

Sensory Rooms in Venues

2023 Guidelines



smartform

Contents

Introduction	4
Understanding Sensory Rooms	6
Sensory Processing	
Sensory Thresholds	
Design Guidelines	8
General Sensory Room Requirements	
Minimum Guidelines	
Design Process	10
Establish a suitable sensory space	
Select Sensory activity Zones	
Select activity equipment	
Select finishes	
Example Sensory Space layouts	16
Sensory Room Proper (Large)	
Sensory Room Proper (Medium)	
Mobile Sensory Space	
Temporary Sensory Space (marquee format)	
Operational Considerations	22
Attachments	24
Typical equipment	
Example Sensory Room Joinery	

Introduction

The AFL is a game that unites the community locally and across the country, and is a central part of Australian life.

We're continually striving to grow participation and opportunities for people to access and engage with our game as players, volunteers, administrators and spectators.

A sensory space is an intentionally designed space that people can access to regulate their nervous systems. In the context of a stadium venue, the space aims to offer a calm environment removed from loud noise and crowded spaces, whilst also providing purposeful equipment and activities that supports people to access sensory input that has a regulating effect on them.

Though these rooms are most commonly associated with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). The AFL Sensory Room is designed to be an inclusive therapeutic environment for all children and adults who may struggle with anxiety or sensory processing challenges.

The inclusion of a Sensory Room at AFL venues will assist in making the AFL game day experience available and accessible to all. This will also continue the great work of programs like the AllPlay initiative, so more children who love playing the game can also enjoy the experience of attending the game as well.

The aim of these Guidelines is to define a strategy to include the benefits of a sensory space in stadium venues, events and communities. This can be facilitated through various means:

- Sensory Room Proper (a permanent space within the venue itself)
- Mobile Sensory Space (van or trailer)
- Temporary Sensory Space (outdoor marquee or temporary function space fitout)

These Guidelines will outline the steps and considerations in designing and implementing Sensory Spaces.

It is recommended that an occupational therapist with a specialisation in Sensory Rooms is consulted as part of a design and implementation process for 'Sensory Rooms in Venues'.

'Footy is a game for all'

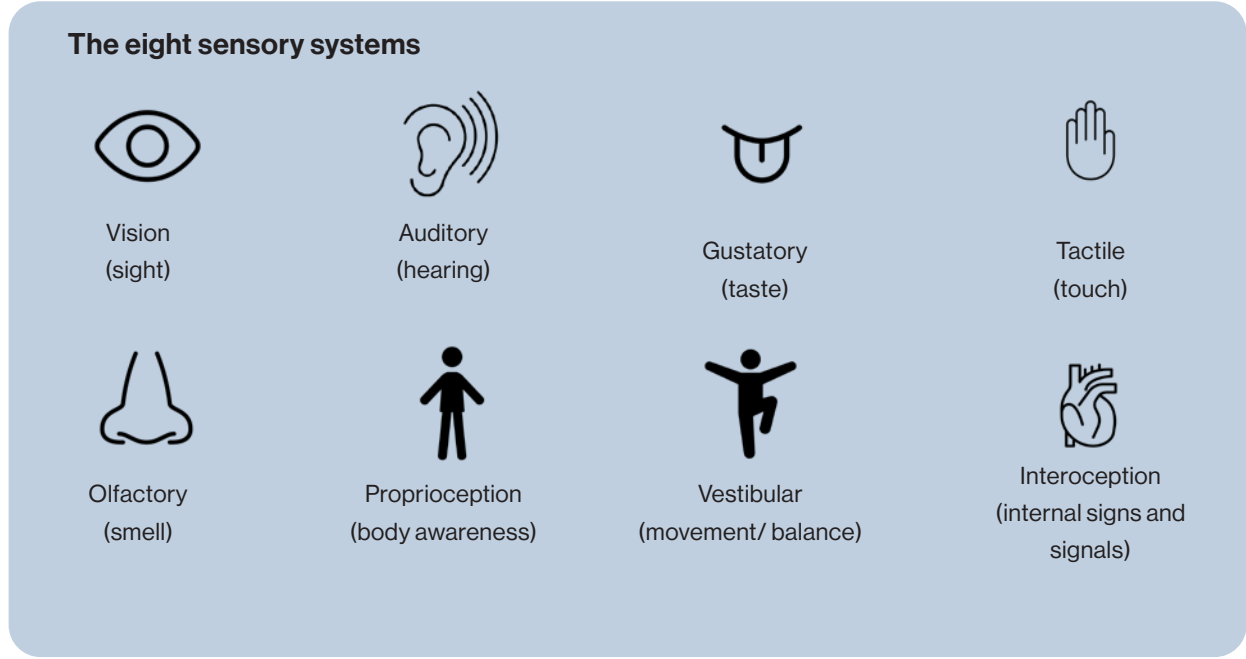
Understanding Sensory Rooms

Sensory Processing

Every individual has a unique way of processing sensations from one's own body and the environment.

