



Caroline Bay Playground

Timaru, New Zealand

Partners

Client: CPlay
Council: Timaru District Council

Location

Timaru, New Zealand

Markets

Communities, Councils

Awards

Recreation Aotearoa Parks Awards Playspace of the Year 2024 ; Chamber of Commerce Community Award and Business and Community Excellence Award



Thank you, Playground Centre! As a key contractor for this project, you have helped us create an awesome place to play. It's been amazing seeing everyone playing together, having a wonderful time, building strength and fitness, and creating memories. Thank you so much for helping us create something really important and needed for our locals and visitors. We are absolutely thrilled with the result."

Roselyn Fauth | CPlay Committee Member

Award-winning playground design for this South Island seaside hub – a community's epic legacy

Shaped by its incredible geological origins and wealth of Māori and European histories, Timaru thrives as a vibrant port city, an industrial hub, and the largest centre of population in the South Canterbury region. Once hailed as the 'Riviera of the South', one of its natural charms is the picturesque Caroline Bay, which has long been a focal point for leisure and recreation for Timaruvians and its tourists.

The old Caroline Bay playground had approached the end of its life and was far from the glory of its Riviera heydays, prompting the community to band together and embark on a journey to build a new playground. What transpired was a project that has completely re-imagined and revitalised the playground area into an inclusive, heritage-themed destination playground that will be enjoyed by residents, visitors and tourists for generations to come.

People-powered play space

Created by the community for the community, the Caroline Bay Playground is living proof that people are at the heart of every great playground design.



A story of vision, passion and persistence, the Caroline Bay Playground project was a five-year long labour of love that was led – from concept to completion – by CPlay, a volunteer committee of local community members. Supported by the Timaru District Council and numerous project partners including the Aoraki Foundation, key contractors such as Playground Centre, and Timaru businesses and residents.

The CPlay committee's playground journey was a voyage of discovery – of the complexity of a large-scale playground design and build project and the value of an engaged community.

By actively seeking their community's input from the outset, sharing the design concepts with them and getting their feedback, CPlay and Playground Centre were able to translate the community's ideas, needs and interests into an imaginative, exciting and memorable play experience. This approach also created an upswell of community support for CPlay's fundraising efforts: supporting the community group to maximise the playground's value in terms of the number of play options, the inclusion of bespoke play equipment specially designed and made for the playground, and state-of-the-art playground surfacing.

Together, we navigated each stage of the project – from design and layout to equipment selection, manufacturing and installation.

A celebration of local culture and history

Inspired by the area's rich local Māori and European maritime histories, the Caroline Bay Playground is more than just a play space, it also serves as a learning hub for history and heritage.

Working with the CPlay team, our Playground Centre team immersed ourselves in a quest for a deeper understanding of the land's stories and draw inspiration for the playground's design through a series of gallery and museum visits in Te Ana Maori Rock Art Centre.

Everywhere you look, there is something to entice and enthral playground users, and encourage them to explore, learn and connect with the stories that have shaped the bay and its people.

Everyone can play!

Playground Centre supplied over 40 standard and bespoke pieces of play equipment, all carefully chosen to provide the perfect mix of play options, challenges, and benefits for different ages and abilities, and sensory needs. All complemented by high quality, soft fall playground surfacing by Creo featuring designs by Francine Spencer, a Maori artist and CPlay Committee member.

The playground's centrepiece, the 10m tall bespoke Lighthouse Tower is inspired by Timaru's Blackett's Lighthouse and boasts adventurous play features including 7m and 5m tube slides, a rock-climbing wall, scramble net, and rope climbing chimney all expertly crafted from sustainable and durable materials. Beneath the tower, a universally accessible area delights younger children with an embankment slide and wheelchair-friendly gently sloping mound.

The Shipwreck, inspired by the wreck of the Ben Venue, combines ingenious design with sustainable construction using recyclable steel, aluminium, and NZ-grown timber. It offers an immersive and inclusive play experience that sparks the imagination with features such as the sloping deck, talking tubes, and interactive panels.



Yet another source of enjoyment and challenge is the 50m sea-rescue themed Double Flying Fox commemorating the lifesaving Rocket Brigade and featuring a custom-designed crow's nest and rocket launcher at each end of the flying fox.

Encouraging active play and physical fitness, the 'Floor is Lava' obstacle course challenges older children and adults and includes a 2.65m Up & Over, 3m Ninja Climbing Wall, Rock Wall, custom Ninja Style Rock Finger Wall as well as Horizontal Totem Pole Fitness Stations.

Adding to the unique and culturally rich play experience is the custom 4m long Mōkihi canoe-shaped seesaw and mahika kai themed under 5s space and whare playhouse, designed by local architect John Rushton in collaboration with Francine Spencer.

Inclusive play was central to CPlay's vision for the Caroline Bay Playground. An almost endless list of inclusive play equipment from the Playground Centre range has been incorporated throughout the playground, and over 90 per cent of the playground is wheelchair accessible.

There's all-inclusive fun and social interaction on offer for all ages and abilities on the 5-9 seater Double Cyclops Snake Swing, different musical instruments, Double Embankment Slide Module, Pohutakawa Nature Rocker, Trampoline Pi, Wheelchair Trampoline, Inclusive Carousel, Inclusive Honeycomb Carousel, Inclusive Spinning Bucket and the popular Interactive Musical bridge.

Cooling down from hours of play, children and their families can stay and mingle on the outdoor metal swings sets offering plenty of swing seats for infants, toddlers, adults and inclusive seats for playground users with special needs.

Playground equipment supplied

Custom / bespoke equipment:



10m Lighthouse Tower with Tube Slides



The Shipwreck



Sea-Rescue Themed 50m Double Flying Fox



Floor Is Lava Obstacle Course



4m long Mōkihi Seesaw

New Zealand

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Playground equipment supplied

Standard Equipment



5-9 seater Double Cyclops Snake Swing



Musical Instruments



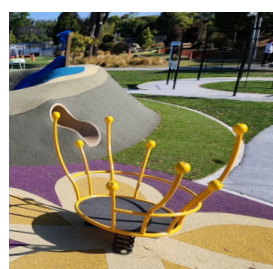
Inclusive Carousel



Inclusive Honeycomb Carousel



Double Embankment Slide Module



Pohutakawa Nature Rocker



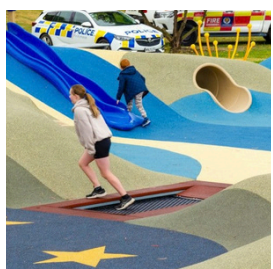
Inclusive Spinning Bucket



Interactive Musical Bridge



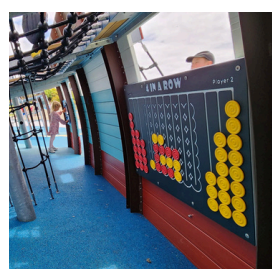
Trampoline Pi



Wheelchair Trampoline



Outdoor metal swings with different swing seats including inclusive seats for users with special needs



Interactive Play Panels