



Celebrating 40 years of supporting families

Playgroup Victoria
Annual Report 2013–2014





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Playgroup Victoria is a membership association with 26,000 family and playgroup members across the state. 40,000 children a week are growing and learning through playgroups in Victoria. Playgroups are part of a child's early learning and development continuum from birth to kindergarten. They provide platforms for children and parents to learn and grow together especially in the first three years.

Playgroups come in many shapes. They can be Community Playgroups run by parents in their local communities, Supported playgroups or Intensive playgroups which are run by agencies for children and parents who experience various levels of vulnerability or disadvantage.

Playgroup Victoria represents all its members across the three types of playgroups by providing information, resources, training and support to ensure playgroups remain vital and grow within Victorian communities.

Playgroup Victoria thanks the following corporate partners.



Message from the Chair



Playgroup Victoria has had a productive and rewarding year and I am pleased to report on some of our achievements, as well as highlighting changes to our governance arrangements.

The inaugural Playgroup Awards were celebrated, which recognises the contribution of community and supported playgroups and acknowledges the individuals who give so much of their time and energy in running them. The Hon Wendy Lovell MLC, Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, joined us to present the Minister's Award, and we appreciate her ongoing encouragement and support. Overall it was a fantastic evening, and heartening to see so many worthy and enthusiastic nominees for each category.

Members are realising the benefits of our new membership strategy and supporting software, and even in this climate of economic pressure on families, our membership numbers have grown modestly. This indicates the broad recognition of the value of playgroups to families, and is also a credit to the advice and support provided by Playgroup Victoria staff.

This year Playgroup Victoria became a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), which recognised the organisation's dedication to the advancement of education and purposes beneficial to the community. We also received Tax Concession Charity status, which gives Playgroup Victoria access to certain charity tax concessions. The Board also approved the investment into new financial systems and reporting arrangements, which enhances sound governance practices and supports the delivery of our programs.

The Board welcomed newly elected members Dianna Belbin and Rob Giles, and more recently appointed Dr Tim Gilley as an expert member; but sadly farewellled Rachel Flottman

and Kate Booth, although both have continued to contribute through board subcommittees. The Board also appointed Leanne Russell as Association Secretary to assist with the corporate governance requirements of the organisation. Leanne is fulfilling this position in addition to her role as an expert member on the Board.

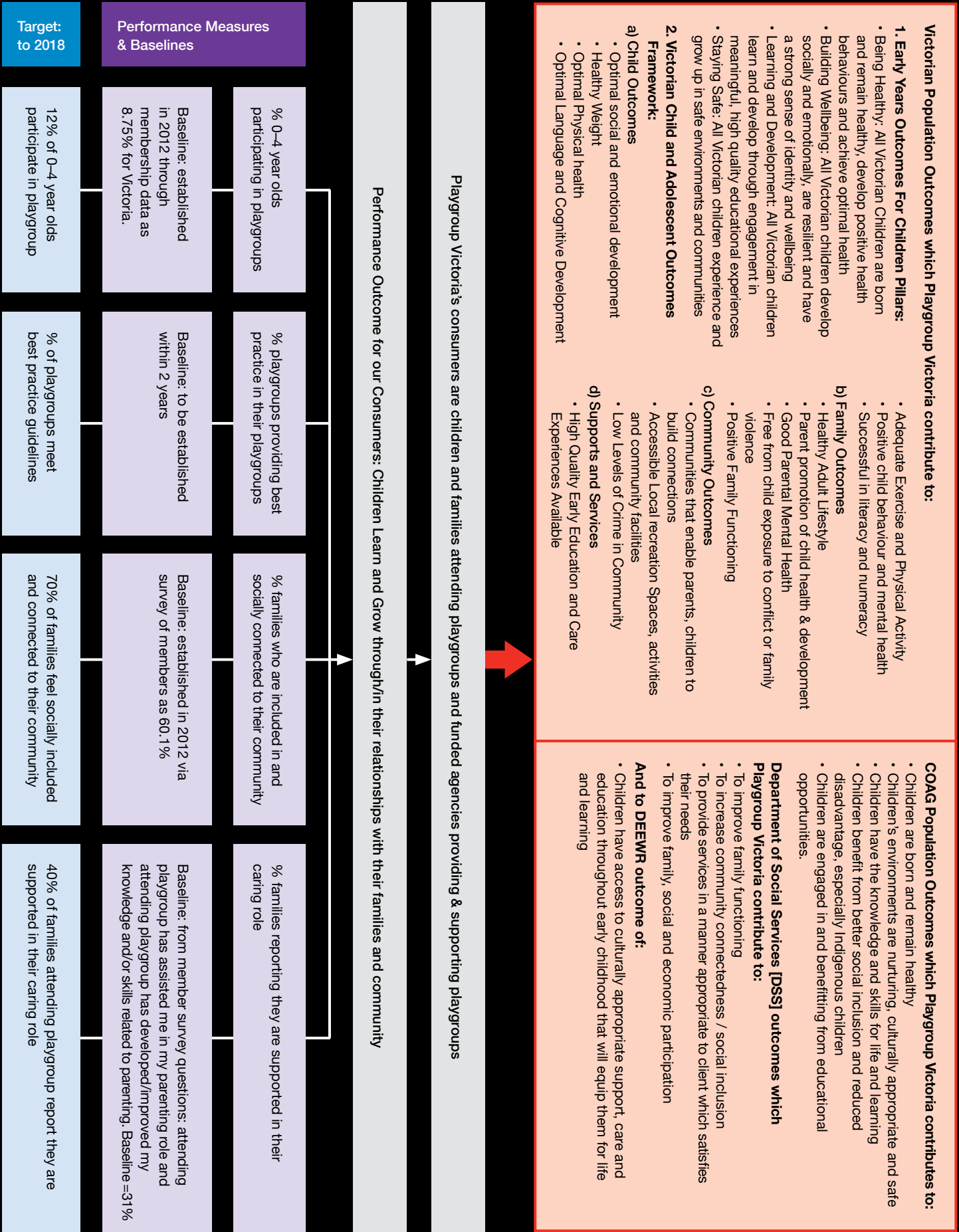
The Board subcommittees continue to support and extend the work of the Board and enable other stakeholders to be involved in aspects of governance such as strategy and board recruitment. My sincere thanks go to each and every volunteer on the Board and subcommittees who contribute their time and skills.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the leadership and dedication of Viv Cunningham-Smith, Chief Executive Officer of Playgroup Victoria. She leads an enthusiastic and committed team of staff and volunteers who provide support and ensure playgroups flourish across Victoria.