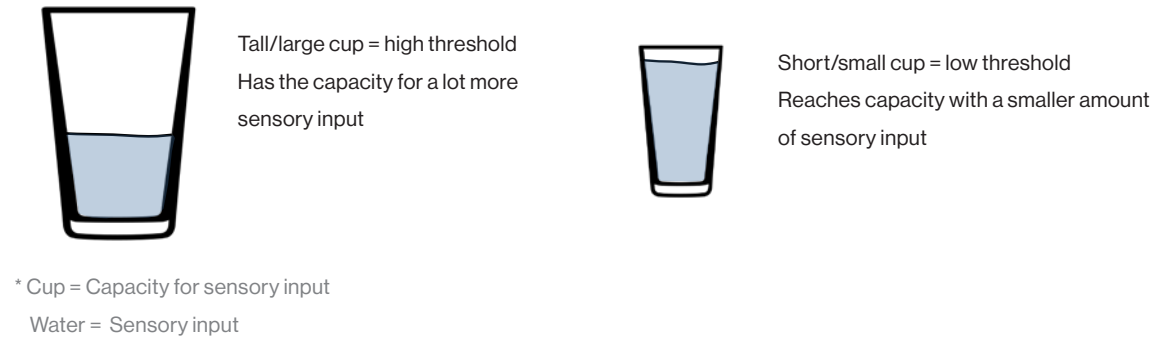
Specifically, sensory processing is the way in which the brain processes multiple sensory modality inputs (based on the eight sensory systems) and translates them into usable functional outputs.

This allows the body to then respond effectively within the environment.



Sensory Thresholds

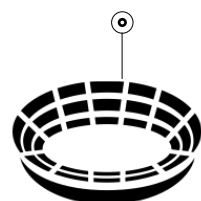
A sensory threshold can be defined generally as a stimulus intensity that produces a response. Sensory thresholds vary from individual to individual.



The point at which your cup is full is the right amount of sensory input for you to be regulated and participate in an activity or environment.

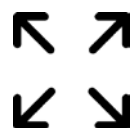
Design Guidelines

General Sensory Room Requirements



Location

The Sensory Room / Sensory Space should be easily accessible from the venue concourse, with universal access and clearly marked way-finding. Mobile Sensory Spaces can be provided on the external concourse of a venue.



Minimum Dimensions

It is encouraged that three (3) sqm is provided for each person in a Sensory Space. This Sensory Space should also be easily accessible from the venue concourse, with universal access and clearly marked way-finding.



Power and Data

Multiple power sources must be provided in all Sensory Spaces to supply electrical sensory equipment. Data should be provided to a Sensory Room Proper and Mobile Sensory Room to enable venue announcements to be displayed within the space.



Lighting

Lighting within the Sensory Room Proper and Mobile Sensory room requires dimming control. It is preferred that each zone can be controlled separately.



Tea Point / Kitchenette

A tea point is recommended in all Sensory Rooms Proper. When this can't be provided it is preferred that bottled water or a drinking fountain is supplied.



Climate Control

Air Conditioning is recommended in all Sensory Rooms Proper. When this can't be provided it is preferred that bottled water or a drinking fountain is supplied.



Staffing

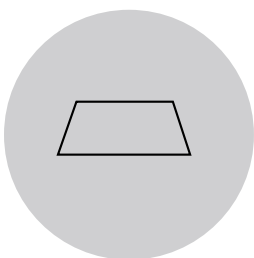
A trained staff member is required within all Sensory Spaces during all operating times. It is recommended that this staff member has undergone training with a qualified Occupational Therapist (OT) or completed a suitable course. This staff member will be required to operate all sensory equipment and regulate access when required.

Design Process

It is understood that each venue has different operational, event and capacity requirements.

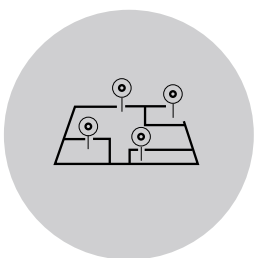
This design process has been developed to guide a universal approach to including a Sensory Space across all venue scales.

In doing so, it encourages all venues to include a Sensory Room Space in their venues at some capacity.



Establish suitable sensory space

- Sensory Room Proper (a permanent space within the venue itself)
- Mobile Sensory Space (van or trailer)
- Temporary Sensory Space (outdoor marquee or temporary function space fitout)



Select sensory activity zones

- Dividing the space into zones that are dedicated to specific activities:
- Seating Zone
 - Activity Zone
 - Darkened Optic zone
 - Movement Zone
 - Adult 'quiet' zone



Select activity equipment

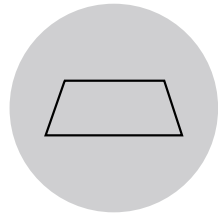
- Dedicated equipment for each Activity Zone designed to address sensory systems:
- Vision (sight)
 - Auditory (hearing)
 - Olfactory (smell)
 - Proprioception (body awareness)
 - Vestibular (movement / balance)
 - Interoception (internal signs and signals)



Select Finishes

Selecting finishes for the space that provide a soft and comfortable environment, whilst being robust and durable.

Establish a suitable sensory space



The purpose of a community-based Sensory Space is to provide individuals with an intentionally designed space to regulate their nervous systems and engage with a positive community experience with their friends and family.

The Sensory Space should provide a calm environment, removed from loud noise and crowded spaces so that users can self-regulate and eventually re-enter the event.



