Utilising playgroup as the universal early learning platform to maximise children’s developmental potential
A group of parents/carers and their children birth to five meeting together to play and socialise.
The early learning opportunity available to all children to maximise developmental potential prior to formal education.

Child safe environments that are developmentally stimulating to advance children’s development and wellbeing in the first 1000+ days.

At playgroup children learn and develop through play activities and social interaction with their parents/caregivers and other children and adults.
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The VEYLDF revisions boost support to children and families from birth to age three, recognising this period as critical to mental health, wellbeing and long-term success.

Playgroup is the platform for children from birth and their parents.

“The Education State, learning begins from birth.”

The Hon. Jenny Mikakos

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Where do playgroups fit in?

PLAYGROUP: prenatal to school entry

Prenatal  Birth  Maternal and Child Health  New Parent Group  ECEC/Kinder  School

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The playgroup continuum aligns with universal proportionalism; the most effective way to reduce the social gradient.

“The proportion of children from disadvantaged families at risk of poor outcomes is higher, however, the actual number of children with poor outcomes is greater from middle-class families.”

Frank Oberklaid, 2005

Playgroup should be made available to all children.
Types of playgroup

**Supported playgroup**
- Trained facilitator
- At-risk population
- Attendees who will benefit most from the supported environment

**Community playgroup**
- Run by the families attending for the families attending

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Types of playgroup; community

Supported playgroup
• Trained facilitator
• At-risk population
• Attendees who will benefit most from the supported environment

Community playgroup
• Run by the families attending for the families attending

Parents contribute to different aspects of running group. As a group, they must be able to
- Manage playgroup business: venue, finances, etc.
- Organise appropriate play space/activities
- Create an inclusive welcoming environment

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Types of playgroup; supported

Supported playgroup
- Trained facilitator
- **At-risk population**
- Attendees who will benefit most from the supported environment

Community playgroup
- Run by the families attending for the families attending

Vary by:
Type risk factor
# risk factors
Protective factors
Levels of vulnerability

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Types of playgroup; supported

Supported playgroup
- Trained facilitator
- At-risk population
- Attendees who will benefit most from the supported environment

Vary by complexity of vulnerabilities:
Type of support needs
Duration of support needed

Community playgroup
- Run by the families attending for the families attending

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Types of playgroup; transitional

Supported playgroup
• Trained facilitator
• At-risk population
• Attendees who will benefit most from the supported environment

Community playgroup
• Run by the families attending for the families attending

Transitional playgroup

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Supported playgroup
- Trained facilitator
- At-risk population
- Attendees who will benefit most from the supported environment

Community playgroup
- Run by the families
  attending for the families
  attending

Transitional playgroup
- Less complex, not as many vulnerabilities
- More protective factors

Have the potential to be part of a community playgroup. Facilitator guides/empowers them to do so.

Types of playgroup; transitional

Short term support
Quickly build capacity

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The transition playgroup model

Transition playgroup model
A time-limited transition playgroup established
Facilitator mentors families to build individual and group capacity
Group becomes self managed community playgroup

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Playgroup and MCH

“The nurse will also talk to you about your own health and how your experience as a parent of a new baby has been so far.”

“At each of these consultations you can discuss your concerns, talk about your parenting experiences and any ways to improve your child's health, growth and development.”

“A playgroup can compliment the support a parent receives from MCH nurses.”
Benefits of playgroup - Parent perception

Most common words parents used to describe benefit of attending playgroup.

New Friends Fantastic Connections Spending
Making Great Way Friendships Adult Conversation
Socialisation Catch Parents
Meeting New People Interaction Baby
Children Sharing Experiences Child
Social Aspect Kids Language Community
Social Benefits Group Contact with other Mums Great Social
Mum and Bub Network Meet other Mums

