



Playgroup Victoria

2022 -2023 Annual Report



Playgroup
Victoria

2022/23

Year at a Glance

1st July 2022 - 30th June 2023

MEMBERSHIP

7,327



Family Members

918

Registered Playgroups

734

Professional Affiliates

PLAYGROUP DEVELOPMENT

680



Partnerships with Local Professionals

26



Local Community Playgroup Networks

25

Community events participated in

36

Local Early Years/Professional Networks



ONLINE CONNECTIONS

15,855

Subscribers

25,479

Facebook Followers

24,937

Facebook Page Likes

8,948

Facebook Group members

5,140

Instagram Followers



Raywood Playgroup

12k

Blog Page Views

592,539

Website Page Views

106,478

Find a Playgroup Searches



Pictured here: Nature play at Every Little Season Playgroup. Image courtesy of Kaye Henry.

About

Playgroup Victoria

Playgroup Victoria is a not-for-profit, incorporated association committed to helping all Victorian families discover the benefits of playgroup. We advocate for the benefits of play in a child's early years of learning and act as a support base for communities and families wanting to start and successfully run a playgroup.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were hundreds of playgroups running throughout Melbourne and country Victoria. There became a need for some cohesion and networking between these groups and parents, wanting to start and join playgroups.

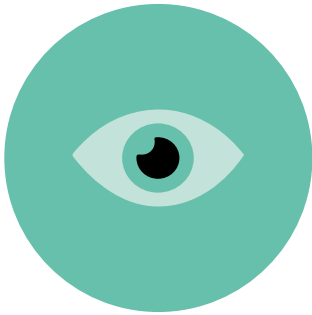
In response to the need, a group of hard-working volunteers came together and invited playgroups and interested people to ring in for advice and support on Monday mornings. The response was so great that in 1974, the *Victorian Playgroup Association* was formed. Its goal was to set up an advisory service, fulfill the need for workshops, lectures and discussions related to parenthood and life with children and to liaise with local, state and federal governments. 49 years on, Playgroup Victoria is still working to ensure families have

access to and can participate in playgroup.

Playgroup has evolved to include a variety of different types of playgroups such as bush playgroups, culturally diverse playgroups, dads playgroups and grandparents playgroups. In 2023 we estimate there are more than 1,600 playgroup sessions running each week, in over 1,000 venues across Victoria.

Funding from the Commonwealth and State Governments has enabled Playgroup Victoria to develop a community development approach to assist and support playgroups. This place-base approach ensures the needs of the community are better understood, fostering relationships and partnerships within local early childhood and family services.

Playgroup Victoria Strategic Framework



VISION

All Victorians value and benefit from playgroup



PURPOSE

To advocate for playgroup to be recognised as integral to learning, development and wellbeing during the early years.

To support the empowerment of families to create community and nurture their children through relationships and play



VALUES

- Collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Integrity and ethical practice
- Reconciliation

- Innovation and excellence
- Diversity and inclusion
- Continual learning
- Compassion and empathy

STRATEGIES

- Increase awareness of the value and benefits of playgroup
- Improve pathways to increase access to the playgroup experience
- Strengthen the playgroup experience and the impact of playgroup
- Grow a (financially) sustainable organisation

Collaboration and knowledge Sharing

We actively seek out new and innovative practice from each other, stakeholders and our community to improve our work. Together we focus on creating positive experiences and problem-solving to make this knowledge reusable. We create opportunities to share knowledge with our colleagues and our community. This helps us stimulate innovation and make better decisions faster.

Integrity and Ethical Practice

We act with integrity and are committed to upholding our values. We practice, encourage and support open communication. Staff are encouraged to be reflective practitioners who are authentic and transparent. We remain professional while also being personal in our work, building rapport and acknowledging what is important to one another. We respect the opinions of others and stand up for what we believe in, being respectful of each other's choices, rights, beliefs and preferences.

Reconciliation

Our organisation will work in a manner that will contribute to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We promote and facilitate respect, trust and positive relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Innovation and Excellence

We base our actions on new and emerging research and best practice. We strive for excellence in all our actions. We welcome new ideas, innovation and evolving practices as we continue to develop and change.

Diversity and Inclusion

We aim to build a workforce that represents our community in culture, background, ability, skills and experiences. We welcome and embrace difference and aim to reflect this in all our relationships, communications and initiatives. We recognise the learning opportunities of diversity.

Continual Learning

We are committed to always improving our work through learning new skills, ideas and concepts drawn from best practice research. We share our learning with colleagues and the professionals and families we support. Through continuous improvement we learn and create innovative programs.

Compassion and Empathy

Through an understanding and awareness of our biases towards experiences, feelings and emotions, we focus on understanding and responding with support, without trying to solve the pain and issues of others. We demonstrate this through relationship-centered practice. Through reflective practice we can better understand ourselves in order to understand and support others.

Chair and CEO Report



Playgroup Victoria CEO
Danny Schwarz



Chair of the Board
Sarah Cummings

We are thrilled to be presenting this year's Annual Report.

It's an exciting time for Victorian families and the whole early childhood sector. We have been so pleased to see in-person playgroups back in action. Families are actively looking for playgroups to join, with searches on our *Find a Playgroup* webpage increasing from 61,730 in 2022 to 106,478 by the year's end.

With families back attending in-person sessions, we brought our highly successful *Playgroup at Home LIVE* online program to a close. This much-loved initiative had more than 40,000 children and their families engaged during the peak of the pandemic.

Our engagement with early childhood professionals, many from local government who support playgroups in their communities, has increased from 577 to 734 professional affiliates.

While numbers are important and nice to see, they are only one measure of the true impact playgroup participation has for children and families. Importantly, over recent years we have seen federal and state governments integrate child development outcomes and family capacity building into what can only be described as the best early childhood policy environment in decades.

An example of this increased focus and support can be seen in the most recent federal budget. We received increased funding, enabling us to further support regional communities with a focus on intergenerational playgroups and baby community playgroups.

We are proud to have been awarded philanthropic, local and state government grants, totalling \$143,000. Being selected in these competitive programs enables us to create and continue a range of exciting and important programs for Victorian families including:

- The development of a new playgroup model that supports children with and without disabilities to connect and play together called *PlayBuddies*
- Partnering with the local community in Sunbury to build capacity and diversity of playgroups thanks to the state government's *Big Build Project*
- Collaborating with other state and territory playgroup organisations on a research project to better understand what motivates volunteers to set-up and run community playgroups, thanks to funding from the *Ian Potter Foundation*

Throughout this report you will read about the length and breadth of the work that has been undertaken by our team and the many volunteers in our community, to support children and families to access and participate in playgroup.

This includes opportunities to dive deeper into what playgroup is really about, including learning more about our Playgroup Champions, nominated by local playgroup attendees to celebrate National Playgroup Week.

Whilst it may seem like child's play, you can read about the evidence that supports the value of play and what we do for the immediate and longer-term benefits to children and their families. This includes the *Peep Learning Together Programme*, *All Come Out To Play!* and the *Connect and Create Workshops* which have been delivered to over 350 volunteers in community playgroups.

We celebrated the launch of the National Playgroup Statement, which at its core is about the universal recognition of playgroup and the ways it contributes to family support and early childhood development.

Another opportunity for development which we have embraced this year has been inclusion and the role it plays in everything we do. Building on work done by all Playgroup Victoria staff and volunteers over many years, this year we established our Programs and Social Impact department. The function of the department is to embed inclusion policies, philosophies and processes throughout the playgroup platform. This includes advocating for change to ensure that all families can access and participate in quality playgroup experiences. An example of how this works in practice is the team's involvement in our Reconciliation Action Plan.

