



# Adelaide Miethke Preschool

Corner of Oval & Cedar Avenues  
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The Adelaide Miethke Preschool POLA project has provided an outdoor learning environment that supports the site vision for "children to engage in play experiences that inspire and motivate them to develop a love of learning". The centre recognises that all children need to develop positive connections with the natural environment so they develop a love and respect for their world, learn about sustainable practices and develop positive dispositions for learning.

As a centre that caters for children from birth to 6 years of age, there was considerable thought and planning undertaken to ensure that the spaces would provide for the needs of all children with flexibility to enable integration of programs. The architects were very supportive in talking with staff and families about the specifics of designing a nature play space that included babies and toddlers.

Planning for the redevelopment commenced in mid-2015 with the support of the POLA team, architects and Community Development Coordinator within the partnership. At a community information meeting families were invited to join a planning group. Parent reps from playgroup, occasional care and kindergarten joined staff and members of the local council for these meetings and two family consultation evenings were held.

Members were encouraged to consider spaces they had enjoyed visiting as children and what elements of a natural learning environment they felt were important in the preschool. Staff gathered and collated these ideas and images which were later grouped to determine the essential elements to be included.

Children were also consulted and actively engaged in the planning process. To ensure their voice was included staff closely observed and reflected upon their established play, interviewed children on excursions to nature play sites, shared images of nature play to develop discussion, had the children draw their ideas and used images to have them vote to determine their essential elements in a process also conducted at a community event with families.

The processes of community consultation and the openness of the architects to engage constructively with all stakeholders has supported the development of a magnificent space.

The brief included developing active learning spaces that support the development of children's physical skills, natural elements that provided challenge, safe "risk taking" and the development of children's creative play, plantings that would attract bird and insect life, a garden and fruit trees that could be harvested for use in the program.

The architects were required to work around 6 existing pine trees that hold community significance. They made a feature of two trees using platforms at different heights linked with a rope bridge. The design element of children being able to play at a variety of heights was explicitly planned for. The rope bridge has been the element that was most challenging post-construction as the ropes stretched with the weight of the log and required lifting.

During construction the builders consulted with staff almost daily and were flexible in consulting at significant times which enabled us to respond to design questions immediately and meant that the build process was well managed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Dawson'.

Suzanne Dawson  
Director

25 March 2017