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## Playgroup benefits aligned to the VEYLDF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VEYLDF Outcome</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Described benefit</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children have a strong sense of identity</td>
<td>Children develop friendships through participation at playgroup</td>
<td>Playing with other playgroup children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup show an interest in participating with others during activities</td>
<td>Playing in the cubby house</td>
<td>Using the hula hoops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children feel comfortable in the playgroup environment to join in activities</td>
<td>Sharing in the jumping castle</td>
<td>Sharing stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup work collaboratively with others</td>
<td>Sharing toys with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup persist with challenges</td>
<td>Threading activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup approach new situations confidently</td>
<td>Tasting new fruits</td>
<td>‘Goopy time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are connected and contribute to their world</td>
<td>Children at playgroup show interest and participate in special ceremonies and days</td>
<td>ANZAC day activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup participate in everyday routines which encourage inclusive approaches to dealing with conflict</td>
<td>Taking turns at snack time</td>
<td>Listening to others during story time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup visit outdoor spaces to play and care for the environment</td>
<td>Visiting local parks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup use sensory play to explore their environment</td>
<td>Water and sand play</td>
<td>Autumn leaf dream catchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup cooperate with other children when they play together</td>
<td>Playing together to create a sandcastle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children have a strong sense of wellbeing</td>
<td>Children at playgroup take responsibility for their own healthy eating</td>
<td>Increased consumption of fruit and vegetables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup take care with hygiene</td>
<td>Washing hands before eating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup enthusiastically engage in physical activities</td>
<td>Outdoor play, climbing and ball activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup manipulate and use tools with increasing confidence</td>
<td>Using scissors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at playgroup demonstrate their developing spatial awareness</td>
<td>Climbing over and under and moving around objects safely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Utilising playgroup as the universal early learning platform to maximise children’s developmental potential

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Great Start for babies

Playgroup Victoria grants to support families taking up free membership to start new playgroups.

Funding from DET to Set up 80 new playgroups over 2 years.

Provide:

• Mentoring
• Resources
• Vouchers for materials and equipment
Benefits of playgroup - Parent perception

Attending playgroup supported their child's development in the following ways:
Agreed by 85%+ respondents

- Increased turn-taking and sharing
- Opportunities to develop new skills
- Opportunities to develop fine motor skills
- More interaction with other children to develop social skills
- Increased understanding of other people’s emotions
- Increased wellbeing
- Increased vocabulary and language
- Opportunities to play and learn
- Opportunities to build relationships
- Opportunities for more physical activity
- Ability to express ideas and emotions
- Opportunities to engage in more imaginative and pretend play
- Increased interest in reading or being read to

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Benefits of playgroup-

Teacher perception

“I benefit too, as children with some playgroup experience settle into Kindergarten (preschool) a little easier, than those who haven’t been to playgroup.”

Preschool teacher
Using Australian Early Developmental Census (AEDC) research to directly and indirectly support benefits of playgroup
What?
• Previously: The Australian Early Developmental Index (AEDI)
• Australian version of the Early Developmental Index (EDI)
• Snapshot in time; population level assessment of development that can be examined as whole or subpopulations

Why?
• The data provide a means of monitoring and tracking the early childhood development over time at a population level.

How?
• Census Undertaken every 3rd year
• Completed for all prep (or state/territory equivalent) children by teacher
• Approximately 100 items about the child’s development, the five developmental domains
Understanding the AEDC results:

Scoring categories for each domain

Developmentally vulnerable
0% to 10%

At risk
10% to 25%

On track
25% to 100%

*Benchmarked on the 2009 data

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Understanding the AEDC results:

Scoring categories for each domain

- **Developmentally vulnerable**: 0% to 10%
- **At risk**: 10% to 25%
- **On track**: 25% to 100%

*Benchmarked on the 2009 data*

**Developmental Domains**
- Physical health and wellbeing
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Language and cognitive skills (school based)
- Communication skills and general knowledge