The work of our staff is supported by a dedicated team of volunteer board members. The board is responsible for shaping the strategic vision and objectives of the organisation as well as ensuring appropriate governance, financial and risk

management oversight. We are fortunate to have a highly engaged, proactive and experienced board. As with any board, over time there are changes as some members leave and others join.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank departing board members Emma Forsyth, Kerrie Neophytou and Kate Bentley who have volunteered their time and expertise over several years. Their contributions and shared skills enabled us to ensure that we continued to delivery support to children and their families during one of the most challenging times through the pandemic.

We are excited to welcome new board members Matt Ralston, Kate Wilson and Unal Haribhai. We welcome back Antony Elliot who has re-joined the Board. Bringing a diverse range of professional skills and lived experience, they have already shown their value as we have been setting the course for Playgroup Victoria's future.

We would particularly like to acknowledge and thank Felicity Dunn, while continuing her service on the Board, stepped down as Chair earlier this year. Felicity has championed the benefits of playgroup and helped guide the organisation as Chair for over six years. In addition, she has been committed to ensuring that Playgroup Victoria plays an integral role in the development of the Playgroup Association Federation.

Finally, to our incredible staff, your dedicated professionalism in all that you do for Playgroup Victoria, has had, and will continue to have, invaluable, money-can't-buy positive impacts for the children and families you have supported. As a result of all that you do, Playgroup Victoria is recognised as the go-to organisation in the state about all things playgroup. Our sold-out conference of 320 professionals is testament to that. We are looking forward to continuing the journey together and to ensuring that through playgroup, the foundation is laid for all children and their families to thrive.

Risk and Audit Committee

Financials

| Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 June 2023 | | | |
|--|------|-------------|-------------|
| Income | | | |
| | Note | 2023 (\$) | 2022 (\$) |
| Revenue | 3 | 2,396,502 | 2,430,870 |
| Other income | 3 | 45,792 | 88,415 |
| Expenses | | | |
| Employee benefits expenses | | (1,911,389) | (2,182,226) |
| Client support expenses | | (43,071) | (185,855) |
| Computer expenses | | (118,743) | (123,614) |
| Insurance expenses | | (42,779) | (48,884) |
| Utilities expenses | | (34,117) | (33,746) |
| Occupancy costs | | (41,572) | (39,738) |
| Membership fees paid | | (21,801) | (15,326) |
| Marketing expenses | | (17,406) | (10,891) |
| Vehicle expenses | | (16,754) | (7,064) |
| Bank charges | | (1,898) | (1,891) |
| Depreciation expenses | | (40,710) | (55,017) |
| Other expenses | | (76,699) | (66,221) |
| Surplus before income tax | 4 | 75,355 | (251,188) |
| Income tax expense | 2(b) | - | - |
| Net surplus for the year | | 75,355 | (251,188) |
| Other comprehensive surplus for the year, net of tax | | - | - |
| Total comprehensive surplus for the year | | 75,355 | (251,188) |

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023

| Current Assets | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|------------------|------------------|
| | Note | 2023 (\$) | 2022(\$) |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 5 | 636,777 | 146,595 |
| Trade & other receivables | 6 | 30,589 | 6,110 |
| Other financial assests | 7 | 1,000,000 | 850,241 |
| Other assets | 8 | 52,217 | 47,728 |
| Total Current Assets | | 1,719,583 | 1,050,674 |
| Non-Current Assets | | | |
| Property, plant and equipment | 11 | 58,728 | 55,438 |
| Intangible assets | 12 | 39,763 | 40,541 |
| Total Non - Current Assets | | 98,491 | 95,979 |
| Total Assets | | 1,818,074 | 1,146,653 |
| Current Liabilities | | | |
| Trade and other payables | 9 | 212,629 | 205,181 |
| Employee benefits | 13 | 316,122 | 282,611 |
| Other financial liabilities | 10 | 618,874 | 89,797 |
| Total Current Liabilities | | 1,147,625 | 577,589 |
| Non-Current Liabilities | | | |
| Employee benefits | 13 | 45,504 | 19,474 |
| Total Non- Current Liabilities | | 45,504 | 19,474 |
| Total Liabilities | | 1,193,129 | 597,063 |
| Net Assets | | 624,945 | 549,590 |
| Equity | | | |
| Reserves | | 4,643 | 4,643 |
| Accumulated funds | | 620,302 | 544,947 |
| Total Equity | | 624,945 | 549,590 |

Treasurer's Report

The year to June 2023 was the first reporting period not directly impacted by one off events since the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021. The Total Comprehensive Surplus of \$75,000 (\$251,000 deficit in 2022) reflects a year on year reduction in revenue offset by reduced operating expenses.

Total income fell from \$2,519,000 to \$2,442,000 (\$77,000 or 3 %) however close control of expenses saw total costs fall from \$2,770,000 to 2,369,000 (\$402,000 or 15%). This underpinned the return to profitability.

In considering the movement in revenue and expenses, it is important to note that FY2022 was materially impacted by the cessation of the *MyTime* program late in the year. This was the result of a tender called on short notice in February 2022. We were unsuccessful (on the basis of cost alone) with the funder confirming our excellent tender submission and historical delivery of the program. Staff in the program had been with us for over 10 years and their accrued entitlements and redundancy payments impacted expenses by more than \$100,000 over budget expectations. This was a one-off cost in FY2022 and not repeated in FY2023.

Note 3 to the accounts discloses the revenue impact of the loss of the *MyTime* program compared to FY2023 (\$452,000).

Pleasingly other revenues, predominantly from the Federal government via Playgroup Australia

and supporting the various programs we deliver, increased by \$371,00 from \$1,723,000 in FY2022 \$2,096,000 in FY2023. This materially offset the *MyTime* reduction. We have also been successful in sourcing increased philanthropic income, up from \$8,000 in FY2022 to \$40,000 in FY2023.

In line with the recovery to profitability, cash generation recovered with EBITDA of \$114,000 for FY2023 increased from a negative \$196,000 in FY2022, a turnaround of \$310,000. This has supported the increased cash surplus recorded in our balance sheet.

Critically for a Not-for-Profit organisation, cash generation was strong in FY2023 as is reflected in the Statement of Cash Flows. This statement reflects the operating cash flow evidenced in EBITDA but also increased cash collections at \$2,930,000 up from \$2,530,000 last year. It should be remembered that part of this is cash received for programs to be delivered in future years and so will be consumed in the ordinary course of our delivering our underlying purpose of supporting playgroups.



As a consequence of this improved cash performance, our balance sheet has strengthened with net assets of \$626,000 compared to \$550,000 in FY2022. Your Board seeks to manage risks and welcomes this improvement, however, we are conscious of our mission and are vigilant in looking for ways of efficiently and responsibly deploying our resources, whether financial or operational.

We continue to invest in operational improvements such as a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to support all of our various playgroup programs, updated financial reporting methodologies and training and development for our staff. This is in addition to our other program investments such as the Australian Licence for the Peep Learning together Program (PeepLTP) which we took on last year and continue to roll out.

Management and your Board have worked with external auditors, JTP Assurance (JTP), to support

the financial audit and you will note that JTP have delivered an unqualified audit opinion. I also note that, although we continue to improve our processes and practices, there are no material changes to the underlying derivation of the accounts between FY2023 and FY2022.

On behalf of the Board, I confirm that the financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial position of Playgroup Victoria Incorporated as at 30 June 2023 and that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Playgroup Victoria Incorporated can continue to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

-

Antony Elliot

TREASURER



Reconciliation

Our Reconciliation journey continues as we forge new relationships, listen to more stories and seek to meaningfully engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and traditions.

Playgroup Victoria reestablished in-person connections with the Koorie Playgroup Network, meeting with members of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). Attending were playgroup workers from VACCA's Eastern, Southern, Western and Northern playgroups. Kristy and Haley from Milla Milla, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative's playgroup also attended.

