Media release

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Vulnerable children can continue to get much needed support
Vulnerable families and children in the Mildura region will continue to get the support they need thanks to continued funding announced in the state government budget. This follows the strong advocacy of Victorian Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development Wendy Lovell.

Supported playgroups under the Supported Parent and Playgroup Initiative (SPPI) had been at risk of being cut by half before the budget announcement.

40,000 children a week attend playgroups in Victoria from community playgroups through to supported playgroups which provide the additional assistance required for vulnerable children and families. Playgroups are the foundation for learning in the first 3 years of a child’s life. Attendance at playgroup enables children to grow and learn in their families and communities.

In the past three years, three supported playgroups have been established in the Mildura Rural City Local Government Area using SPPI funding. These include Butterflies Playgroup, which is aimed at families dealing with post natal depression and anxiety; Rhythm and Rhymes Playgroup, for families whose first language is not English; and the Multicultural Supported Playgroup, for families of diverse cultural backgrounds.

More than 30 families regularly access these supported playgroups.

The SPPI program is the only playgroup investment in these critical early years that the state government makes. The continuation of this funding will help more Sunraysia families access universal early childhood services, including those in isolated rural towns such as Ouyen and Werrimull.

This funding renewal follows the recommendation of the Cummins report into Victoria’s vulnerable children and families that the government, through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, ‘should increase investment and appropriate infrastructure in universal services… including community playgroups, to communities that have the highest concentration of vulnerable children and families to increase their participation in this service’.

“Playgroup Victoria appreciates the continued support of Victorian Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development Ms Wendy Lovell,” Playgroup Victoria CEO Viv Cunningham-Smith said.

“The Minister’s advocacy in this tight fiscal environment demonstrates her recognition and commitment to the important role playgroups have in supporting vulnerable families to build family environments which assist their child’s development and success in learning and life. Supported playgroups also assist vulnerable families to become connected to vital universal services such as Maternal and Child Health and kindergarten and are used as platforms for service delivery across the housing, health, community development and child protection sectors.

“We look forward to working with the Victorian Government to continue to help give all Victoria’s families and children the best start to life.”

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