Playspace Whakatū

TUKUA TE HAEATA

Community Engagement Report

April 2025



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A Community-Wide Conversation

Between late February and mid-April 2025, more than 500 people from across Whakatū Nelson made submissions to help shape this project.

Over 200 tamariki from local kura contributed ideas through workshops. And thousands viewed our digital content and kōrero online.

This report captures the voices, values, and visions that emerged — ensuring the final design reflects the people it's being built for. It ensures the community and key stakeholders are meaningfully represented, supporting a space that meets the needs and aspirations of our wider community.

500+ submissions from across Whakatū

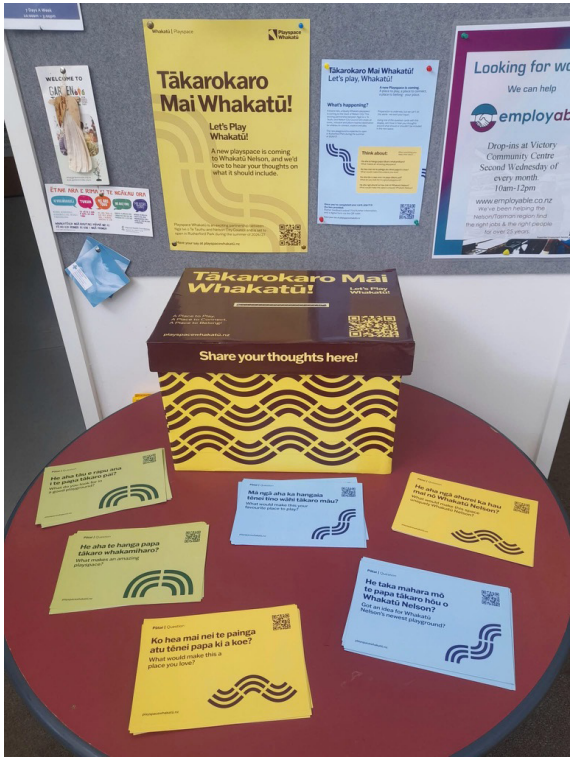


200+ tamariki directly engaged through kura-based workshops

Tens of thousands reached through digital content and social media

Multiple onsite, in-school, and community activations

Focused engagement with iwi, accessibility advocates, cultural experts, and park users


Tākarokaro Mai Whakatū!
Let's Play Whakatū!
A new playspace is coming to Whakatū Nelson, and we'd love to hear your thoughts on what it should include.
Tākarokaro Mai Whakatū!
Let's play, Whakatū!
Looking for
We can help
employab
Drop-ins at Victory Community Centre
Second Wednesday of every month
10am-12pm
www.employable.co.nz
Tākarokaro Mai Whakatū!
Share your thoughts here!
He aha te hanga papa tākaro whakamīharo?
What makes an amazing playspace?
Ko hea mai nei te painga atu tēnei papa ki a koe?
What would make this a place you love?
He taka mahara mō te papa tākaro hōu o Whakatū Nelson?
Got an idea for Whakatū Nelson's newest playground?


Pātai | Question
Playspace Whakatū
He aha ngā āhurei ka hau mai nō Whakatū Nelson?
What would make this space uniquely Whakatū Nelson?
Share your thoughts for Whakatū Nelson's newest Playspace.
Have your say at playspacewhakatū.nz


Pātai | Question
He aha ngā āhurei ka hau mai nō Whakatū Nelson?
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A Community-Wide Conversation

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Visible, Trusted, and Relational Engagement

Our engagement approach was designed to be visible, welcoming, and relational — ensuring people felt invited, heard, and valued at every step. We focused not just on collecting feedback, but on building trust and connection, especially with groups often underrepresented in civic design processes.

We ran a visible community campaign across the city from late February to mid-April 2025. Our goal was to meet people where they are — not just online, but in schools, libraries, community centres, iwi offices, and onsite at Rutherford Park.

This multi-layered approach ensured we captured the depth, breadth, and diversity of aspirations for this space — especially those of tamariki, disabled community members, hāpori Māori and wider whānau.

Where and How We Engaged

Schools: Over 200 tamariki were engaged through facilitated workshops in kura environments where they felt confident and safe.

Feedback stations were set up in hubs such as libraries and community centres enabling people to contribute on their own terms.