Throughout the year Playgroup Victoria shared stories, ideas, artwork and inspiration from Reconciliation Australia. We marked the big events: NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Childrens Day. Within our communications we shared artwork, stories, resources- encouraging playgroups to engage and learn more.

Members of Playgroup Victoria's Reconciliation Action Committee met to discuss the new things they had learnt. They discussed what future opportunities they saw as important to make meaningful change. Things such as the interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders featured on [ABC's One Plus One](#) program provided great insight and wisdom.

Members of the Reconciliation committee have sought out new relationships, meeting to have a yarn with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These conversations have created a greater depth of understanding.

We encouraged playgroups to find deeper meaning in their Reconciliation journey. An example comes from [Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann](#). Miriam shares what deep listening means to her. The 2021 Senior Australian of the Year encourages us all to reconnect with ourselves, with nature, with an inner peace. This is one example of our listening and our learning. We are listening. Connecting with nature. Taking families and children to nature. Inspiring them with nature activities and nature playgroup stories, the seasons and change.

One of the most heartwarming things to see comes directly from local playgroups and children. Many playgroups have taken it upon themselves to establish their own Welcome to Country- one that is meaningful to them and the land they are on. Together they have learned about the history of their area and seek to pay respect to those past, present and emerging. Through music, art and stories, children are developing understanding from a very young age.

A powerful signifier that the future looks bright, the children growing up on these ancient lands already understand its significance and beauty. They are listening to the stories and will carry them on. We continue to listen. To build community. To create awareness. To create a space where we all belong.



^ Image courtesy of Kardinia Playgroup



^ Pictured: Koorie Playgroup Network team meeting in June 2023 hosted by the Milla Milla Playgroup, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative.

Online Playgroup Sessions

Playgroup at Home Live

While there were still pandemic restrictions and hesitations in place, we welcomed families and early years professionals to enjoy our online playgroup sessions. Over time, it was evident that there was a big shift as families began to meet once more for in-person sessions. We slowly transitioned back, running a select number of sessions online. The need for sessions reduced and we completed our last online playgroup session on 13 December 2022.

“It has been such an honour to be part of Playgroup at Home Live each week, watching children and families engage, sharing laughter and having fun. Each week, we have had the privilege of families welcoming us into their homes and sharing some amazing stories. Program planning for these special sessions each week has been such a joy. This experience has been heart-warming and one we will never forget.” - Louise Buckle-Smith, Playgroup Victoria

A comforting staple during the pandemic, Playgroup at Home LIVE drew to a close at the end of 2022. Between 1st July 2022 and 31st December 2022, *Playgroup at Home Live* reduced its regularity and communications to meet the needs of our audience. We ran 16 online sessions in total, with 129 children and 157 parents attending. This included all-ages sessions, baby playgroup sessions and a special session with Sovereign Hill. A Playgroup at Home Live Finale was held at the end of the year, in celebration of the many connections and moments shared.

The level of engagement was no longer sustainable and *Playgroup at Home Live* had done its job and kept the community connected during the pandemic as we transitioned to a new chapter. The last few years have highlighted how important social connections are, how valued our local communities are and those within them. Everyone who took part in the online session had an impact. Families and special guests shared their stories and experiences. There was fun and laughter at a time we needed it most. During times of uncertainty, regular connections are vital.

Playgroup at Home Live was a familiar, fun and free way for families to connect, play, learn and share. It was light relief. We are so grateful for the memories and moments shared. Now we turn our focus towards helping families connect with local playgroups in their communities. We take comfort in knowing that online connections are also there when needed. People are always close.



“We laughed, we cried, we sang, and told stories. We were joined by many generous partners who enriched the experience with memories we will treasure. As we transition our way back into a ‘normal’ life we will reflect on this project with an overwhelming sense of pride and fondness for the 40,000 plus people we have met and worked with. We will never forget it. Thank you to the team who helped to create and roll-out the magic!”

NancyLee Merzel, Playgroup Victoria



The Playgroup Statement Launch

In October 2022, Australia's first Playgroup Statement was launched. The Playgroup Statement represents the collective efforts of a National Advisory Group committed to the universal recognition of the contribution playgroups make to family support and early childhood development outcomes.

Playgroup Australia Launches a National Conversation About the Value of Playgroups.

The role of playgroups in supporting children's development and building strong families and communities was highlighted for the first time in a national Playgroup Statement. A collaborative effort from the Playgroup National Advisory Group, in partnership with the Australian Catholic University, resulted in this robust advocacy document.

The Playgroup Statement was formally launched in October 2022. The project brought together an esteemed group of professionals across national government, not-for-profit and community organisations, early years academics and individuals with a history of service to Australian children and families. It demonstrated the substantive commitment to the universal recognition, that playgroup contributes to family support and early childhood development outcomes.

"Every playgroup is unique, but they all provide incredibly important services: play-based learning and social-emotional development for children; social support for parents and carers; and connections that build communities," said Playgroup Australia CEO Dr Amanda Walsh.

[READ THE PLAYGROUP STATEMENT HERE.](#)



'The Playgroup Statement sends a powerful message about the importance of community in the lives of children and families. Coming together to play, learn, and connect helps every child and family. We all need a strong sense of community and belonging, and that's what playgroups deliver.'

As part of the Playgroup Statement launch, Playgroup Australia hosted an expert panel to discuss the role and value of playgroups.

[Enjoy watching this enriching discussion HERE.](#)



National Playgroup Week 2023

National Playgroup Week provided an opportunity for early years communities to get-together and celebrate the many wonderful and diverse playgroups we have - and the many benefits we reap from play.



National PLAYGROUP Week

20th - 26th March 2023

Being Present, Together Let's Play!

From small rural groups in the bush, to intergenerational groups in city areas, to those who meet in our beautiful parks, schools, beaches, coffee shops and school halls across the state- National Playgroup Week was a celebration of all the good playgroups bring. Playgroups shared stories, experiences and highlights.

After a turbulent three years of change, the idea of being present, sharing moments together in-person, was something we drew close. Through play and conversation, we learnt about each other, connected, relationships strengthened and many people felt a sense of belonging.



THE PLAYGROUP PALS HIT THE ROAD!

Playgroup Victoria visited several local communities during National Playgroup Week. This created opportunities for families and early years professional to connect with their wider community and welcome new families to their playgroup.

Families, carers and early years professionals were invited to nominate their Playgroup Champions in March 2023. This was run in conjunction with our National Playgroup Week celebrations. In the middle of April, we announced the Playgroup Champion and runners up, sharing their stories.

Since then, throughout May, June and July we have been continuing to share their stories in more depth on the blog, in our newsletter, in our communications and on social media.

The Playgroup Champion stories demonstrated the power of local connections and contributions, which support the wellbeing of families and the wider community. The people who nominated Playgroup Champions highlighted the many hardworking, caring, considerate and enthusiastic people who bring playgroup to life and strengthen early years experiences.

After COVID lockdowns and restrictions, each of these playgroups acted as a meeting place for families and carers, welcoming them into a safe space to share and connect. This in turn opened opportunities for discussion, social support and knowledge sharing. Raywood Playgroup, for example, established itself in the small country town. Raywood has a primary school of approximately twelve students. There is a pub and post office. The introduction of a playgroup adds another point of contact for community members and assists in connecting people, connecting services and contributes to building a sustainable future for the small country town as more families with small children get to know each other and others in the community.

Several of the playgroups shortlisted as Playgroup Champions were folding or non-existent one year ago. All endured the lockdowns and restrictions of a once in a century pandemic.

The consequences of the pandemic were felt and local playgroups supported families and their community as they reestablished.