Sensory Room Proper
A permanent space within the venue



Mobile Sensory Space
Van or trailer parked in concourse



Temporary Sensory Space
Marquee or temporary function space



Sensory Room Proper (GABBA)



Mobile sensory room (trailer example)
Credit: Kulture City



Temporary Sensory Space (marquee example)
Credit: Bingham Health

Select Sensory Activity Zones

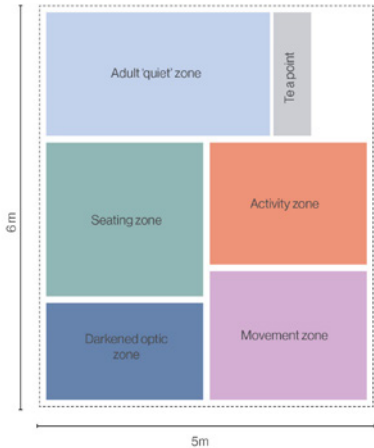


It is recommended that every Sensory Space is organised into multiple activity zones. The zoning of the space is most effective when separated with clear spatial definition (eg. partition walls, curtains). These zones help organise the shared use of the space and provides a broader range of sensory regulating assistance across the different zones. The number and size of the zones is determined by the size and type of the space available.

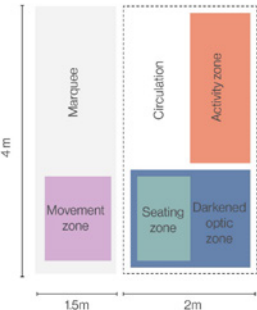
Each zone is most effective when dedicated to a defined activity that is able to address different means of sensory regulation:

- Seating Zone (body awareness, comfort, calming)
- Activity Zone (communication, focus)
- Darkened Optic zone (focus, calming)
- Movement Zone (movement, body awareness)
- Adult 'quiet' zone (acoustically separated space for calming, comfort, ideally cooled and darkened)

Examples of Activity Zoning within typical layouts



Sensory Room Proper
A permanent space within the venue



Mobile Sensory Space
Van or trailer parked in concourse



Temporary Sensory Space
Marquee or temporary function space

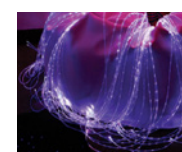
Select activity equipment



There is specific sensory equipment that is appropriate for each of the different activity zones. It is recommended that at selection of these items and equipment is provided within these zones.

This equipment is designed to address different aspects of sensory processing. The number of these items varies will vary depending on the size, capacity and type of Sensory Space (proper, temporary or mobile).

Examples of Sensory Space Equipment



Vision
(sight)



Auditory
(hearing)



Tactile
(touch)



Proprioception
(body awareness)



Vestibular
(movement / balance)



Interoception
(internal signs/signals)

Activity Zone

- Vision
- Tactile
- Proprioception
- Vestibular
- Interoception

Seating Zone

- Auditory
- Proprioception
- Vestibular

Adult Quiet Zone

- Vision
- Auditory
- Tactile
- Proprioception
- Vestibular

Movement Zone

- Proprioception
- Vestibular

Darkened Optic Zone

- Vision
- Tactile

Select finishes



It is recommended that sensory spaces are carpeted to provide a soft and comfortable finish. The carpet should be commercial grade durability and soil/stain protection.

Walls and ceiling to have a single paint finish, avoiding wall papers and patterning.

Calming colours of neutral blues, greys and greens throughout are recommended.

Soft lighting with dimming control recommended for all spaces.



Soft furniture finishes

Neutral warm blue, green, grey recommended

Heavy-duty commercial grade polyesters, or solution-dyed acrylic canvas

Removable and washable covers for all soft furniture recommended



Carpeted floor

Neutral warm grey, recommended recommended

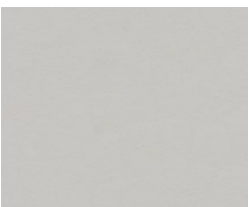
Solution-dyed nylon carpet tiles or suitable other

Commercial grade durability

Soil/ stain protection

Antimicrobial protection recommended

Minimum P2 slip rating



Easy wipe-down floor

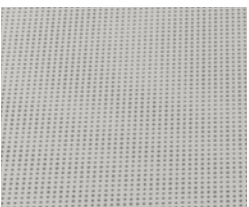
Marmoleum, epoxy or similar

Neutral warm grey, recommended recommended

Easy-clean

Commercial grade durability

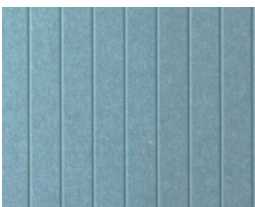
Minimum P2 slip rating



Acoustic ceiling panels

Warm neutral colours /white recommended

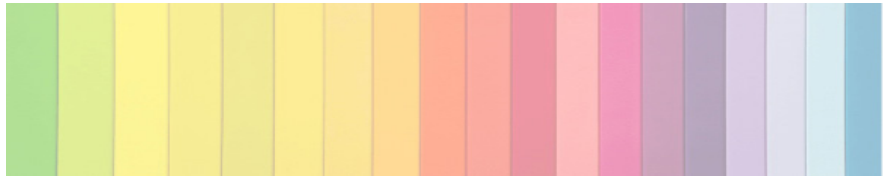
Laminate, veneer or raw finish



Acoustic wall treatment

Neutral warm blue, green, grey, beige recommended

Laminate, veneer or raw finish



Warm, soft colour palette recommended

Muted colours tend to support calm and relaxation.