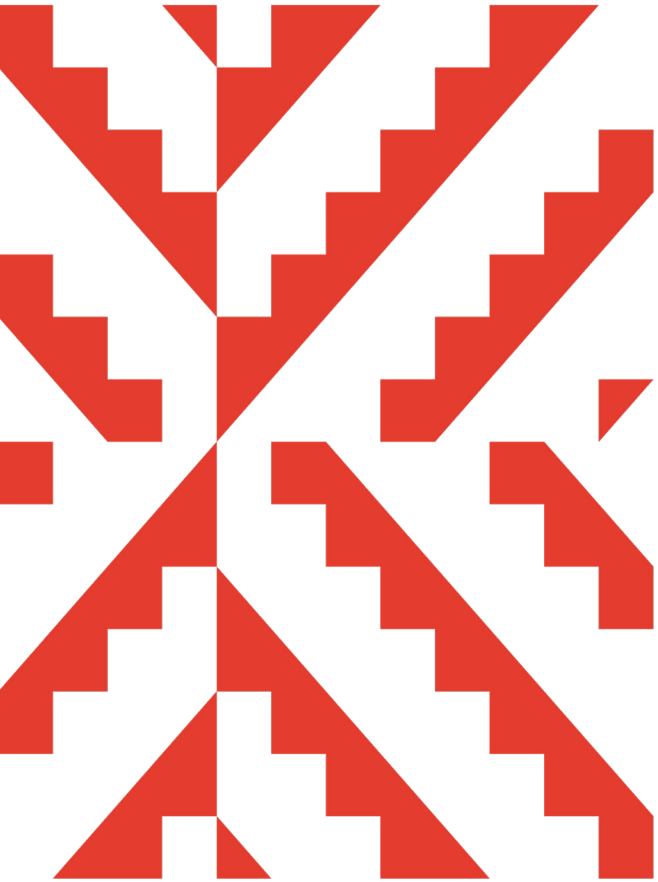
Onsite meetings were held at Rutherford Park to engage key stakeholder groups and affected parties early in the design process.

Kōrero took place with whānau, caregivers, and community members, especially those with lived experience of disability or exclusion.

Dedicated hui and wānanga with iwi and cultural practitioners shaped the narrative, identity, and kaupapa of the playspace.

Digital campaign promoted through council and iwi channels reached tens of thousands, with hundreds of digital submissions received.

Who We Heard From



Tamariki through direct and indirect engagement with schools

Parents, caregivers, and kaumātua

Accessibility community members and advocates

Iwi leaders, designers, and storytellers

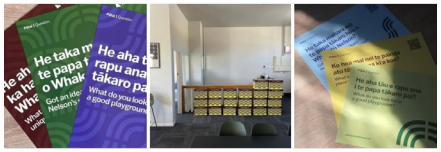
Local residents, park users, and neighbourhood groups

A fantastic playground for Nelson
Johny O'Donnell · 3 Mar ·

We're underway! Let's Play, Whakatū!

It's been a whirlwind couple of weeks as we launched into community conversations to inform the new playspace design.

Very proud that we started with tamari... See more
— feeling excited with Ruby Meekma and **4 others**.



You and 12 others 1 comment

Like Comment Send Share

Campbell Rollo Nelson City Councillor · Follow
1h ·

Great news from Nelson City Council
Engagement on the new Rutherford Park playspace extended to Friday 11 April... See more



Johny O'Donnell and 1 other

Like Comment Send Share

Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Rārua
6 Mar ·

Mōrena e te whānau whānui - Please share this kaupapa and help create a playspace that reflects meaningful stories, and creates a fun a... See more

Ngāti Koata Trust
5 Mar ·

Tēnā koutou e te whānau o Ngāti Koata!

Alongside our fellow Te Tauihu iwi, ... See more



You, Johny O'Donnell and 5 others 1 comment 1 share



Katharina (Kati) Doehring · 1st 22h
Freshwater Ecologist | Science Communicator with a...

This is so great to see. My son was part of the designs and he came home beaming, raving about how wonderful it would be if 'their' playground were to be implemented. I wish we would involve and 'consult' tamariki so much more in our day-to-day visualisations and decision-making. The world would be a more diverse and colourful place.

Top Community Requests (Ranked)
These emerged most frequently and consistently across all forms of engagement:

Rank	Feature / Priority	Community Sentiment
1	Water Play	“Water connects us to the awa and moana”
2	Fencing and Inclusive Design	“Fencing means freedom, not restriction”
3	Shade and Seating	“Shade is what makes it usable all day”
4	Toilets and Accessibility	“If there are no toilets, we won’t stay”
5	Cultural Expression	“Let it look and feel like Whakatū”
6	Epic Play Features	“Make it wild — not stock standard”
7	Spaces for Whānau to Gather	“Play is for everyone, not just tamariki”

The Design Priorities – What Matters Most

We heard five clear messages about what people want in the playspace:

1. A Playspace Everyone Can Use

Accessibility, inclusion, and dignity — with fencing, surfacing, seating, and facilities that welcome all ages and abilities.

2. Big, Loud, Imaginative Play

Water features, trampolines, climbing structures, and wow-factor elements that spark creativity and movement.

3. A Place That Looks and Feels Like Us

Cultural storytelling, Te Ao Māori design elements, native plantings, and local motifs woven into the space.

4. A Space for the Whole Whānau

Shade, seating, kai tables, and social layout that encourage connection, rest, and longer stays.

5.A Natural, Beautiful Place to Be

Grounded in the environment, using natural materials and climate-conscious design that honours Papatūānuku.