On an individual level, reconnecting with people in person was of immense importance at playgroup, especially for the children who missed out on many early years experiences during this time. Families were welcomed, to have fun, learn and establish a support network.

For each local community, the playgroups strengthened the early years experiences. This in turn created a positive learning space, readying children for school, supporting their development. For all ages of the community, the regular interaction helped to support their wellbeing.

Nominate Your Playgroup Champion!





We would love to congratulate our overall Playgroup Champion 2023 winner Amelia Weir, from Kardinia playgroup. Thank you for your local playgroup contributions Amelia!

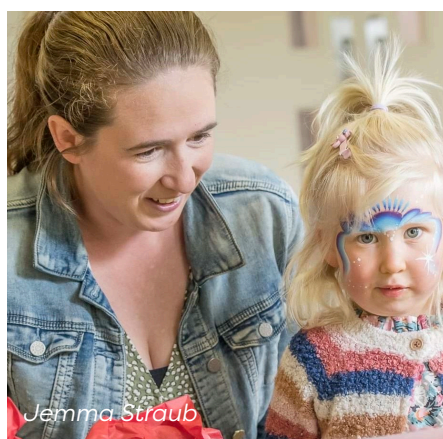
"This is really hard to put into words - how do you truly convey the absolute awesomeness that is Amelia? She is always ready with a smile, a cup of tea and a hug when you need it. She devotes hours of her time to research, developing amazing programs for our groups and coming up with the best craft and event ideas. She is incredibly inventive with resources and makes the best play dough. She is a friend to everyone who walks through our doors and puts on the most amazing community shows as well as running three regular playgroups every week. She cooks meals and delivers them to new mums, is always thinking of others and doing what she can to make their lives brighter and better. She is a wonderful example as a mother and is always ready to commiserate with you in your hard times and celebrate with you in the good ones. She advocates for her team of volunteers and is the best champion for children. She is so much more than words on a page, she is a force of nature, the true meaning of a good friend." Sarah Neumann nominated Amelia, finding her inspiring and a pillar of their playgroup community.



Runners Up

We would love to congratulate our two Playgroup Champion runners-up, from Raywood Playgroup and Leopold Playgroup. Thank you for your local playgroup contributions Jemma and Jess!

"In the time we have been with the playgroup, Jess has completely transformed the experiences, activities and the whole connection that the playgroup offers with the incredible organisation, creativity and connection between committee members that she has instilled. From a playgroup that was on the verge of closing to now adding extra days to accommodate more children and families, and giving back to the local businesses through playgroup Easter Market, Jess has really made it a wonderful place to belong." Playgroup member Leah nominated Leopold Playgroup president Jess Conway with these kind words.



"Jemma took it upon herself to start a playgroup in our small town of Raywood, unsure if she would have anyone turn up on day one, let alone continue to come each week. With two young children herself she's turned up each week eager to engage with all the kids and provide a safe and fun environment for all the kids to learn in. Raywood playgroup has now been running for one year. Jemma encourages community engagement, with bush walks, visiting the local park and residents. We have loved the connection she has made with the local school, Raywood Primary School (of only 12-15 students). Every term we meet with the school and the school children run an activity with our children. Being able to meet other local families has been fantastic, especially in our small farming community. We thank Jemma so much for taking on the role and getting playgroup started in Raywood." Matthew Straub kindly nominated Jemma on behalf of the Raywood playgroup families.

Practice and Research

The Playgroup Victoria Practice and Research team have led the work and activities for grant applications to diverse philanthropic and government offerings. This has been an exciting year allowing staff to be creative and strategic in the imagination, design and development of playgroup models, community development projects and potentially increase the reach and utilisation of the Peep Learning Together Programme through the assistance and impact of external and additional funding.



Grants and Projects

During the first half of the financial year, we submitted twenty grant applications. Ten were successful. Many of these projects commenced during the first half of this financial year and will be completed in the next financial year. Others will commence in the new financial year.

Valuably, through the submission process, our staff developed connections with some of the grant providers resulting in further discussions and consultations about the utilisation of playgroup to improve and enhance children's learning, development and wellbeing. It provided an opportunity to discuss the positive impact playgroup has parents and carers confidence, knowledge, wellbeing, relationships, engagement, vitality and social connections.

Feedback from several grant providers was incredibly positive, highlighting the standard and quality of the grant submissions, demonstrating to

staff that the effort and approach to developing project ideas and concepts is essential and noticed by those assessing applications.

This time dedicated to project development has enabled Playgroup Victoria to expand partnerships and increase the number of significant stakeholders who support and advocate for our work. More and more are interested in what the organisation does and hopes to achieve.

The Playgroup Conference

In the latter part of the year, following continuous discussion, staff commenced planning for the Playgroup Victoria annual conference. Due to the pandemic, the conference has not run for four and a half years, the last taking place in 2019. This conference will be held in October 2023.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR CONFERENCE HERE.](#)

Research

The school playgroups project was completed, undertaken with prestigious Australian Research Council's Linkage Projects funding, awarded to Australian Catholic University in partnership with Playgroup Victoria (PROJECT ID: LP160101759). This research connected specific features of school playgroups to child and family capabilities about play and learning- and the outcomes informed the creation of resources for families, schools, policy makers and researchers.

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)

The unique role and contribution of Playgroup Victoria amid the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the form of Playgroup at Home, was published in a peer-reviewed publication. The article, Physically Distanced but Socially Connected: Interactive Playgroup Sessions Delivered Remotely during the COVID-19 Lockdown, was featured in the COVID-19 special issue of the Journal: Children, Youth and Environment.

[READ ARTICLE HERE](#)

During this financial year, Playgroup Victoria has trained over 100 new Peep Learning Together programme practitioners. Training continues to be delivered online with consistent positive feedback about the training content, programme materials and online format. This format has enabled us to train Peep practitioners across the country.

Communities of practice have been successfully launched, offering monthly sessions for practitioners. Here they have received implementation support, professional development and connection with peers across Australia. These sessions have enriched knowledge sharing and enhanced practice.

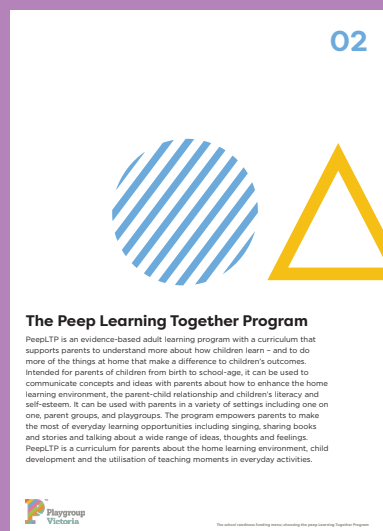
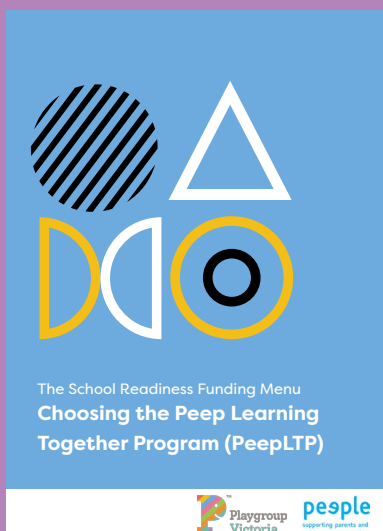
There has been an increased interest in our training networks, with other state and territory organisations eager to deliver Peep training. Three organisations have commenced the train the trainer process. The recognition of the Peep Learning Together programme is strengthening in Australia. *The Smith Family* in Australia accessed training through the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Communities for Children evidence based program menu, for 18 community hub leaders who will be delivering Peep programme in the school hub setting. Additionally, we were able to present

the Peep programme at the international Toy Library conference, sparking high interest from toy library staff who form a large paid and volunteer workforce. They staff are keen to complete practitioner training to bring new skills to their work with families.