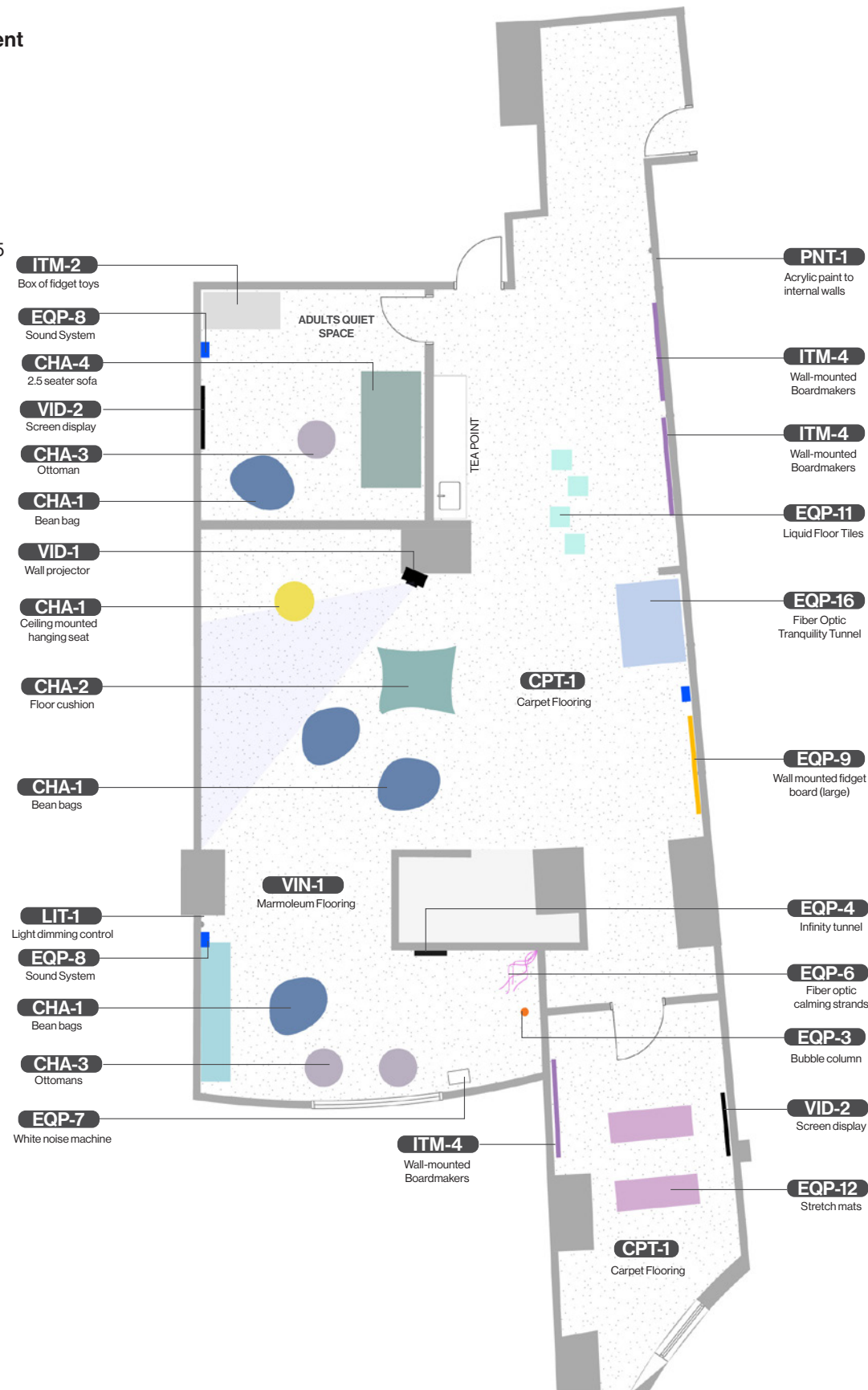
Muted blues, greens and warm greys are recommended for room finishes to create a calming effect.

Example Sensory Space layouts

Sensory Room Proper (Large)

Recommended quantity of
selected sensory engagement
items:

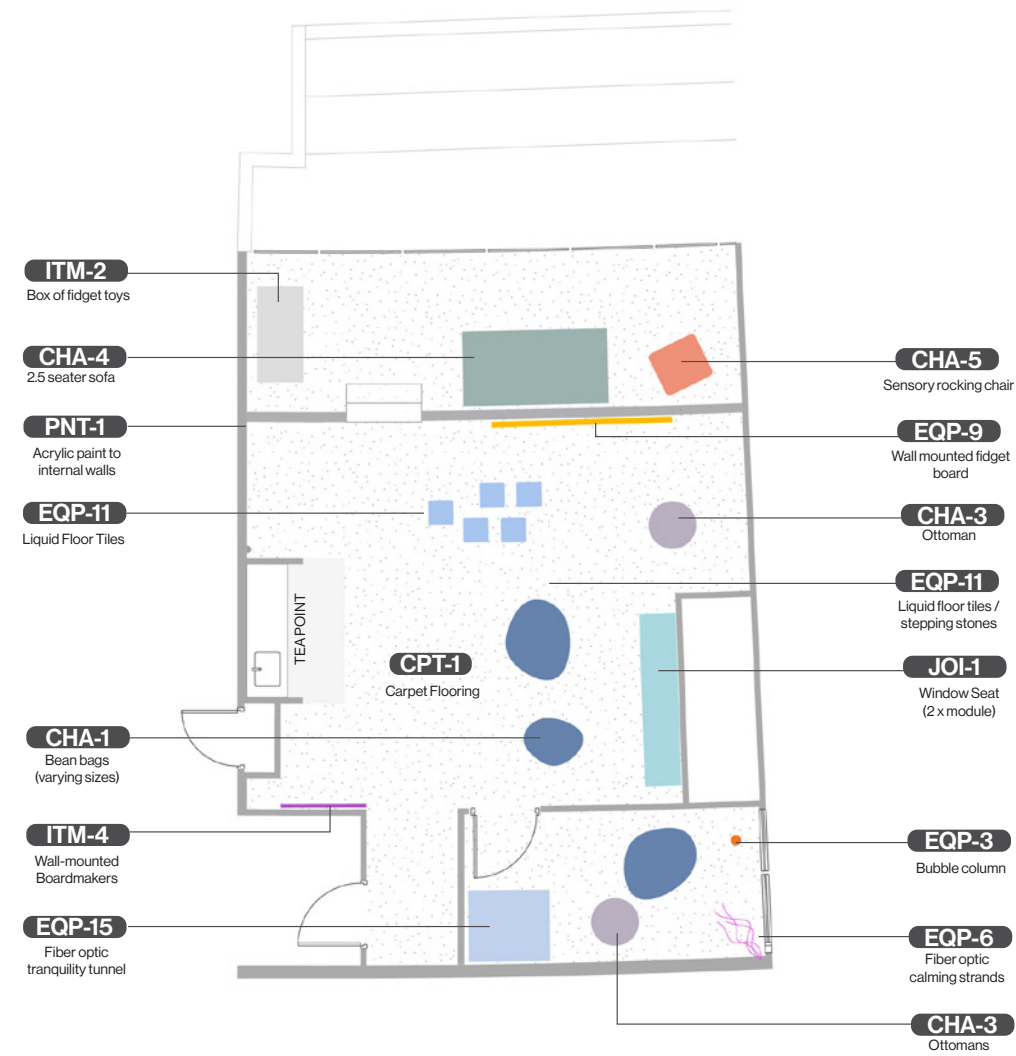
- Visual engagement: 5-6
- Auditory engagement: 2
- Tactile engagement: 3
- Proprioception engagement: 4-5
- Vestibular engagement: 2-3
- Interoception: 1



Sensory Room Proper (Medium)

Recommended quantity of
selected sensory engagement
items:

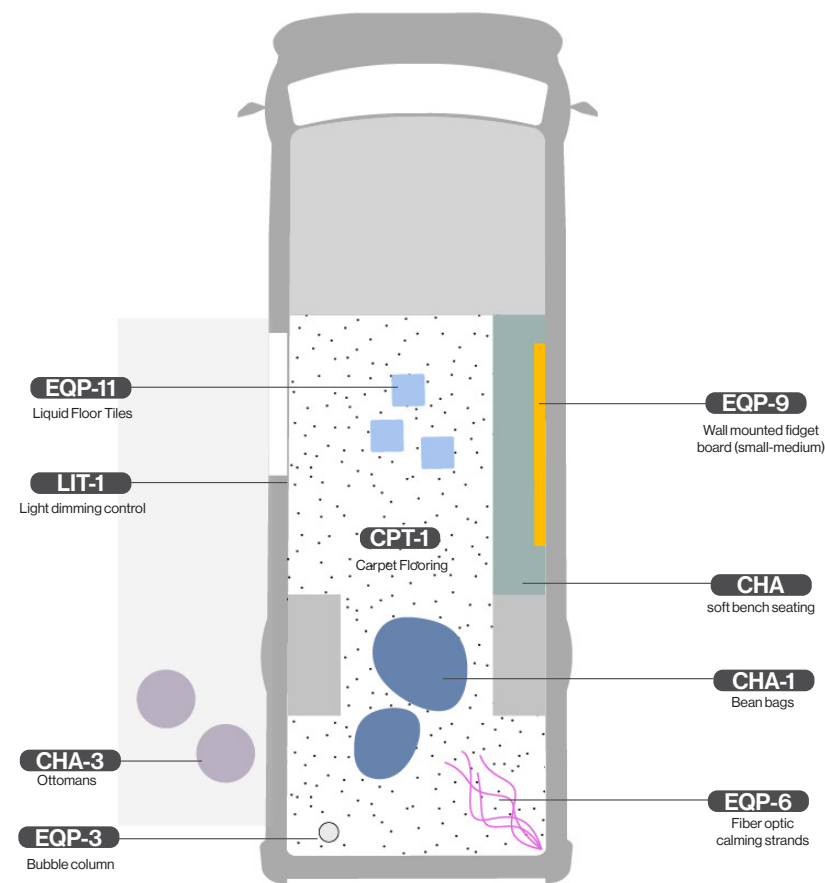
- Visual engagement: 2-3
- Auditory engagement: 1
- Tactile engagement: 3
- Proprioception engagement: 4
- Vestibular engagement: 2
- Interoception: 1