Experts Led the Way
Over 200 tamariki participated directly in shaping the design — and they brought bold vision, identity, and imagination.

They asked for:

Hydroslides, lazy rivers, splash pads

Ninja courses, volcanoes, castles, treehouses

Waka swings, marae-inspired play spaces, pātaka kai

Quiet zones, bean bags, places to rest and reset

Features with Māori designs and expressions — “so we can slide through our stories”

Two Key Enablers for Success

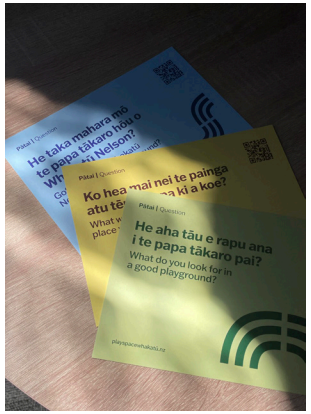
A Design Shaped by the People
The voices of iwi, tamariki, whānau, and disabled communities must remain visible and active throughout design and delivery.

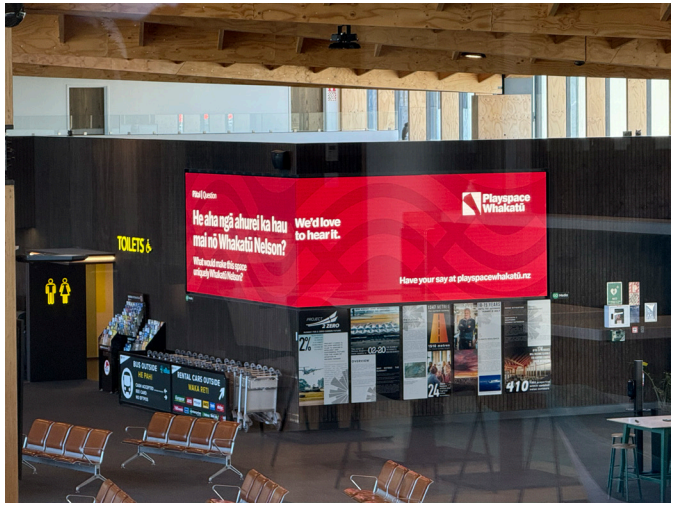
A Plan That’s Realistic and Future-Ready
Clear scope now, with room to grow.
Durable, achievable, and designed to last — but flexible for future additions.

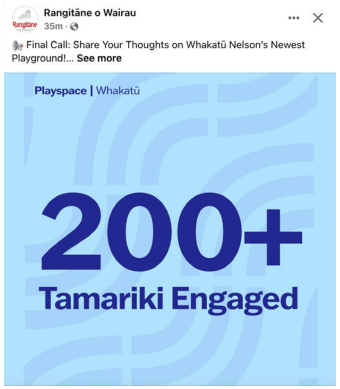





Emma Louis
Have you seen this circulating the community.. it's so parents can have their say with what they want to see in a new play space currently being developed by the council in the Nelson community. Might be a great place to start and to share 🙂
Pātai | Question
He aha tāu e rapu ana i te papa tākaro pai?
What do you look for in a good playground?
playspacewhakatū.nz
5h Love Reply
10


He aha tāu e rapu ana i te papa tākaro pai?
What do you look for in a good playground?


He aha ngā ahurei ka hau mai nō Whakatū Nelson?
We'd love to hear it.
Playspace Whakatū
Have your say at playspacewhakatū.nz
TOILETS


Rangitāne o Wairau
35m
Final Call: Share Your Thoughts on Whakatū Nelson's Newest Playground!... See more
Playspace | Whakatū
200+
Tamariki Engaged

Feedback Themes

A space where everyone can participate with ease, comfort, and dignity.

Whānau want a space where tamariki of all abilities can play safely and confidently. This means accessible equipment that isn't separated from the rest of the playground, secure fencing, thoughtful surfacing, and toilets that meet complex medical needs.

1. **Safe, secure fencing** that supports neurodivergent tamariki and creates peace of mind for whānau.
2. **Accessible equipment** such as web swings, sloped ramps, and wheelchair-friendly carousels.
3. **Mobility-friendly surfacing** and wide, smooth paths throughout the space.
4. **Inclusive facilities** like toilets with medical shelves, accessible picnic tables, and armrest seating.
5. **Design for all ages and abilities**, including quiet/sensory zones and under-5s areas.