Uniting Australia continues to use the Peep programme in their work with families and had ten new practitioners trained over the last 12 months. We are actively working with Playgroup NSW, Northern Territory and South Australia to train practitioners in their respective states and territory to further enhance early childhood development and support families.

Through Playgroup Victoria's commitment to promoting the Peep Learning Together programme as an evidence-based programme that makes a difference to children, there has been a demonstrated increase in the programme across sectors. By continuing to offer training online, establishing communities of practice and fostering valuable partnerships, the Peep programme is now being used in every state and territory across Australia.

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)



Over the past six years the ALL Come Out to Play! show has been shown to raise awareness about gender stereotypes and ways to promote equality. The show is aimed at parents/carers and their children up to the age of seven. In the 2022/2023 financial year, the *All Come Out to Play!* staff aimed to work with 12 organisations. They worked with 20 over the two-year funding period.

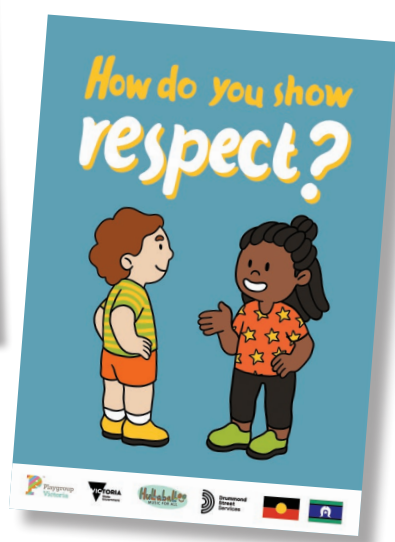
The latest iteration of *All Come Out to Play!* focused on supporting and assisting early years professionals to engage with and utilise the various resources and materials. These were designed to improve gender equality knowledge and practices, thereby enhancing and embedding gender equality in their programs and unique settings more successfully.

A small number of early years professionals were impacted by significant changes due to the impact of COVID and as such, were unable to implement modifications and adaptations as initially planned. Recognition of such difficulties has subsequently informed future approaches to our continued support for these organisations.

All Come Out to Play! has been funded for a further two years by the Department of Family Fairness and Housing, from July 2023 to June 2025. The program will engage early years professionals and link with organisations and platforms to share the full range of resources and training. It is intended that there will be structural impact due to the duration and free access of the program. [LEARN MORE HERE.](#)



Pictured: South Melbourne Child Care Co-operative putting the *All Come Out to Play!* story and resources into action. Image courtesy of Kate Hall, Director.



The inclusion component of Playgroup Victoria has continued to grow, allowing many more families with children impacted by disability, developmental delays or medical concerns to access playgroups that are supportive, welcoming and understanding.

PlayTogether

Everyone Deserves to Play and Be Part of their Community

At playgroup, we believe that everyone should feel they belong, regardless of their background, culture, gender or ability. Playgroups celebrate the differences and strengths of all children and families. *PlayTogether* is about acknowledging the individual needs of every child and caregiver, by creating a rich culture that identifies and sees to remove barriers to participation.

PlayTogether training and support continues to develop. A big part of this is about creating playgroups that are welcoming for all. The purpose of this training is to help playgroups to improve how they engage children with disabilities, and their parents/carers. The training also supports playgroups to enhance their support for these families when necessary. Assistance is also provided to families where the parent/carer has a disability. [LEARN MORE HERE.](#)

PlayBuddies

A Playgroup Victoria Initiative

To further develop inclusive playgroup practices, the Practice and Research team commenced the design and development of *PlayBuddies*, an inclusive playgroup model. *PlayBuddies* incorporates features derived from existing programs, integrated with research and evidence about inclusion, practical knowledge and extensive practice experience. This has resulted in a program logic greatly benefiting funding applications.

PlayBuddies is an attractive model that provides an opportunity for children with and without disabilities, and their parents/carers, seeking access to play and social experiences with children of all abilities and their families. Successful grant

applications enabled *PlayBuddies* facilitated playgroups to provide inclusive opportunities for families to enjoy the benefits of playgroup. The *PlayBuddies* program further supported local groups with informal training and mentoring to encourage and support their interactions for children with disabilities.

Funding received through the State Government *Big Build* project, enabled further development of the playgroup platform in Sunbury, City of Hume, reaching out to more families in the region by increasing the number and diversity of playgroups. A playgroup network bringing together neighbourhood houses, community hubs, local churches and local council has also been established to further support the sustainability of playgroups into the future. [LEARN MORE HERE.](#)





Development and Support

The Playgroup Victoria Development and Support team has continued to assist and advocate for playgroups across the state. The team employs a community development approach. They recognise the importance of each playgroup and their unique attributes. They get to know the differences and similarities across local government areas and highly value working in collaboration. Together the team has co-facilitated community playgroup sessions and held professional network forums to deliver workshops. Creating opportunities for playgroups to grow and connect with their wider community, the playgroup platform increases access so that all Victorians can benefit.

Fostering Social Inclusion - A Partnership Between Playgroup Victoria and Mornington Peninsula Shire

The pandemic had a big impact on the vitality and visibility of playgroups in local communities. Playgroup Victoria partnered with Mornington Peninsula Shire Council to reinvigorate playgroups in the government area, over a 12-month period.

The goals of the project were to:

- Increase stakeholder awareness of the benefits of playgroups for children, their parents, families and the community post-pandemic
- Engage new parents in the playgroup journey
- Regenerate the community playgroup platform by saving existing playgroups
- Increase playgroup numbers in the shire

With staff from Playgroup Victoria supporting each goal, the project included a wide range

of activities. The playgroup development team collaborated on events, local gatherings, information sessions, workshops and playgroup visits. The team interacted with many first-time parent groups to inform new parents about playgroup opportunities and support.

The success of the project led to the establishment of the Community Playgroup Leaders Network. This strengthened partnerships with playgroups and many professional stakeholders including Mornington Peninsula Shire early years and maternal child health teams. The ongoing impact of the project has increased recognition of playgroups and created sustainable pathways for families to connect with local playgroups.

We hope to see the playgroup platform continuing to grow in strength and sustainability.



^ Pictured above: Attendees at National Playgroup Week event run with Mornington Peninsula Shire

Aiming to reach and support more playgroups, the team continued to deliver online workshops. Connecting and creating positive playgroup experiences was at the front of mind. The workshops were a free offering, encouraging members, playgroup leaders and professionals engaged in playgroup to come along and be inspired, seek guidance, forge relationships and continue to develop and build their playgroup community.

Delivered by our experienced development team, the workshop topics were selected from current trends and common situations that playgroups were eager to explore. The team have repeated popular topics due to the interest and demand from playgroups. Each topic was designed to be interactive and didactic for all participants.

The workshops provided an opportunity for playgroups to connect with each other, share innovation, work through challenges and implement changes to their own playgroups. We have enjoyed learning from playgroups and facilitating discussions that have gone on to inspire many playgroup leaders across Victoria. Playgroup Victoria would like to thank all the participants for their contributions to the workshops and look forward to many more in 2024!

| Workshop title | Number of participants |
|---|------------------------|
| Money Matters at Playgroup | 16 |
| Inclusive Environments at Playgroup | 20 |
| Baby Play at Playgroup | 51 |
| Inspiring Imagination at Playgroup | 39 |
| Starting Your Playgroup- Inspiration for You! | 104 |
| Let's Celebrate at Playgroup | 15 |
| Supporting Leadership Roles at Playgroup | 28 |
| Nature Play at Playgroup: Exploring Outdoors | 34 |
| Sharing the Roles at Playgroup | 31 |
| Promoting Your Playgroup | 36 |



Communities of Practice

DFFH Supported Playgroup Program

33

The Development and Support team have continued to offer ongoing support to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Supported Playgroup Program. This support was given to facilitators through Communities of Practice sessions in 10 regions across Victoria.

