bigger than sport. Let's make Brisbane 2032 a Games that honours every child's right to play—and leaves a legacy of wellbeing, belonging and bold ambition for the generations who follow.

To get involved or partner with us email us at info@play32.org.au

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