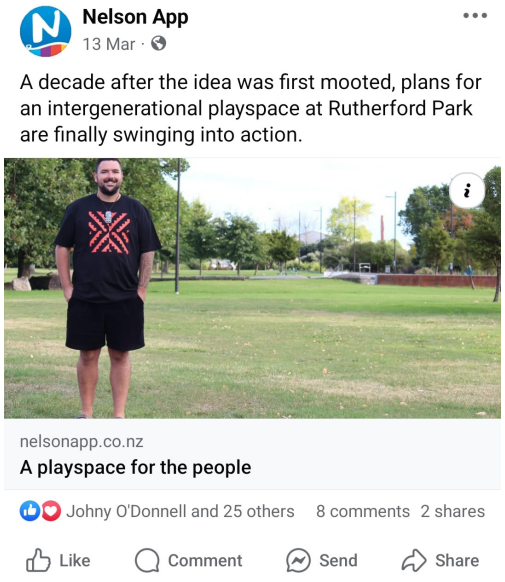
"Fencing matters when your kid bolts without warning. It's not about restriction – it's about safety."

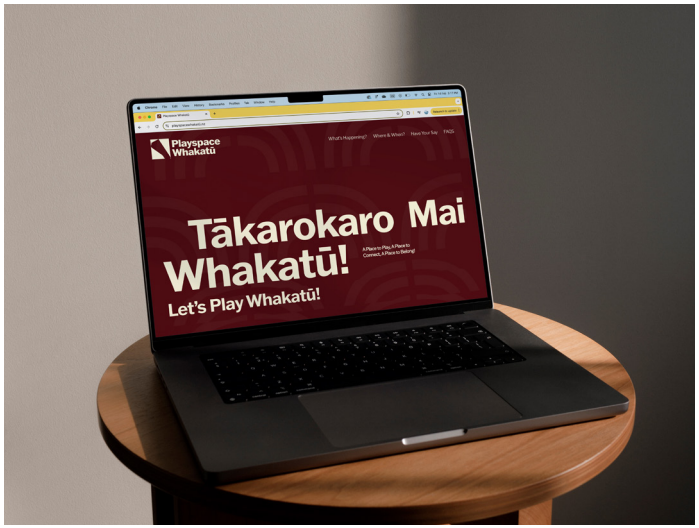
"Let this be a place that holds all of us – Māori, disabled, older, young. We all deserve play."

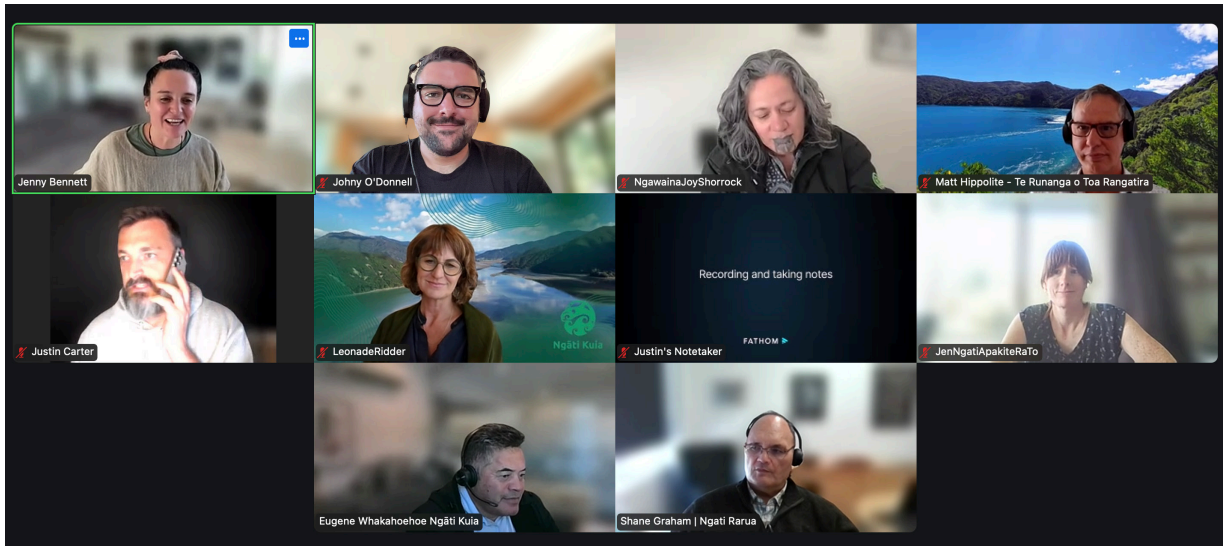
"No child should feel left out, and no parent or caregiver should have to choose between the needs of one child and the participation of another."

"My daughter didn't come into town for years because there were no safe or accessible toilets. That's what exclusion looks like."

"Why are the accessible swings always off to the side? We're not contagious."


Nelson App
13 Mar ·
A decade after the idea was first mooted, plans for an intergenerational playspace at Rutherford Park are finally swinging into action.
nelsonapp.co.nz
A playspace for the people
Johny O'Donnell and 25 others
8 comments 2 shares
Like
Comment
Send
Share


Playspace Whakatū
Tākarokaro Mai Whakatū!
Let's Play Whakatū!