**DV1- Developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the five domains**

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Vulnerability amongst at-risk groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of children with valid scores (one or more domains)</th>
<th>Developmental vulnerability on one or more domain(s) (%)</th>
<th>Number of children with valid scores (two or more domains)</th>
<th>Developmental vulnerability on two or more domains (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>246,421</td>
<td>272,282</td>
<td>286,041</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 1 (most disadvantaged)</td>
<td>50,623</td>
<td>53,467</td>
<td>53,764</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 2</td>
<td>46,913</td>
<td>51,442</td>
<td>53,100</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 3</td>
<td>47,502</td>
<td>52,566</td>
<td>56,242</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 4</td>
<td>48,724</td>
<td>55,383</td>
<td>59,575</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintile 5 (least disadvantaged)</td>
<td>51,893</td>
<td>58,808</td>
<td>62,305</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Cities</td>
<td>169,114</td>
<td>187,837</td>
<td>199,649</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Regional</td>
<td>46,886</td>
<td>50,948</td>
<td>52,583</td>
<td>23.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outer Regional</td>
<td>23,724</td>
<td>26,233</td>
<td>26,555</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Developmental vulnerability on one or more domain(s) (%)

- **Quintile 1 (most disadvantaged)**: 32.6%
- **Quintile 2**: 24.8%
- **Quintile 3**: 20.9%
- **Quintile 4**: 17.9%
- **Quintile 5 (least disadvantaged)**: 15.5%

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### Vulnerability amongst at-risk groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<td>62,305</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic location</td>
<td>Major Cities</td>
<td>169,114</td>
<td>187,837</td>
<td>190,649</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inner Regional</td>
<td>46,886</td>
<td>50,948</td>
<td>52,593</td>
<td>23.6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outer Regional</td>
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<td>26,232</td>
<td>26,555</td>
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<td>4,392</td>
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<td>Very Remote</td>
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<td>2,824</td>
<td>2,852</td>
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<td>28.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
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<td>135,055</td>
<td>142,355</td>
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<td>Language diversity</td>
<td>LBOTE – Total†</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>43,897</td>
<td>52,277</td>
<td>61,846</td>
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<td>20.4</td>
<td>202,976</td>
<td>230,988</td>
<td>224,670</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English Only – Total†</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>6,487</td>
<td>8,810</td>
<td>7,207</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English Only – Not proficient in</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Developmental vulnerability on one or more domain(s) (%)**

- Major Cities: 21.0%
- Inner Regional: 22.4%
- Outer Regional: 25.2%
- Remote: 27.5%
- Very Remote: 47.0%

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Vulnerability amongst at-risk groups

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Number of children with valid scores (two or more domains)</th>
<th>Developmental vulnerability on two or more domains (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td>246,421</td>
<td>272,282</td>
<td>286,185</td>
<td>17,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status</td>
<td>Quintile 1 (most disadvantaged)</td>
<td>50,623</td>
<td>53,467</td>
<td>53,632</td>
<td>5,821</td>
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<tr>
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<td>51,442</td>
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<tr>
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<td>56,362</td>
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<td>8,3</td>
<td>8,3</td>
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<td>Quintile 5 (least deprived)</td>
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<td>6,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>32,2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>6,611</td>
<td>7,107</td>
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<td>54,704</td>
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<td>21,7</td>
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<td>6,482</td>
<td>6,837</td>
<td>7,219</td>
<td>93,8</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Utilising playgroup as the universal early learning platform to maximise children’s developmental potential

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AEDC* data can indirectly support for the benefits of playgroup

Service use
Study
‘Dose-response’ relations between participation in integrated early childhood services and children’s early development (Patel et al., 2016).

Result
Great participation in early childhood services resulted in lower rates of vulnerability at school entry.

Relevance to playgroup
Playgroups promote the use of early childhood services.
Integrated early childhood services hubs are an ideal venues for playgroups.

* Research using data from the AEDC and data collected in other countries using their comparable version.
AEDC* data can indirectly support for the benefits of playgroup

Family risk factors

Study
A population-based analysis of factors that predict early language and cognitive development (Brownell et al., 2016).

Result
Family risk factors are the key driver of academic school readiness.
Family risk is strongly influenced by neighbourhood socioeconomic status (SES).

Relevance to playgroup
Supported playgroups address family risk factors.
It is important to start/maintain playgroups in low SES neighbourhoods.

* Research using data from the AEDC and data collected in other countries using their comparable version.
Linked AEDC-LSAC data indirectly supports the benefits of playgroup

The importance of setting strong foundations

Study
Learning trajectories... (Goldfeld et al., 2015).