Mobile Sensory Space

Recommended quantity of selected sensory engagement items:

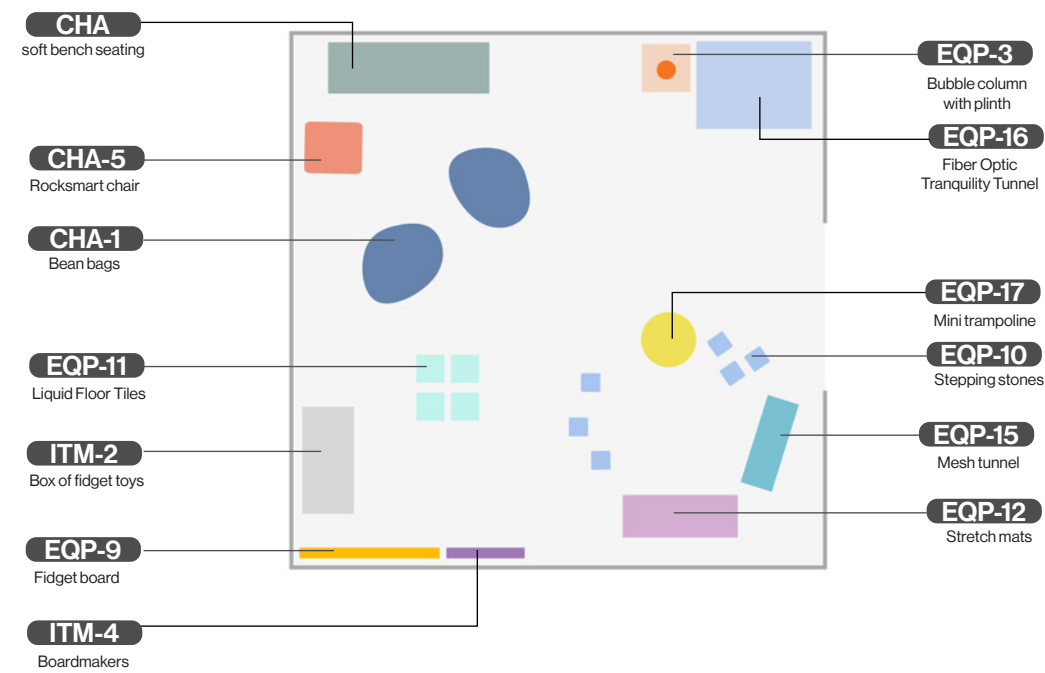
- Visual engagement: 2
- Auditory engagement: 1
- Tactile engagement: 2
- Proprioception engagement: 2
- Vestibular engagement: Nil



Temporary Sensory Space (Marquee format)

Recommended quantity of selected sensory engagement items:

- Visual engagement: 2-3
- Auditory engagement: 1
- Tactile engagement: 3
- Proprioception engagement: 2-3
- Vestibular engagement: 1-2
- Interoception: 1





Visual representation of Sensory Room Proper

Operational considerations

Maintenance

A budget for ongoing equipment servicing, maintenance and staff training will need to be considered.

Training

It is recommended that each venue engages with an Occupational Therapist (OT) to develop suitable training for staff members operating the Sensory Spaces.


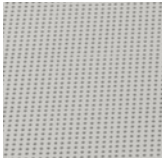

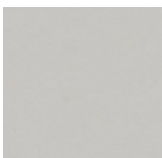



This could include partnering with a Tertiary Institution that is able to offer an OT or therapy assistant program (or similar).



Typical Equipment

Vision (sight)

Important to maintain a balance between visual stimulation and visual overload




Element	Code	Description	Details	Recommended application
Wall finish	PNT-1	Interior Acrylic Wall Paint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Neutral warm blue/green/grey (or suitable other)AcrylicLow SheenLow VOC paint	Sensory Room Proper - to all interior walls
Acoustic: Wall Panels	WAL-1	Perforated Timber: Acoustic Wall Panels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Perforated Timber Acoustic Wall PanelsMDF or ply4.5mm hole perforationLaminate, veneer or raw finishNeutral warm blue/green/grey (or suitable other)	Sensory Room Proper - selected interior walls
Flooring	CPT-1	Carpet Flooring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Flotex Pile Carpet TilesNeutral grey/warm blues (or suitable other)Solution dyed nylonCommercial grade durabilityAntimicrobial protectionSoil/stain protectionMinimum P2 slip rating	Interior floor surfaces
	VIN-1	Marmoleum Flooring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Marmoleum sheetEasy-cleanCommercial grade durabilityMinimum P2 slip rating	Interior hard floor surfaces
Room Lighting	LIT-1	Lighting with dimming control 		Sensory Room Proper Mobile Sensory Space
Visual stimulation equipment	LIT-2	Rotating disco ball with spotlight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rotating Disco Ball with LED Spotlights	Sensory space areas with dimmable lighting control Darkened Optic Zone
	VID-1	Mounted wall projector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wide angle ceiling mounted projectorInstalled so lense is minimum 2.8m from walls.	Sensory space areas with dimmable lighting control Darkened Optic Zone