Jenny Bennett
Johny O'Donnell
NgawainaJoyShorrock
Matt Hippolite - Te Runanga o Toa Rangatira
Justin Carter
LeonadeRidder
Ngāti Kuia
Recording and taking notes
FATHOM
Justin's Notetaker
JenNgatiApakiteRaTo
Eugene Whakahoehoe Ngāti Kuia
Shane Graham | Ngati Rarua



Big, bold, imaginative play that reflects how tamariki love to move, dream, and explore.

Tamariki want a place that's exciting, energetic, and full of adventure — with water play, flying foxes, bold colours, noteworthy features, and creative play ideas that spark the imagination.

1. **Waterplay** is the most consistently requested feature: splash pads, fountains, slides, and pools.
2. **Dynamic physical elements** like flying foxes, trampolines, climbing walls, and bounce pillows.
3. **Imaginative features:** castles/towers, treehouses, maunga, and interactive murals.
4. **Sensory-rich play** with textures, movement, sounds, and multi-user swings.
5. **Design for different energy levels:** zones for high energy, quiet reflection, and creative play.

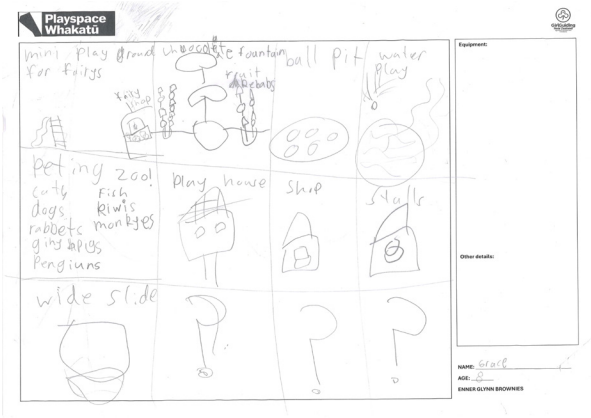
"Interactive play with water, pā harakeke, carvings. Something that says Whakatū when you step in."

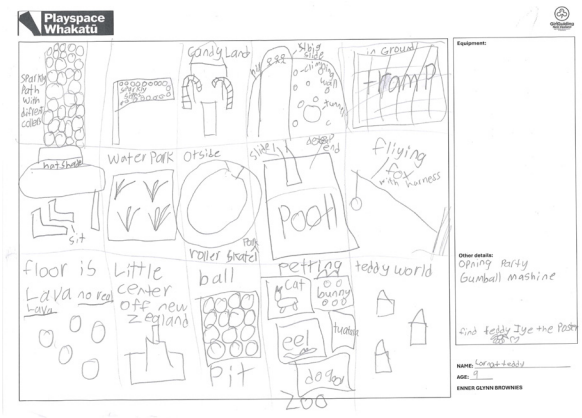
"We need a playground that isn't boring. Let's make it wild – like a ninja course meets Te Waka a Māui."

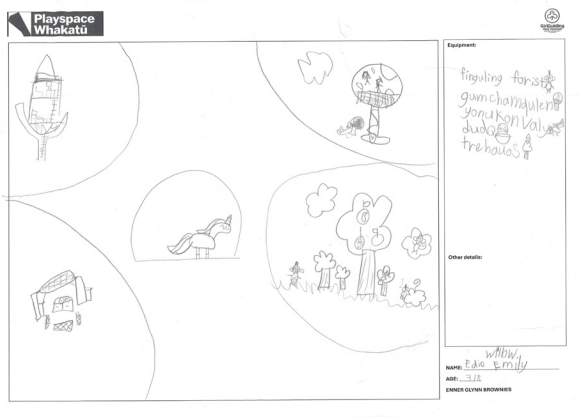
"Can it have tunnels and treehouses? Make it feel like an adventure, not a park."

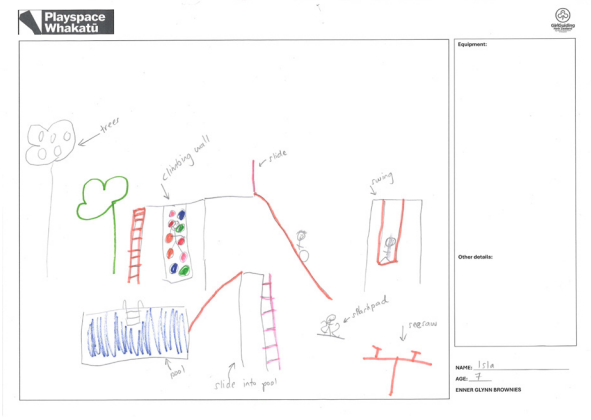
"Play with water connects us to te moana, to our rivers. It cools us, grounds us, brings life."