Relevance to playgroup
Academic performance remained steady from age 4-5 onwards, so it is important to invest in the years prior to school entry (4-5 years)

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Linked AEDC-NAPLAN data indirectly supports the benefits of playgroup

AEDC vulnerability predicts numeracy and reading

Study
Early development index (EDI) at age 5 predicts reading and numeracy skills four, six and eight years later (Brinkman et al., 2013).

Results

Relevance to playgroup
There is an association between playgroup attendance and vulnerability at school entry, and an association between vulnerability at school entry and numeracy and reading skills at the start of high school.
Developmentally vulnerable by playgroup attendance

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Developmentally vulnerable by playgroup attendance

Playgroupers have half the risk of vulnerability

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Developmentally vulnerable by playgroup and preschool attendance

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Developmentally vulnerable by playgroup and preschool attendance

A comparable pattern for attending and not attending playgroup as attending and not attending preschool.

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Playgroup is associated with better learning outcomes

Longitudinal research shows that disadvantaged children who attended playgroup at 0-1 years and 2-3 years had significantly better learning outcomes at 4-5 than disadvantaged children that did not attend playgroup at all.

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Playgroup is associated with better emotional functioning

Disadvantaged girls who attended playgroup at 0-1 years and 2-3 years had significantly better social and emotional functioning than disadvantaged girls that did not attend playgroup at all.
Not attending playgroup increases risk of vulnerability by:

- 42% amongst the least disadvantaged children
- 84% amongst the most disadvantaged children

Notes:
Disadvantaged-SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage Vulnerability- Vulnerable on 1+ AEDC developmental domains.

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Attendance by vulnerable cohorts

Playgroups act as a soft entry point to engage at-risk families.

However

Lower playgroup attendance rates among the more vulnerable cohorts

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*SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage

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Barriers to playgroup attendance; Can we help alleviate these?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Familiarity</th>
<th>Awareness of benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even a minimal cost is out of reach for some families</td>
<td>Some families do not have a car</td>
<td>In many families the parents work at the times playgroups are traditionally held.</td>
<td>Some parents are not confident with the English language</td>
<td>Not everyone has heard of playgroup, or understands what it is.</td>
<td>Some people do not realise that playgroup is more than just fun.</td>
</tr>
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Barriers to playgroup attendance; Can we help alleviate these?

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- **Language**: Some parents are not confident with the English language.
- **Familiarity**: Not everyone has heard of playgroup, or understands what they do.
- **Awareness of benefits**: Some people do not realise that playgroup is more...

Promote playgroup venues that are accessible by public transport.
Help schools set up playgroups on-site for younger siblings of their students.
Barriers to playgroup attendance; How we help alleviate these.

- Cost: Even a minimal cost is out of reach for some families.
- Transport: Some families do not have a car.
- When: In many families the times playgroups are traditionally.
- Language: Some parents are not confident with the English language.
- Familiarity: Not everyone has heard of playgroup, or understands what it is.
- Awareness of benefits: Some people do not realise that playgroup is more than just play.

Promote weekend and after-school playgroups.
Barriers to playgroup attendance; How we help alleviate these.

- **Cost**: Even a minimal cost is out of reach for some families.
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- **Language**: Some parents are not confident with the English language.
- **Familiarity**: Not everyone has heard of playgroup, or understands what it is.
- **Awareness of benefits**: Some people do not realise that playgroup is more than just playtime.

Encourage all playgroups to welcome CaLD families, and provide guidance for including non-English speaking members in the program.
Barriers to playgroup attendance; How we help alleviate these.

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Playgroups in schools

"The school is also promoting school readiness through sharing information related to quality play, oral language development and the importance of reading."

School Principal

Playgroups in schools address many components of transition faced by both the child and their family.

An avenue for accessing the school community

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Playgroups in schools enhance;

- Parental capacity as first educators
- Children’s school readiness
- Family-school-community partnerships
- Teacher effectiveness to engage with families
- Parental perceptions of the school environment

“Playgroup being at a school is a big advantage because the kids see what school’s going to be like before they get to school. I know some kids that have had separation issues, but I know that next year it’s going to be easier for her because she’s been in this environment before, and that’s why I like the school playgroup.”