Element	Code	Description	Details	Recommended application
Visual stimulation equipment	VID-2	Digital Screen Display 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Securely wall mountedRemote control operatedSound and channel control	Sensory room proper Mobile Sensory Space
	EQP-1	Therapy Mirror 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Safe bevelled edgesChild-proof, shatter proof mirrorNominal 600W x 450H(mm)	Appropriate for all Sensory Spaces
	EQP-2	Wall Bubble Feature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Securely wall mountedAcrylic water tank with no seamsRemote controlled with power sourceNominal 600W x 900H(mm)Serviced every 6 months	Sensory spaces with power source and dimmable lighting control
	EQP-3	Bubble Column 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Securely floor or wall mountedAcrylic water tank with no seamsRemote controlled with power sourceNominal dimensions: 150W x 1200H(mm)Serviced every 6 months	Sensory spaces with power source and dimmable lighting control
	EQP-4	Infinity Tunnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides diverse sensory entertainment - controlled by voice and other noises in the roomComposite timberNominal size: 600W x 700H x 100D(mm)serviced every 6 months	Sensory spaces with power source and dimmable lighting control
	EQP-6	Fiber Optic Calming Strands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Approx 100 fiber optic tails with Low Voltage LED light sourceMounted against wall surfaceServiced every 6 months	Sensory spaces with power source and dimmable lighting control

Typical Equipment



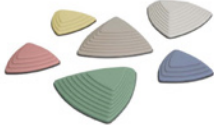

Auditory (Hearing)

All auditory items should have controls that are accessible by individuals utilizing the room

Element	Code	Description	Details	Recommended application
Sound Machine	EQP-7	White Noise Machine		Enclosed quiet areas
Music	EQP-8	Sound System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Volume control 	Appropriate for all sensory spaces
Noise cancelling headphones	ITM-1	Noise cancelling headphones	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Adjustable 	Appropriate for all sensory spaces

Tactile (Touch)

All tactile items should be easy-clean









Element	Code	Description	Details	Recommended application
Fidgets	EQP-9	Wall Mounted Fidget Board	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Wall Mounted Fidget BoardNominal dimensions 1800W x 1200H (larger), 450W x 500H (smaller)Easy-clean surfacesNo loose pieces	Activity Zone
	ITM-2	Assorted Fidget Toys	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Noise Cancelling HeadphonesMarble FidgetNoodle FidgetTangle Fidget	Activity Zone Seating Zone Adult 'Quiet' Zone
Stepping Stones	EQP-10	Sensory Stepping Stones	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Varying sizes	Activity Zone Movement Zone
	EQP-11	Liquid Floor Tiles	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Leak proof - non-toxic cosmetic liquidHighly durableAnti-slip backingBest suited for hard surface flooring	Activity Zone Movement Zone

Typical Equipment

Proprioception (Body Awareness)


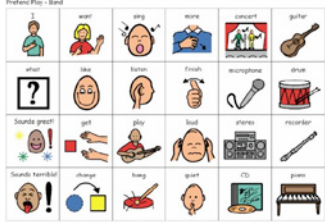
Element	Code	Description	Details	Recommended application
Seating	JOI-1	Window Seat Joinery (refer to page 33) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Description: Window seat - Modular joinery itemColour: Duck Egg BlueDimensions: 2400H x 1500W x 518D per moduleMaterial: 18mm ply carcass, 12mm ply sub structure, with 4.5mm perforated MDF acousitc panel with concealed fixingsFinish:Duck Egg Blue to all ply panels and perforated acoustic panel	Seating Zone
	CHA-1	Beanbags 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Description: Indoor Quilted Bean BagColour: Neutral warm blue/ green/grey (or suitable other)Dimensions: 900H x 1100W x 1200L - seat height approx 450mm (8kg filled)Material:heavy-duty commercial range polyster	Seating Zone Adult 'Quiet' Zone Darkened Optic Zone
	CHA-2	Floor cushions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Description: Large Floor CushionColour: Neutral warm blue/ green/grey (or suitable other)Dimensions (mm): 1300 x 1300Material: heavy-duty commercial range polyster	Seating Zone Adult 'Quiet' Zone Darkened Optic Zone
	CHA-3	Ottoman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Description: Bean Bag OttomanColour: Neutral warm blue/ green/grey (or suitable other)Dimensions (mm): 470H x 700W x 700L, with polystyrene filling (weight filled - 5kg)Material: solution-dyed acrylic canvas	Seating Zone Adult 'Quiet' Zone Darkened Optic Zone
	CHA-4	Sofa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Description: 2.5 seater sofaColour:Neutral warm blue/ green/grey (or suitable other)Dimensions (mm): 1960L x 1110D x 685HMaterial: Polyester	Seating Zone Adult 'Quiet' Zone Darkened Optic Zone
Yoga/stretch mats	EQP-12	Stretching mats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">High quality PVC non-slip surfaceClosed cell foam: non absorbent and wipe cleanNominal size 1730Lx610W(mm)Nominal weight 2kg	Movement Zone Activity Zone

Vestibular (Movement & Balance)