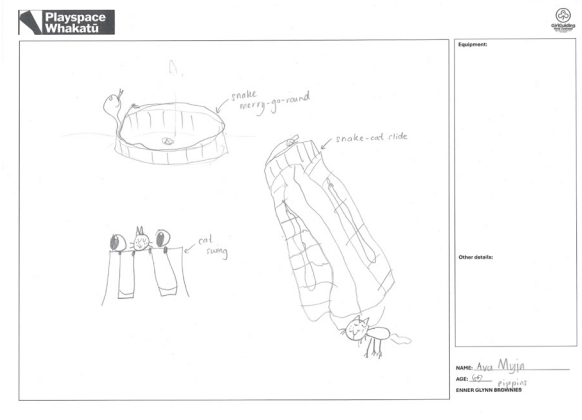
"Make it like the river – different depths, rocks to jump, places to just sit and soak your feet."

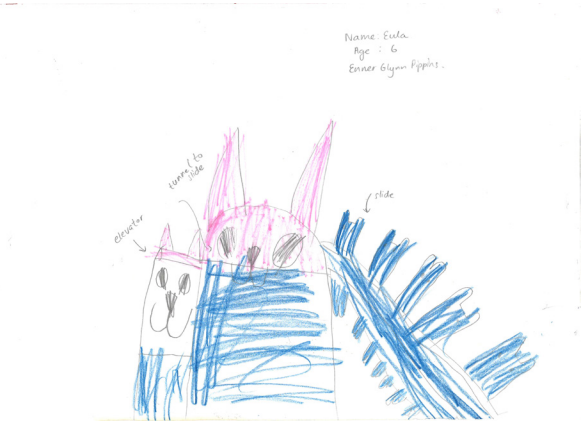

Playspace Whakatū
mini play for fairys
chocolate fountain
ball pit
water play
petting zoo
cats
fish
dogs
kiwis
rabbets
monkeys
ginapigs
Penguins
play house
ship
stalls
wide slide
Equipment:
Other details:
NAME: Grace
AGE: 6
ENNER GLYNN BROWNIES


Playspace Whakatū
Candy Land
in Ground
trampP
water park
Pooh
flying fox
petting
teddy world
floor is Lava
Little
center
off new zealand
ball
pit
zoo
Equipment:
Other details:
Opening Party
Gumball mashine
NAME: Longest teddy
AGE: 9
ENNER GLYNN BROWNIES

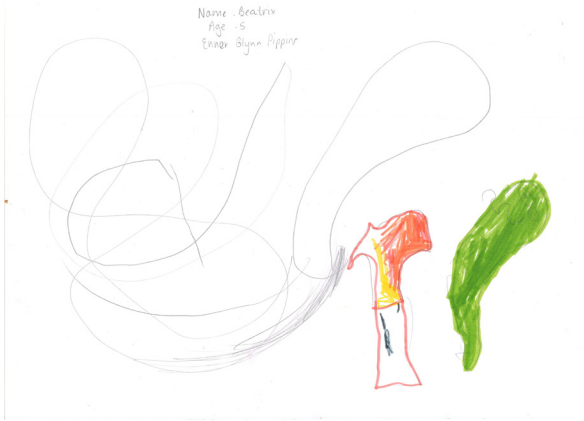

Playspace Whakatū
Equipment:
Other details:
NAME: Ella Emily
AGE: 9 /8
ENNER GLYNN BROWNIES


Playspace Whakatū
tree
climbing wall
slide
swing
trampoline
seesaw
pool
slide into pool
Equipment:
Other details:
NAME: Isla
AGE: 7
ENNER GLYNN BROWNIES


Playspace Whakatū
snake merry-go-round
snake-coat slide
cat swing
Equipment:
Other details:
NAME: Ava Myja
AGE: 6/7
ENNER GLYNN BROWNIES


Name: Eula
Age : 6
Ennor Glynn Pippins.
turret to slide
slide
elevator


Name : Esme
Age : 6
Ennor Glynn Pippins
waterslide
pool
climbing wall
Zoo
gate
spinning seat thing
tipping water bucket


Name : Beatrix
Age : 5
Ennor Glynn Pippins

A celebration of Whakatū's cultural identity through design, stories, and symbolism.

The community wants a space that reflects Whakatū Nelson's unique identity — with strong Te Ao Māori designs, local stories, native plants, and cultural elements woven into every part of the design.

1. **Cultural markers** like waharoa, whare, pātaka kai, and waka-inspired features.
2. **Tamariki-inspired motifs** including the Tino Rangatiratanga flag embedded into play elements.
3. **Naming and narrative** in te reo Māori, grounded in local history and whakapapa.
4. **Design elements that teach and reflect mātauranga Māori** (e.g. native plants, play maunga).
5. **Partnership with iwi and tamariki Māori** in shaping cultural design language.

"Let it be a creative space, not cookie-cutter. Think sculpture, sound, art – let the kids touch and climb on the stories of this place."