Playgroup parent
Playgroups in schools support existing DET policy and Frameworks;

- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLFDF)
- Transition: A Positive Start to School

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Supporting playgroup families; Empowering parents as their child’s first and constant teachers

• Provide tangible resources
• Enhance awareness of developmental benefits of different activities/tasks
• Promote intentional teaching/companionable teaching
• Promote enhancing the Home learning environment
• Growing Up In Australia research:
  • Home activities index (HAI) when child is 2-3 years of age predicts reading and numeracy in grade 3.
    (Yu & Daraganova, 2014)
Skill development at playgroup

Reading a book together
- Sustained attention and sitting
- Listening and comprehension
- Literacy and language skills

Sing along
- Promotes pre-literacy skills
- Language development
- Communication and expression

Play dough
- Fine motor skills
- Tactile engagement
- Increase sensory vocabulary

Snack time
- Sitting at a table together
- Sharing
- Healthy eating habits

Sandpit
- Develop imagination — sand can become anything.
- Experience impermanence
- Strengthen muscles in the fingers and hands

Outdoor play equipment
- Appropriate risk-taking with parent present
- Gross motor skills
- Exploration
What makes a playgroup a GREAT Playgroup?

While everyone at playgroup is different, there are some characteristics of a group that help to make a playgroup a GREAT playgroup.

**SAFE**

The playgroup works together to ensure that everyone is safe while attending playgroup activities.

Adults and children feel part of their community.

The playgroup supports parents/carers in their role.

The physical environment is managed to reduce the likelihood of harm or injury.

The playgroup is aware of its obligations and has

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Playgroups provide opportunities for children's cognitive, physical, emotional and social development.

- Provides a range of play opportunities that support a child’s learning and development
- Activities follow children’s interests
- There is a range of activities that allow children to play according to their age and stage of development
- Opportunities to support children's social development and build on the parent/carer-child relationship are provided

**STRONG PLAYGROUPS**

Community playgroups with solid organisational structures ensure for future families.

- Playgroup members take an active role in ensuring the functions needed to keep the playgroup running
- The playgroup meets the needs of its members
- The workload is shared by the members of the playgroup
- Playgroup is affordable
- Sound financial practices are in place
- Money earned goes into the playgroup
- Playgroup is accountable for its funds
- Transparent processes about distribution of funds
- Fundraising activities match the requirements of the playgroup and its members.

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What makes a playgroup a GREAT Playgroup?

**SAFE**
Safe and supportive playgroups create a positive environment for adults and children to meet.

**LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**
Playgroups provide opportunities for children’s cognitive, physical, emotional and social development.

**STRONG PLAYGROUPS**
Community playgroups with solid organisational structures endure for future families.
Playgroup resources- GREAT playgroups conversation starters

Working together

To ensure all families have equal opportunities to participate and know their responsibilities at playgroup, think about the following:

Play

Playgroup Victoria promotes activities and routines that support the five outcomes of the Victoria Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLF): identity, community, wellbeing, learning and communication. Playmap provides an easy to use Play Curricula for playgroups that reflects the five learning outcomes of the VEYLF to promote children’s learning and development at playgroup.

Safety

Part of your playgroup’s duty of care is to ensure that your playgroup is both physically safe and emotionally secure for all adults and children.

Social Connectedness

Discuss the following to find out if your playgroup is structured to encourage children and adults to build friendships.

Money Matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes (Y) or Needs Development (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial accountability is a group responsibility and the workload is shared.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The playgroup works to an annual budget.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgroup has a bank account, cheque account,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Playgroup resources—Playmap

Take your playgroup somewhere new

Playmap provides a Play Curricula for playgroups that reflects the five learning outcomes of the National Early Years Learning Framework to promote children’s learning and development in playgroups. Playmap supports parents as their child’s first educators, by providing an easy to use tool to plan experiences for children at playgroups that can be used by parents and playgroup facilitators alike.