This year saw the return of these Community of Practice sessions in person. Together the team covered all regions from Gippsland, Metropolitan Melbourne, Barwon, Central Highlands, Goulburn, Ovens Murray, Loddon, Campaspe, Mallee and West Wimmera.

In partnership with the Parenting Research Centre (PRC), the Community of Practice brings together the facilitators from each local government area to share practice wisdom, innovation and experience. A range of discussion topics were explored to enhance the delivery of the DFFH Supported Playgroups.

Working collaboratively with the supported playgroup facilitators across Victoria further enhanced the support and connections for families to transition between community and supported playgroups. It also further promoted playgroups. The supported playgroup facilitators play a vital role, helping to nurture Victorian families on their parenting journey prior to formal education.



STORY OF CHANGE

From Fire to Success

The Back-to-Basics Playgroup is a successful playgroup running in Leongatha, Victoria. As their previous venue had been closed down, the playgroup were temporarily hosting their sessions at the Leongatha Cricket Club, while awaiting a new venue from the council. On Saturday the 25th February 2023, a fire destroyed the Leongatha Cricket Club, the temporary home of the Back to Basic Playgroup. All of the group's equipment and toys were destroyed in the fire. The playgroup leader contacted Playgroup Victoria to commence an insurance claim for the playgroups destroyed belongings and support regarding the group. She was carefully guided and supported through this process to achieve a successful outcome.

The playgroup received an insurance payout and is now settled in a new location. The playgroup has been able to purchase new furniture, equipment, toys and consumables. The efficient and timely response of Playgroup Victoria allowed the playgroup to get back on their feet with minimal downtime and the playgroup has shown extreme gratitude for the support, empathy and guidance they have received. ^ Pictured above: Leongatha Back-to-Basics Playgroup attendees replacing their damaged equipment. Images courtesy of Jess Lester.



"Thank you for advocating for Supported Playgroup and thank you for all the hard work you put into the CoPs each term."

Communities of Practice
Attendee



Programs and Social Impact

The Programs and Social Impact department acts to support the embedding of inclusion philosophies, policies, and processes across the playgroup platform. This department leads Playgroup Victoria's advocacy to support families to access and participate in quality playgroup experiences. This year the Programs and Social Impact department has been accountable for the implementation and delivery of The PlayConnect+ Program and Play and Learn Supported (PALS) Playgroups.



Play and Learn Supported (PALS) Playgroup

The Play and Learn Supported (PALS) Playgroup program provides a great opportunity to bring together children of all abilities, aiming to increase confidence of parents with children with disabilities to participate in existing community service partnerships, to deliver social and engaging activities.

PALS playgroups provide a greater understanding of the benefits of inclusion. PALS support families, creating opportunities for them to connect, build awareness and foster inclusive communities. By the end of 2022, eight PALS playgroups were in operation, supporting more than 160 families, with waiting lists exceeding demand.

Over the last year, several playgroup families have transitioned into community playgroups from PALS, which is the intention of the program after 12 months of facilitated delivery.

Families have shared stories about their PALS journey and the ways it has given them greater connections to other families going through similar experiences. It has helped them to form relationships beyond playgroup.

Over time, facilitators have observed families positively building respectful relationships, confidence, and an awareness of their local community.

Families have had opportunities to engage in a variety of activities such as sport, music and dance with various community service providers in a fun and safe learning environment for all children's abilities.

PALS is a great opportunity for all families and children from different paths to feel welcomed, included and supported.

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)



PlayConnect+

From 2009 to the end of 2022, Playgroup Victoria delivered the *PlayConnect* playgroup program. *PlayConnect* was a federally funded program, available across the country. It was a free, safe and supported playgroup program for children on the Autism Spectrum (or with developmental delays or behavioural concerns) and their families. This long running program saw a change at the beginning of 2023. A new program, *PlayConnect+* was born, drawing on the experiences and learning gathered through the original *PlayConnect* playgroups model.

The *PlayConnect+* program is open to all children with disability and/or developmental concerns aged 0-6 years (school holiday programs available for 5-8-year-olds), their families, carers and siblings. *PlayConnect+* playgroups are facilitated by qualified professionals and provides access to safe and inclusive activities that prepare children for learning environments. *PlayConnect+* is delivered by the State and Territory Playgroup Associations as part of a consortium led by Autism Queensland. *PlayConnect+* is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

Significant work was put into *PlayConnect+* in the first half of 2023, establishing the new program ready for commencement on the 1st of July 2023. Existing staff and families were updated about the changes. The website was redeveloped, two new regional locations were added, online playgroups were developed and school holiday programs were planned.

A new Play Support role was implemented into the program to support the facilitator and families for the duration of the playgroup session. The new program has grown from 7-9 facilitators and 10 Play Support roles.

This is an exciting time for Playgroup Victoria to be involved in a program that will deliver support to children and families in need in the community.

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)



^ Science Week at PlayConnect+ Sunbury



Positive feedback from PlayConnect+ experiences

Pictured: PlayConnect+ Sunbury Attendees.

“PlayConnect is our safe space. I thought it would be for our son but I didn’t realise it would be haven for myself also. To have a space where our son is accepted, supported and free to be himself is immeasurable. To listen and hear from other families similar to ours has also provided me amazing comfort and support. Fiona in particular is one in a million! Her knowledge, advocacy and kindness in helping guide us in a very challenging system is something I’ll forever be grateful for.”

PlayConnect+ Attendee



“Attending PlayConnect+ has been an invaluable part of my son Taj’s development and overall wellbeing. It has been wonderful to have a ‘safe space’ to come to where Taj can be celebrated for being his true authentic self. In the past, Taj has found group settings challenging, however he thrives in the PlayConnect+ group. PlayConnect+ has helped him to learn the skills he needs to be able to not only participate in play group but to participate in group settings in the broader community. We are exceptionally grateful to be a part of such a wonderful group.”

PlayConnect+ Attendee





Celebrating Playgroup

Local playgroup communities throughout
Victoria continued to thrive and leave
generational legacies as shared
experiences brought families together to
learn, connect and play.

Elwood Playgroup

A Space to Share, Play, Belong

“Being able to sit, have a coffee, put the babies on the mat together with people who get it, I think it’s just so nice.”

JESS, PLAYGROUP ATTENDEE

Elwood playgroup provides opportunities for local families to connect in a relaxing and inspiring environment set-up for play. This space is rare, in that it has an open-door policy for playgroup members. It is available for local families five days a week, 9am to 6pm, with an understanding that we are all on different schedules that continue to change. Here, families are encouraged to come to the scheduled playgroup sessions, with the opportunity to drop in and make the most of what is on offer at other times.

“Being here, with all our facilities set up, it’s all about playing and connecting with the kids. You’re not at home worried about whether you need to do the washing or every other thing that can distract you from interacting with you child. It’s also safe enough that if you need to have a bit of downtime as well and sit on the couch and talk to another parent or connect with another parent.”

Nicola, Playgroup President

[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)



Raywood Playgroup

Childhoods in the Country- Connection, Creation, Community

"I see the importance of families getting together, the importance of a playgroup, especially in a small town where you can feel very isolated, not having that connection with other mums or other dads." JEMMA STRAUB, PLAYGROUP LEADER

Raywood playgroup, located in the heart of town, creates opportunities for the community to come together. The playgroup gathers at the local hall, with the little library out the front and big playground out the back. It acts as a meeting place, where local families can come together to feel a sense of belonging, have a chat and play with their children.