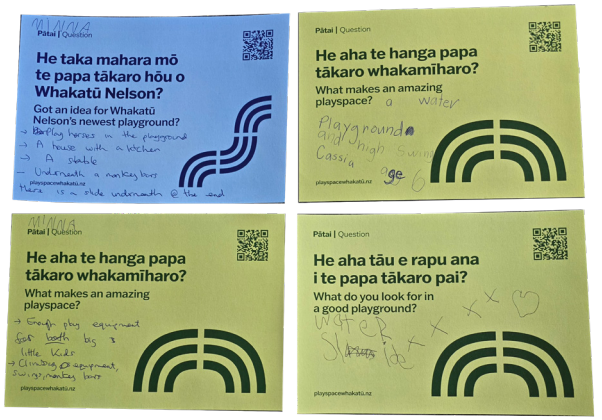
"Interactive play with water, pā harakeke, carvings — something that says Whakatū when you step in."

"Celebrate where we are. Tohu whenua, awa, waka — use these to tell stories in the design."

"It needs to look like Whakatū. Our kids should see their culture in every corner."

"Let's make a slide with the Tino Rangatiratanga flag on it – so we can slide through our stories."




Pātai | Question
He taka mahara mō te papa tākaro hōu o Whakatū Nelson?
Got an idea for Whakatū Nelson's newest playground?
Pātai | Question
He aha te hanga papa tākaro whakamīharo?
What makes an amazing playspace?
Pātai | Question
He aha te hanga papa tākaro whakamīharo?
What makes an amazing playspace?
Pātai | Question
He aha tāu e rapu ana i te papa tākaro pai?
What do you look for in a good playground?


SWEET AS

A destination where tamariki, parents, and kaumātua all feel welcome and connected.

People want more than just a playground — they want somewhere whānau can gather, relax, eat, and spend time together. Comfortable seating, shaded tables, and social areas matter as much as the rest of the playground.

1. **Shaded seating and picnic areas** that support rest and socialising for whānau.
2. **Inclusive kai spaces** — tables that accommodate wheelchairs and diverse whānau setups.
3. **Comfortable furniture** like armrest seats, benches for elders, and flat access for mobility.
4. **Playful gathering zones** that support multigenerational engagement and watching tamariki.
5. **Encouraging longer stays** through comfort, shade, and food-friendly design.

"It should be somewhere tamariki, parents, kuia and koroua can all come together. Play should be for everyone."

"Design it to support manaakitanga – places to rest, drink, connect, and look after one another."

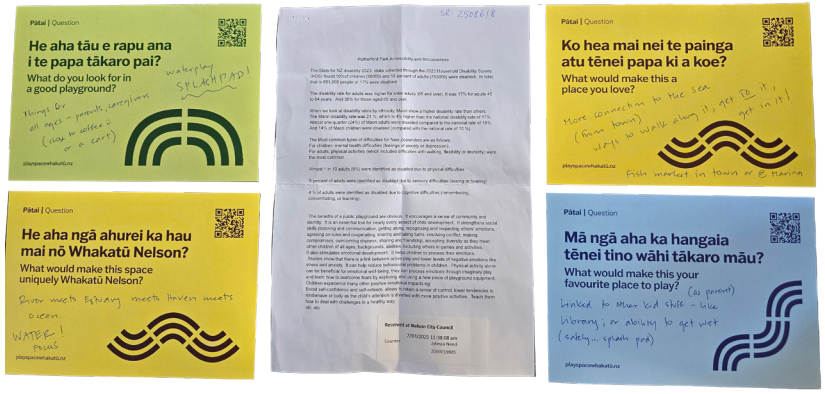
"Toilets, clean and open. Shade that covers whole seating areas. Spaces to bring your lunch and stay for hours."

"Places where kuia and koroua can sit, shelter, and feel included — that's manaakitanga in action."

"Please make this a place where older tamariki want to go too – not just toddlers."


Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Rārua
9m ·
Be part of shaping Whakatū Nelson's newest playground —last chance to share your ideas!... See more
Playspace | Whakatū
3 Days To Go!
Playspace Whakatū




Pātai | Question
He aha tāu e rapu ana i te papa tākaro pai?
What do you look for in a good playground?
Pātai | Question
He aha ngā ahurei ka hau mai nō Whakatū Nelson?
What would make this space uniquely Whakatū Nelson?
Pātai | Question
Ko hea mai nei te painga atu tēnei papa ki a koe?
What would make this a place you love?
Pātai | Question
Mā ngā aha ka hangaia tēnei tino wāhi tākaro māu?
What would make this your favourite place to play?


Ngāti Kuia Trust
23h ·
He aha ō whakaaro?
Ngā Iwi o Te Tauihu and Nelson City Council are working together to create Playspace Whakatū—a unique Whakatū play destination to connect, explore, and play. ✨ This is being planned for Rutherford Park and set to open during summer 2026/27.
Before the design phase begins, the council wants to hear from you. What would make this space special for Whakatū? What elements would reflect Ngāti Kuia, our stories, and our whenua?
Have your say by sharing your ideas here: www.playspacewhakatu.nz
This is an opportunity to shape a space that will celebrate us and bring our community together. Let's make it happen, e te whānau.
#PlayspaceWhakatū #HaveYourSay #NgātiKuia #WhakatūNelson
Tākarokaro Mai Whakatū!
A new playspace is coming. Have your say on what it should include.
Playspace Whakatū

A playspace that honours Papatūānuku through natural materials, design, and care.