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Playmap can be used to plan activities for both playgroup sessions and in the home.

Playmap contains Evidence-based content

Promotes intentional teaching

Activity guides include the list of materials, and parent notes such as developmentally stimulating questions to ask children.

Play provides a learning platform for children to understand the world around them.

Intuitive for use by both facilitators and parents.

Reflects the principles, practices and outcomes of the framework to support and enhance young children’s learning from birth to 5.

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Promote the incorporation of the Playmap ‘curriculum’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.30am</td>
<td>Arrive and Set-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.30am</td>
<td>Freeplay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.15am</td>
<td>Snack time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30am</td>
<td>Playmap activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15am</td>
<td>Song/story time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30am</td>
<td>Pack-up, goodbye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Playgroup resources-Supported playgroup Standards of Practice

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Playgroup resources—VELDF posters and resource sheets

Each poster in this set focuses on one of the five learning and development outcomes in the VEYLDVF.

Identity
Community
Wellbeing
Learning
Communication

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Delivering positive health message via playgroup

Active Play@Playgroup (Weber et al., 2014)

• Program: 10 week intervention at supported playgroup
  Messages from coordinator to promote active play and decrease screen time.

• Results: ↑ children’s active play
  ↑ Parents playing with their children

Demonstrated the feasibility and potential for supported playgroup as an effective setting for increasing parental knowledge and promoting healthy behaviours for children.
A person can change their health behavior, and health behavior impacts future health status.

- Playgroups can play a role in changing people’s behavior.
- Change adults behavior and they will teach their children differently.
- Create environments that are supportive of health
- Promote positive health messages to playgroup families
- Playgroups empower parents and we can do so on health management too

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Playgroups could help reduce health disparities by impacting determinants of health:

- **Individual factors**
- **Cultural factors**
- **Socioeconomic influences on health**
Playgroup and determinants of health

Playgroups could help reduce health disparities by impacting determinants of health:

• **Individual factors**
  - Build knowledge and skills
  - Be able to recognize what is normal and seek assistance when something is not
  - Peer networks - advice and modelling
  - Distribution of key messages through our online communications

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Playgroups could help reduce health disparities by impacting determinants of health:

- **Cultural factors**
  - Overcome isolation and social exclusion
  - Soft entry for refugees requiring trauma related mental health assistance
  - CaLD families- exposure to English language or cultural specific peer networks
Playgroup and determinants of health

Playgroups could help reduce health disparities by impacting determinants of health:

- **Socioeconomic influences on health**
  - Better health literacy, and more willing to access health service
  - Playgroup can assist in understanding need for health services, and awareness of local resources

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Playgroups are a ‘soft entry’ point for many services that they may otherwise not have been aware of, or were hesitant to attend.

They provide the opportunity for communities to build, strengthen, and grow by connecting families to services and other families.

Families share stories about their own family’s use of services can demystifying processes and reduce anxieties.

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Understanding typical development through playgroup

- With exposure to other children of same age, typical developmental milestones can be observed.

- Playgroup can play a role through identification of additional needs and early intervention and the promotion of health and support services.

Source: Max Pixels
Early intervention is important.
• It can change developmental trajectories
• It can prevent the onset of secondary complications.
• The earlier children start, the more benefit they gain.

Emerging Special Health Care Needs (SHCN)
• ~18% prevalence at school entry (Goldfeld et al., 2012)
• Associated with 3 x risk of a trajectory of low academic performance across the primary school years. (Goldfeld et al., 2014)
Roadmap for reform: Strong families, safe children

“Our vision is that Victoria will be a state with strong families and children who are safe, healthy and well.” (p12, DHSS, 2016)

Playgroup Victoria supports the Child Safe standards and promotes child safe practices even in scenarios where there are not legislative requirements.

Support documentation for playgroups are currently in preparation by Playgroup Victoria.
Playgroups and family violence hubs

- Playgroups are soft entry point to services
- Playgroups can promote the hubs
- We can help set-up playgroups at the hubs
- Dyadic engagement at playgroup is a positive experience for parent and child.