[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)



May 2023

Every Little Season Playgroup

You Little Wonders

"It is about being present in the child's world and in the moment. Our hope is that it's family centred, doing things outdoors all together, and that people will then replicate this outside of the playgroup setting." RONI, PLAYGROUP FACILITATOR

Every Little Season nature playgroup welcomes families to share in the variety and change of Melbourne's summers, autumns, winters, springs and in-between together at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. As the playgroup has discovered, the abundance of plant life, bug life, bird life and human life make for a rich bounty of play opportunities and connection.

"Honestly, it sounds a bit exaggerated but it's been life changing- going from not having much, just socialising with a friend here and there- coming together at playgroup has completely changed our week. It's the highlight of our week. He loves it."- Kaye Henry, Playgroup Attendee

[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)

Arnold's Creek Grandparents Playgroup

Our Intergenerational Playgroup Village

"They just mean so much to me, they changed my life."

That is what one grandmother said at Arnold's Creek Grandparents Playgroup. Not only are grandparents playgroups a huge benefit to the community-strengthening bonds and building support networks- they are a joy for younger and older alike as they share stories, have fun, enjoy new experiences and play!

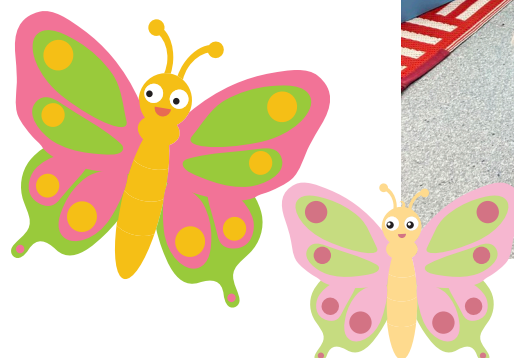
"As a grandparent I am truly blessed and have come to the realisation just how quickly time goes by and I'll never take moments like that for granted."- Tess Galea, Playgroup Leader.

Playgroup is a day they look forward to. The young and young at heart have forged strong bonds at Arnold's Creek Grandparents Playgroup. A strong support network, this intergenerational get-together brings great benefits, proving that the village it takes to raise a child is built of many, with a sense of belonging and care residing at its core.

"It's an amazing idea. Not only is it good for us, it's great for the kids. An opportunity to get out, do something different and spend quality time with the grandkids." - Marie Williams, Playgroup Attendee

[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)

[WATCH FULL- 9 NEWS MELBOURNE STORY HERE](#)



Playgroup Interviews and Insights

Speaking with those working in the early years field, we gathered great insights about the power of play and the relationships that strengthen because of it. Through research, music, education and community support, the whole family dynamic has the chance to flourish.



I Wonder

Professor of Play

Karen Stagnitti has been studying play for many decades. On the back of her new book, she talks about the power of play and the ways that it enriches a child's life, integrating skills that lead to lifelong learning and wellbeing.

[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)



In Conversation with Aussie Kids Band, The Mik Maks

Music, Inspiration, Creativity, Fun

The Mik Maks are a family band. Their music is fun, embedded with great melodies, stories running beneath. Their latest album 'Songs to Help Us Grow' will resonate with a variety of ages- they are songs to share alongside the younger generations. We caught up with them to talk about their song writing, creative inspiration, childhoods and the joy of making music- plus lots more!

[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)



Making Connections Today for a Brighter Tomorrow

Parents Early Education Partnership in Benalla

The Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) program in Benalla acknowledges the great work that parents do each day- it also encourages more of it, by reinforcing their role as their child's primary educator. It shines light on the everyday opportunities to bond, learn, share and connect through play.

[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)

Playgroup in the Media

The importance of play, community connectedness and early years experiences was shared and promoted with various media outlets via podcasts, news reports, blogs and newspaper articles.

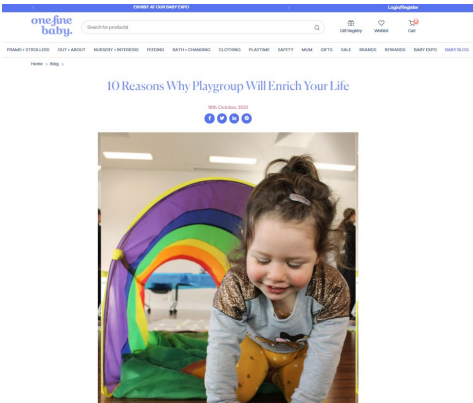


OCTOBER 21, 2022

Herald Sun, Victoria

Playgroup Australia launches a national conversation about the value of playgroups as Elwood playgroup gathers to share, bond and play.

READ FULL STORY HERE



OCTOBER 18, 2022

One Fine Baby Blog

10 Reasons Why Playgroup Will Enrich Your Life. "At playgroup you can source company, understanding, friendship, connection, kindness, joy- and lots of fun along the way."

READ FULL ARTICLE HERE



AUGUST 30, 2022

Star Weekly, Sunbury/Macedon Ranges

Sunbury has secured a second Play and Learn Supported (PALS) playgroup, bringing together children of all abilities to connect through exciting, fun activities.

READ FULL STORY HERE



JULY 23, 2022

The Courier, Ballarat

Playgroups begin to reestablish and connect in-person after COVID restrictions. "Playgroup brings together multiple generations which is a real benefit to the whole community."

READ FULL STORY HERE



Social Connections

Social media platforms enable us to regularly connect with existing playgroup members, share news, information and resources in real-time. Social media has also allowed us to connect with new families and introduce a wider audience to the concept of playgroup and invite them to join the community. These online connections have allowed us to support more families with instant chat and through engagement via different content.

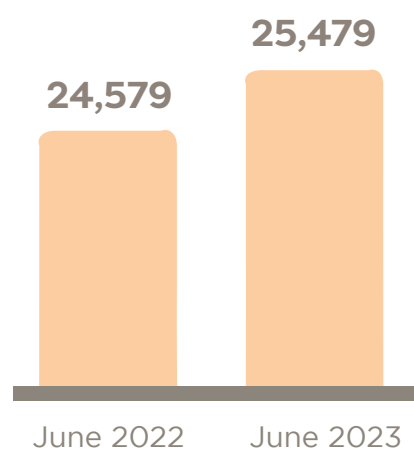
Social Connections

Our online content has led to further interactions with families on our website, blog, Facebook, closed Facebook group, email communications and Instagram. Together, these online communications allow us to connect with local communities, and connect people with each other so that they can share experiences, forge friendships, gain support and meet up in real life to play, share and bond.

FACEBOOK

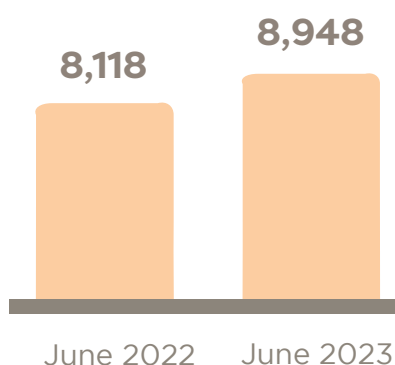
Page Followers

+ 900 Increase



Group members

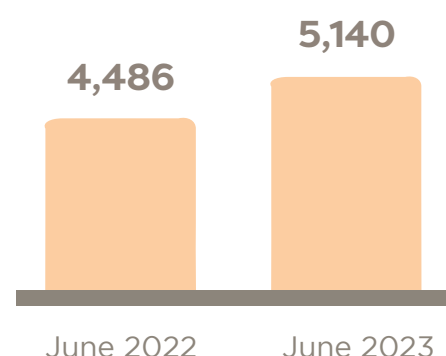
+ 830 Increase



INSTAGRAM

Followers

+ 654 Increase



Facebook Community Group Rename

Our Facebook Community group is an online space, created in 2017 to bring playgroups together, to share ideas, stories and support. During 2020, we renamed the group to support each other while at home - *Playgroup at Home* it became. While our *Playgroup at Home* resources, services and online sessions are still ongoing, in July 2022 we decided to rename the group, as it was originally founded- *Wonderful World of Playgroup*. We encourage members to post about their playgroups and share ideas with each other. As group owners we continue to share play inspiration, resources, articles, event opportunities and giveaways via this space.