Element	Code	Description	Details	Recommended application
Seated movement	CHA-5	Rocking lounge Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Double or single seaterMin weight capacity 70kg(single seater), 90kg (double seater)Nominal size: 480L x 380W x 700H (single seater), 680L x 760W x 1000H (double seater)Machine washable cover	Seating Zone Adult 'Quiet' Zone Movement Zone
	CHA-6	Hanging fabirc seat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ceiling mounted from structural ceiling beamNominal size 1050H x 85W (mm)Min 80kg weight requirement	Movement Zone
	CHA-7	Nest swing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ceiling mounted from structural ceiling beamNominal size 1050H x 85W (mm)Min 80kg weight requirement	Movement Zone
Reading / quiet space	EQP-13	Reading Tent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Easy clean polyester with polypropylene plastic connectors	Activity Zone
	EQP-14	Reading Canopy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ceiling Mounted fabric canopyTo be hung from structural ceiling beamPolyester or suitable otherNominal size 2400L x 550W(mm)	Activity Zone Movement Zone
Play movement	EQP-15	Mesh Tunnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CollapsibleSemi transparent mesh for visibility and air flowLightweightNominal dimensions: 2500L x 700D (mm)	Acitivity Zone Movement Zone
	EQP-16	Fiber Optic Tranquility Tunnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fiber Optic tunnel with transformerRemote control operatedNominal dimensions 1050W x 1200Lx800H (mm)	Activity Zone Darkened Optic Zone
	EQP-17	Mini Trampoline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nominal dimensions 900mm diameter x 230mm highMaximum weight recommendation 100kgSpring covered with PVC and sponge combination skirt	Acitivity Zone Movement Zone

Typical Equipment

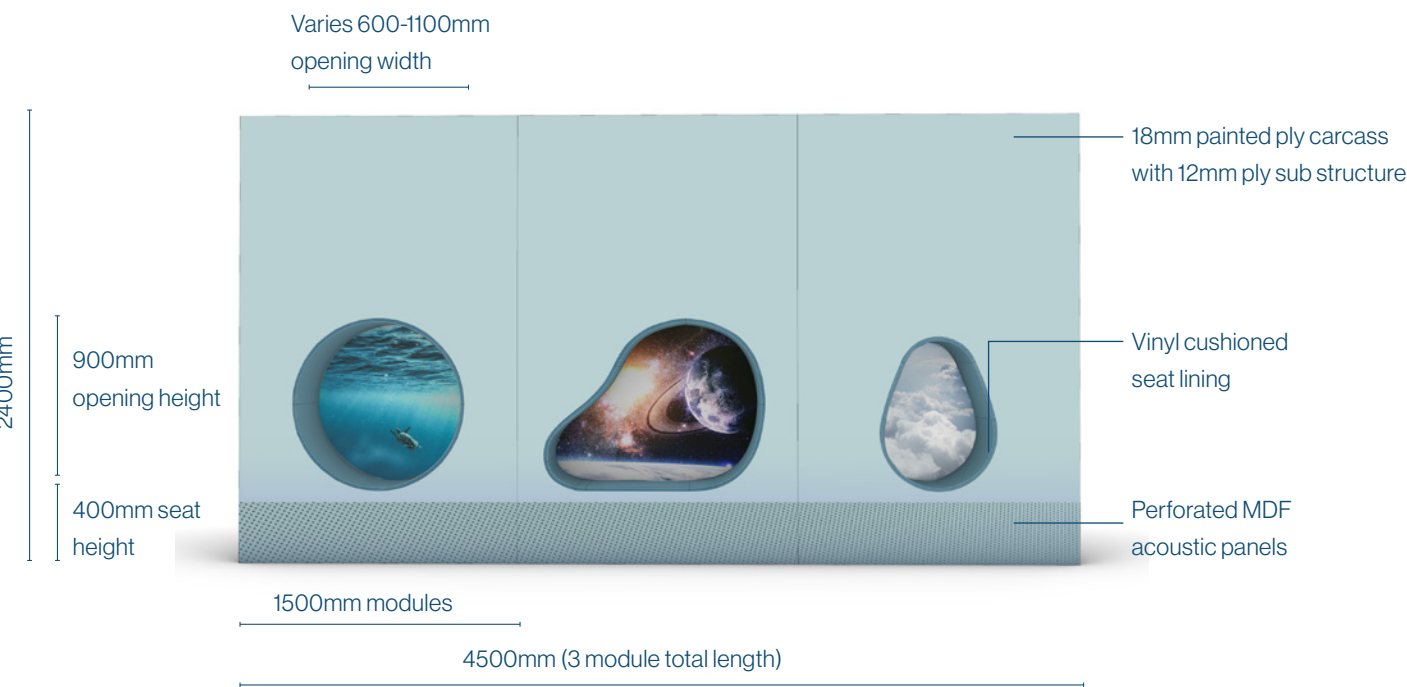
Interoception (Internal cues and signals)

Element	Code	Description	Details	Recommended application
Communication	ITM-3	Emotions and Feelings Flash Cards 		Activity Zone
	ITM-4	Board maker 		Activity Zone Movement Zone Sensory space entrance/exit points

Example Sensory Room Joinery

Modular Window Seat

A bespoke joinery piece, unique to AFL sensory spaces.
Designed to provide a semi-enclosing, comforting space to meet proprioception needs and assist in the individual's ability to find a sense of location and safety. The modular design allows venues to incorporate any number from 1-3 of these Window seat modules depending on available sensory zone areas.



smartform

smartformarchitecture.com
contact@smartformarchitecture.com