



# PROLUDIC CELEBRATES

## 10 YEARS DESIGNING PLAY EQUIPMENT THAT IS A PERFECT FIT FOR THE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT

For a man who has been working in the industry for over 20 years, Steve Walding still gets excited talking about playground design. We asked Steve to tell us a little about Proludic, one of the country's most prominent playspace companies, and share his views on playspace design in the Australian landscape.

### Q. HOW DID PROLUDIC FIRST GET STARTED?

A. When I began working in the field 20 years ago, play equipment was functional, but there wasn't a lot of playground design involved. You might find a swing, a slide and a basic climbing unit in your local park, but not much more. My business partner and wife, landscape architect Madeleine Walding, and I launched Proludic in Australia in 2010. We saw an opportunity for a design-led company that was 100 percent suited to the Australian environment. We wanted to make

playgrounds that are designed by Australians for Australian families.

### Q. AS PART OF A LARGE, INTERNATIONAL GROUP, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMERS WHEN WORKING WITH PROLUDIC?

A. Originally founded in France in 1988, the company has always made a significant investment in research and development. Being a part of this global network offers real advantages for our clients.

Australia has such a strong outdoor culture and a solid demand for good quality recreational facilities. As a result, our ideas for product improvements and for the design of new products are embraced by HQ in France and implemented worldwide.

The focus on innovation and our ability to give constant feedback to our manufacturing team, has led to more inclusive, creative designs and stronger,

resilient play equipment which is safe for children and sustainably produced.

### Q. IN 2016, PROLUDIC WON A GOOD DESIGN AWARD (GOLD) FOR ITS INCLUSIVE PLAY AREAS GUIDE. HOW IMPORTANT IS INCLUSIVE DESIGN TO YOUR PLAYSACE APPROACH?

A. For us, inclusive design is fundamental. We've had a longstanding commitment to creating play equipment and inclusive playspaces that all children can enjoy. We also feel it's important to offer resources to others connected to the industry to increase knowledge in this area.

Our *Inclusive Play Areas Guide* was the first of its kind. Since its release, other guides have been written and more projects are being designed along inclusive guidelines.

One example of our work in this area is Jacaranda Park in Grafton. It's one of the largest inclusive playspaces installed anywhere in Australia. We worked closely

with Clarence Valley Council to design and develop unique, inclusive play solutions inspired by the region.

### Q. ACCORDING TO PROLUDIC, AUSTRALIA IS NOW LEADING THE WORLD IN DESIGNING PLAY ENVIRONMENTS. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR THE PLAY LANDSCAPE?

A. Australia is an educated, mature market for play equipment. In the last five to ten years, I've seen people's expectations about what makes a good playground get higher and higher.

With social media, the public can easily give feedback on what works and what doesn't in their favourite playground. As a result, there's been an increase in community expectations and investment in better playspaces. It's given us an enormous opportunity to implement new ideas and develop better products.

Throughout our design process, we also try to give a voice to those who are often not easily heard — babies and toddlers, teenage girls, the elderly, and those who experience disability.

### Q. WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLAYGROUND?

A. Playgrounds are all about kids being active and having fun. They're a focal point for thriving communities to meet, relax,

get fit and enjoy each other's company. They're a central ingredient of what makes somewhere a good place to live. A successful playground is also one that's designed to fit into its local environment.

### Q. KNOWN FOR ITS INNOVATIVE AND NATURE-THEMED DESIGNS, THE COMPANY IS INCREASINGLY DESIGNING BESPOKE PLAY EQUIPMENT FOR ITS CLIENTS. CAN YOU SHARE THE VISION BEHIND A COUPLE OF THESE PROJECTS?

A. Two examples of how we've created unique playgrounds and drawn from the local culture are the Riverside Adventure Park in Swan Hill and the Austin Crescent Reserve in Pascoe Vale in Victoria.

At Riverside Adventure Park, local indigenous artist Sandra Kropinyeri created artwork based on traditional stories of the Swan Hill region. We used our innovative Grafic Games technique to apply the artist's designs to a custom-designed Kanopé Tree Tower. This helped to strengthen the community's connection with the playground and support imaginative play.

At the Austin Crescent Reserve, we incorporated our award-winning, nature-inspired Kanopé range. Designed specifically for Australia, Kanopé seamlessly integrates into the natural

setting using robust materials made to suit Australian conditions. Our playground design revitalised the playspace by complementing the creek and wetland theme of the park.

### Q. WHAT IS THE COMPANY'S APPROACH TO PLAYSACE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS?

A. Proludic's method is grounded in innovative design, sustainability, a deep knowledge of children, and the delivery of outstanding customer service. Our philosophy is to provide opportunities for children to choose how they play. Children's needs always come first in every design, but client service is also fundamental to us.

Our service model is based on outstanding design, easy-to-maintain, durable equipment, environmentally-sound production processes, ready access to stock and spare parts, and on time, professional delivery and installation.

Having a great team of qualified local landscape architects, designers and construction professionals that help bring our clients' vision to life, is at the core of our Australian success story.

We're confident that Proludic's playgrounds will continue to offer our customers exceptional value and bring joy to Australian families for years to come. ■