We featured local playgroups on our social media throughout the year, enabling more families to participate in playgroup and for playgroups to grow. We enjoyed learning more and sharing more about the many diverse and wonderful groups throughout Victoria!



Acorns Playgroup



Fawcner Outdoor Playgroup



Sojo Playgroup



Glen Waverly Uniting Church Playgroup



Essendon Playgroup



Glenroy Hub Community Playgroup



Ferntree Gully PlayConnect+ Playgroup



Sunshine Japanese Playgroup



Seedlings Nature Playgroup



Every Little Season Playgroup



Croydon Uniting Church Playgroup



St Hilary's Anglican Church Playgroup



Partnerships and Collaborations

Aligning with shared interests and passions, we partnered with local and national organisations to promote play, play-group, early years education and community spirit.



Celebrating 2022

12 Days of Playgroup Giveaways - A Celebration of Community, Friendship and Play

So many wonderful things happened in the second half of 2022 at playgroup, most profoundly, playgroups returning to in-person sessions! There was much to celebrate! We ran 12 Days of Giveaways leading up to the summer break, creating opportunities to inspire more play and connection alongside our valued partners.

Celebratory giveaways included experiences at SEA LIFE Melbourne Aquarium, Melbourne

Museum, Legoland, Zoos Victoria, Melbourne's Christmas Wonderland, Puffing Billy, LUME Melbourne and more!

Each day that we featured a special giveaway, we asked playgroups and families to share stories about play, community, kindness and the year that had been. Members of the playgroup community were highly engaged, reflecting on all the good memories and moments.

12 Days of Giveaways

Join us as we celebrate community, friendship and play



SCIENCEWORKS



Creating engaging opportunities and offers for families and playgroups.

At playgroup, we love to support like-minded organisations. We love to create opportunities for families to have enriching experiences and receive discounts that allow them to make the most of the early years- a time of great learning and relationship building. We know that the little things make a significant difference to the everyday lives of families and members of the playgroup community. Through our community connections, Playgroup Victoria provides many opportunities to forge meaningful connections that go beyond the city and extend to regional and rural families as well.

As a not-for-profit, we seek out collaborations that will benefit the financial health of the organisation, too. We choose carefully to ensure that the content and offering aligns with our values and is relevant to our audience. A real winning combination is when we can advertise things that we really believe it- and believe will have a positive impact.

During the last financial year, we have partnered up with several organisations and businesses to promote their offerings to our audience. These include:

Play School Concert Series, Melbourne's Christmas Wonderland, One Fine Baby Expo, Pram People, Zoom Kites and LEGO DUPLO.

Alongside our partners, we collaborated to create engagement opportunities and offers for families and playgroups. One regular offering came from our relationship with local magazine *MamaMag*. Each edition we contributed an article to highlight the benefits of play, playgroup and community connection. In turn, we shared the edition and showcased the many positive things feature in the magazine.

[View our advertising kit HERE](#)



Playgroup Victoria
Annual Report 2022/23

Creative Collaboration

After several years of restricted gatherings, it was a real joy to take part in events again. Enjoying incidental and spontaneous interactions was uplifting and helped to connect many families. National Playgroup Week in March was a tremendous highlight, encouraging playgroups across the state to run little open days and welcome new families to join. *Little Kids Day In* at Scienceworks was one of our first major events, post COVID. It was fantastic to see so many families enjoying the activities and opportunities to connect. SEA LIFE Melbourne has long been a partner and it is always a thrill to give families an insight into the wonder and joy of our underwater world.

Events over the last year have included:

- Children's Week Pop Up Playgroup (with Mornington Peninsula Shire) Oct 2022
- Sealife Play Day March 2023
- Baby's Day Out Pop-Up Playgroup (with Mornington Peninsula Shire) National Playgroup Week March 2023
- Nature Playgroup at The Briars (with Mornington Peninsula Shire) National Playgroup Week March 2023
- Sunbury Playgroup in the Park National Playgroup Week March 2023
- Little Sprouts Kids Gardening workshops Ballarat National Playgroup Week March 2023
- Little Kids Day In (in collaboration with Scienceworks Melbourne) March 2023
- Sealife CocoMelon Play Day May 2023

Partner giveaways have included:

Merlin Entertainment Big Ticket Children's Week Giveaway, numerous Sealife offers, Lego and Crayola prize packs, offers, free tickets to the Playschool concert, LUME and Melbourne Christmas Wonderland.



^ Storytime at Scienceworks Little Kids Day In



^ CEO Danny Schwarz at Scienceworks Little Kids Day In



^ Baby JJ at the Sealife CocoMelon Play Day



^ Little Sprouts Kids Gardening Workshops in Ballarat



^ Easter egg hunt playgroup prize pack giveaway



^ 90th anniversary of LEGO family pass giveaway in partnership with Legoland



^ Family pass giveaway in partnership with SEALIFE



^ Family pass giveaway in partnership with The LUME Melbourne

What our playgroup leaders said

Annual Playgroup Leader Survey Snapshot

“How satisfied are you with the playgroup volunteering experience?”

50%

Are **extremely satisfied**

27%

Are **very satisfied**

21%

Are **moderately satisfied**

3%

Are **not satisfied**

“How valued do you feel as a playgroup volunteer?”

47%

Feel Highly Valued by Playgroup Families

35%

Feel Highly Valued by their Community

“I would (and do) highly recommend playgroup to parents and carers for the well-being of both the adults and children. I think it’s a wonderful experience and helps parents and carers through the challenges that come with caring for children through their different stages”

Survey Respondent

48.6%

Have connected with Playgroup Victoria via Email

25.7%

Have connected with Playgroup Victoria via Phone

17.1%

Have connected with Playgroup Victoria via Website

What our members said

Annual Survey Snapshot

80.7%

Would recommend playgroup to other families with young children

90.1%

Of members feel that play is **very important** for their child's learning, development and wellbeing

65.7%

Of members told us that they are **extremely satisfied** with their playgroup experience

“What are the best parts about playgroup for you?”

- Opportunity for connection with other parents in the same stage of life as me
- Social engagement for children
- Socialisation and friendships, the fun that the kids have , their smiles and laughs
- Sharing first-time motherhood journey with other mums
- Meeting other mums, connecting with the playgroup educators and getting ideas
- Playing with my child in a new setting
- It is a child safe and inclusive environment
- Parents and their children can grow through social interaction
- Meeting other parents and bonding with my child
- Meeting other local families
- Kids are entertained and learning plus social aspect for parents
- Convenient, friendly, consistent
- Being part of a community and getting tips on local activities, information on childcare etc.
- Social opportunities for me, easy, low stress and low effort activity to fill the morning

“Playgroup changed my life. I wouldn't be the parent I am without it. My children have since gone on to school but I still volunteer for playgroups to give back to a community that gave me more than I ever could have asked for. It gave me lifelong friends, excellent craft skills and reignited my love of performance. Playgroups made my life infinitely better.”

Survey Respondent

“Playgroup is one of my favourite places to take my child each week. It has a safe and secure yard to play and can engage with other families.”

Survey Respondent



Playgroup Victoria

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playgroup.org.au



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/playgroupvic



**Playgroup
Victoria**

Pictured on front and back cover: Nature play at Every Little Season Playgroup. Images courtesy of Kaye Henry.