The community wants a space that feels alive, natural, and grounded in the taiao — with ample trees for shade, soft ground to play on, and design that respects Papatūānuku and reflects our local natural environment.

1. **Natural surfacing** (grass, sand, bark) that supports sensory diversity and eco play.
2. **Trees and plantings** that provide shade, kai (e.g. apple trees), and cultural meaning (e.g. harakeke).
3. **Design for climate resilience** – flood-conscious layout and runoff sensitivity.
4. **Recycled and low-impact materials** used in structures and landscaping.
5. **Interactive nature zones** that invite tamariki to explore, plant, touch, and tend.

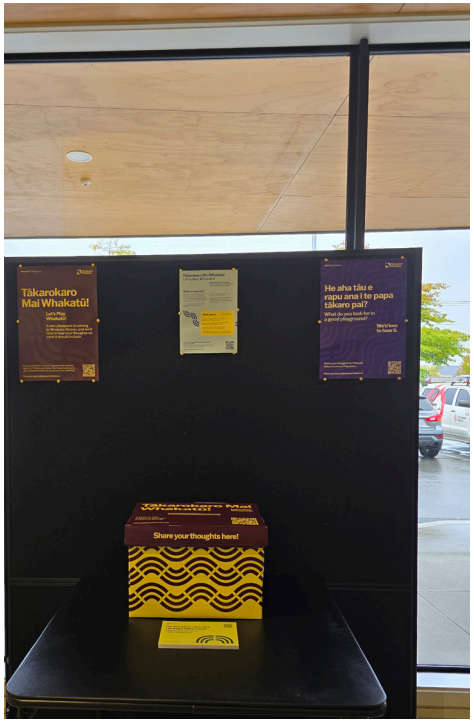
"A peaceful natural place with water and shade. I want to feel like I've stepped out of the city and into the ngahere."

"Use what's already here – trees, rocks, the bush. Not everything needs to be bright plastic."

"Use mātauranga Māori as a base — learning through play, respect for the whenua, playing with nature not against it."

"Make it feel like it belongs here – bush, trees, sand, wood, not plastic jungle gyms."




Tākarokaro Mai Whakatū!
He aha tāu e rapu ana i te papa tākaro pai?
Share your thoughts here!



Enabling Themes

A space that is co-designed with us, not for us.

We need the design to visibly reflect the voices of tamariki, whānau, and iwi who contributed their ideas, hopes, and lived experiences — not just during the consultation, but throughout the process.

1. **Tamariki and whānau voices** are embedded in the design decisions.
2. **Whānau stories and lived experience** reflected in priorities like fencing, seating, and access.
3. **Visible acknowledgment** of who shaped the space — through design, signage, or storytelling.
4. **Iwi values, identity and narratives** guide the design from concept through to delivery.
5. **Building knowledge and trust through open-source design**, not just consultation on a single project.

Grounded in what's achievable and maintainable whilst future-proofing the design.

We need a delivery approach that's achievable now, easy to care for, and ready to grow with our community — with clear outcomes, smart choices, and flexibility to add on later to grow the space.

1. **Clarity around scope** – what's funded now, what can be added later, realistic expectations.
2. **Staged delivery** that allows for enhancement without redesign to allow for the growth of the space.
3. **Durability and low-maintenance materials** that suit the site and reduce ongoing costs.
4. **Budget-smart choices** between custom and off-the-shelf elements to balance impact and feasibility.
5. **Site-specific design** that fits within the natural constraints: drainage, flood risk, and legacy of reclaimed land.

Across hundreds of submissions, creative workshops, hui and everyday conversations, the message was clear:

Everyone should feel welcome and included.

Tamariki want big, bold, beautiful play.

Whānau want shade, kai spaces, and time together.

Te Ao Māori must be central — not decorative.

The space should feel alive, local, and unique to Whakatū.



This engagement process took place before design began — not as a formality, but as the foundation. It has directly informed the design brief and shaped the kaupapa that will guide every decision from here.

It affirms that this is not just a playground. It's a regenerative public space — a place of identity, gathering, resilience, and belonging.

It also tells us that:

Inclusion is about freedom and kotahitanga, not limitation and separation.

Te Taiao and Te Ao Māori are not layers to add — they are the soil we build from.

Practical design decisions (like fencing, surfacing, or toilets) have a big impact on usability.

We now move into design with:

A clear kaupapa grounded in what our community told us.

A strong design partnership committed to reflecting those voices.

A practical approach that will deliver something meaningful, buildable, and future-ready.

The design work will take these insights and turn them into form — not from a blank page, but from a deep well of community knowledge, cultural narrative, and grounded aspiration. As we move into the mahi of design and delivery, we must keep this message front and centre:

“Let it feel like us. Let it hold all of us.”

TUKUA TE HAEATA

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