

Crafting sustainable outdoor play for Australian communities

A rapidly growing Queensland business is creating 100 per cent recyclable pirate ships, giant treehouses and rockets, all in the name of play.

With designs to delight and challenge both kids and adults, WillPlay manufactures sustainable outdoor play and fitness equipment to withstand Australian conditions. Its open space recreation solutions include equipment, shade, installation and soft fall surfacing.

Since its start-up in 2013, councils, schools and commercial developments around Australia have been lining up for WillPlay's outdoor play and fitness equipment, tailored to their site and budget requirements. Now the business is producing 30 to 40 projects a month.

WillPlay's catalogue reads like a wish list for active kids, grownups, and canine buddies - from fairytale adventures, giant treehouses and street climbers to climbing orbs, bike tracks, cableways, urban warriors and dog agility equipment.

Recent projects include a destination pirate park at the Gold Coast's Palm Beach, a giant seven-metre Goliath tower within a multi-faceted adventure play park in Adelaide and the Donnybrook Apple Fun Park in Western Australia.

WillPlay challenges its design manager Jared Silcox and his team to dream up the next big thing in outdoor fun and fitness to bring communities together.

"The latest trends include councils' development of larger, destination parks, like the Pirate Park at Palm Beach.

"This includes a pirate ship with climbing nets and ropes, telescopes, cannons, crow's nest towers, row boats with talk tubes, caves, a flying fox, an eight-metre-long tunnel slide and more," Jared enthuses.

"If I were a kid, I would want to be out

there having a go."

Jared observes that bringing these playgrounds and fitness systems to life and ensuring they can be easily assembled and installed requires a raft of specialist skills and experience.

"We look after all the design work in-house and have about 40 years of experience in our design team.

"In the workshop, we've got years and years of experience in cabinetmaking, carpentry, boiler making and fitting and turning.

"By doing everything in-house, we can control our quality."

Part of WillPlay's commitment to maintaining quality is ensuring material and finish selections are fit for purpose and withstand the rigours of many years of active play by communities across Australia.

One material that features prominently in WillPlay installations is aluminium.

Jared explains that aluminium is used extensively throughout the WillPlay range and custom-designed solutions for three fundamental reasons:

"One, it's lightweight, but two, it's also strong. And thirdly, it is sustainable.

"Its weight saves on freight around Australia, and it survives our climate from the ocean to the deserts.

"And importantly, aluminium can be recycled at the end of a product's life," he says.

"Our playgrounds are 100 per cent recyclable, so everything that gets taken off one of our playgrounds can be taken to a recycling facility.

"It sets us apart."

Since the business started, sourcing aluminium locally has been a priority for the WillPlay team, which works closely with Capral Aluminium.

"We have been associated with Capral since we started nine years ago, and they've really helped us along," Jared says.

Custom-designed aluminium extrusions developed by WillPlay and extruded by Capral have helped WillPlay streamline their projects' design and installation, reducing installation complexity and time.

"We have a custom extrusion that allows us to install our systems as easily and quickly as possible. It's like a giant Meccano set with blocks on its sides that enable us to drill through. It works effectively and makes our systems go together quickly.

"We can also order raw or powder-coated extrusions, saving us time."

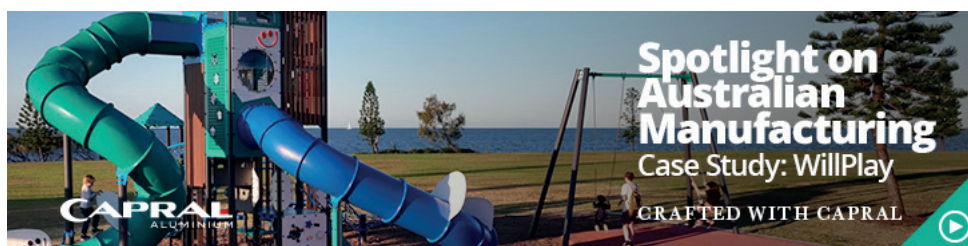
Capral works closely with WillPlay to develop prototypes for custom extrusions, enabling WillPlay to quickly review new extrusions to ensure they will provide the required functionality and flexibility to bring WillPlay's big ideas to life.

"Once it ticks all the boxes and goes into production, we order a tonne of it," Jared laughs. Although said partly in jest, the new purpose-designed WillPlay facility in Bundaberg has provided the team with the space to stock more material and to bring their creations to life under one roof.

"Our new facility has made manufacturing more efficient. The business had expanded so quickly that we had been operating out of different buildings."

Now everything gets cut, drilled and manufactured at the same facility. WillPlay has its own CNC routers to cut all the plastic tubing and a rotor moulding machine to create slide and tube pieces.

Jared observes that WillPlay's success speaks for itself: "You can find WillPlay playgrounds and fitness equipment pretty much anywhere in Australia now." ■



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ix00DJ4g8M>

Photos for use with this release can be downloaded here

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ay661gckucd6i0t/AAA9d60J1rW174iDhS9IEXHa?dl=0>