“The Support and Safety Hubs will give families the support they need to stay safe, with world’s best practice and the world’s best family violence workforce.”

Premier Daniel Andrews

Source: Max Pixels
Rural and regional areas

- Families in rural and remote areas have poorer access to and use of health services than people living in Major cities. (Australia’s Health 2016, AIHW)

- Playgroups are a good way to bring families together and have a captured audience to whom you can communicate health info.
Rural and regional areas

• Community playgroups- Connecting rural families locally pilot project (‘13-’16) demonstrated the importance of being on the ground and developing community connections and laid the ground work for the Playgroup Development Adviser roles.

• The PDAs have each been allocated an area of Victorian LGAs so that playgroup families and professionals have a consistent person with whom to make contact and build a relationship.
Wimmera transitional playgroup project

• Trialing the suitability of the transitional playgroup model for use in rural and regional areas.

• Study findings will inform modifications to ensure it’s relevance outside of metro areas.
Rural and regional areas

Playgroup attendance can impact children’s transition to preschool and school.

This is beneficial to both the children and teachers.

“I benefit too, as children with some playgroup experience settle into Kindergarten (preschool) a little easier, than those who haven’t been to playgroup.”

Preschool teacher, regional Victoria
“Preggie play” is prenatal experience that introduces new parents to their local playgroup.

Establish a support network of parents prior to babies arrival

Engage with and promote the importance of playgroup with:
• prenatal services
• providers of pregnancy needs/supplies
• providers of baby equipment

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Preggy play- address prenatal risks

• An antenatal support system is important
  – Detection of risk for mother and/or baby
  – Accurate medical and nutritional advice
  – Reduces rates of low birth rate
  – Answer questions

• Variation by SES in Low birth weight \( \therefore \) potential for ongoing problems. Lowest SES: 7.6%, highest SES: 5.5%.

• Dental care
  Pregnant women who have a current concession card do not have to go on a waiting list to see a public dentist. You will be given the next available appointment.
Playgroup and parental wellbeing and mental health

- Parents can have positive experiences and develop relationships with others
- They can observe other parents or facilitator modelling good parenting practices; good parenting is predictive of resilience in children (Brennan, Le Brocque, & Hammen, 2003).
- Mothers of 0-5 year olds who attend a local playgroup have greater social capital, social support and mental wellbeing. (Strange, Bremner, Fisher, Howat, & Wood, 2016)
- The benefits on parents’ wellbeing can secondarily strengthen the functioning of their entire family unit.
Playgroup and parental wellbeing and mental health, and the child

- At playgroup children can develop social and emotional connections with both children and adults; this can significantly moderate the impact of parental mental disorder (Beardslee, Versage, & Gladstone, 1998).

- Playgroup attendance can assist children who have poor coping skills, a vulnerability characteristic for children experiencing parental mental disorder.

- Engaging with other children and learning coping strategies can assist children to adapt to the stress of parental illness (Langrock, Compas, Keller, Merchant, & Copeland, 2002).
Playgroup and resilience

VicHealth research indicates that resilience is impacted by factors at three different levels:

– *individual*,
– *family/friends and*
– *community/ organisations.*

High overlap with playgroup’s three pronged approach of nurturing:

– *children*
– *parents/family and*
– *community.*
Playgroup and nature contact

• Some playgroups meet in the bush, or another outdoor setting.

• Contact with nature provides opportunity for unstructured, incidental movement and develops the fundamental movement skills necessary to participate in physical activity.

• Physical health and wellbeing
  At school entry 1 in 5 children are not school developmentally on-track

• Health benefits of nature contact include improvement in resilience and mental health.

Source: Pexels

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Addressing socioeconomic status-related disparities


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Addressing socioeconomic status-related disparities

The mediators could be targeted utilizing the playgroup platform.


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Addressing socioeconomic status-related disparities

The mediators could be targeted utilizing the playgroup platform.


**Prenatal factors**
Preggy-play and prenatal care

**Parental care**
Parental well-being and mental health and the impact of playgroup on these parents and their children was just mentioned.

**Cognitive stimulation**
Playgroups are a developmentally stimulating environment and promote learning through play

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