Karen Harvey-Collings
Chair



Outcomes Framework for Playgroup Victoria



Supporting families for 40 years

Government support for playgroups



Playgroups have been active for well over half a century and 2014 marks the 40th Anniversary of Playgroup Victoria, however the government support for playgroups has been largely over the last decade.

In the past there had been limits on the amount of government funding for playgroups, both supported and community. Then in 2006 the Howard Government decided to introduce new funding under the Playgroup Expansion Program (PEP).

The PEP was designed for State and Territory Playgroup Associations to use extra funding to support and resource community playgroups and to recruit new members to start playgroups.

Part of PEP was to ensure that rural and regional playgroups and their members were included in the recruitment and

retention process of playgroups. This allowed Playgroup Victoria to access new frontiers of membership and also allowed the organisation to become truly Victorian.

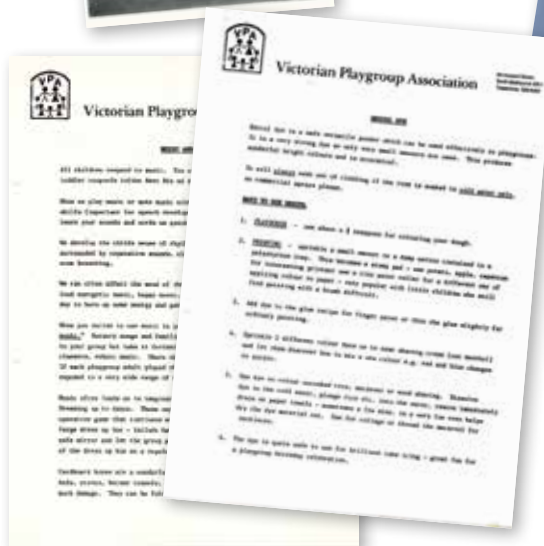
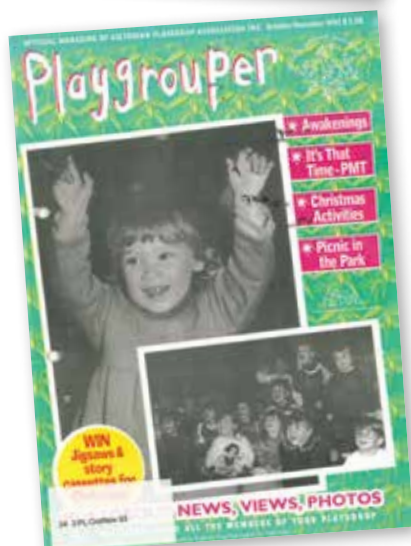
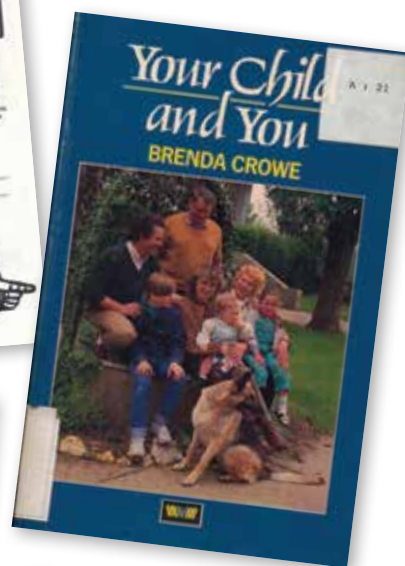
This funding was the forerunner to the existing community playgroup funding that for the last three years has been received from the Australian Government Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). This funding has been purely to support and resource community playgroups. Coupled with this, the Australian Government has also provided supported playgroup funding for PlayConnect (supported playgroups for children with ASD), My Time (peer support groups), targeted and transitional Supported Playgroups and Intensive Supported Playgroups (ISP).

Playgroup Victoria has also been able to advocate progressively over the last five years, to the point where the Victorian Government now fund supported playgroups in a number of different areas – with direct funding to local government for Supported Playgroup and Parent Initiative and the Playgroup Victoria Rural Project.

The Rural Project is the first Victorian Government investment in community playgroups and is an extension of the work undertaken as part of the initial PEP funding, face to face contact for rural and regional playgroups and sustaining community playgroups in these areas into the future.

Supporting families for 40 years

Taking a look back over 40 years





Supporting families for 40 years

Celebrating 40 years of playgroup



Ocean Grove Playgroup

The Ocean Grove playgroup, situated on the picturesque Bellarine Peninsula, has some unique distinctions as it celebrates its 30th year.

The current playgroup, located in the community centre of the town, has seven families who attended the playgroup as children.

Three generations of playgroups have now used the playgroup to socialise, support, play and learn and Kylie Titheridge, one of the present members, is in awe of the power of the playgroup.

"I can't really remember coming here to the playgroup with my mum, however I have seen photos, both via Mum and here at playgroup of the history of this place and it gives me a great sense of belonging to my local community that

the playgroup is still around today," Kylie said.

The Ocean Grove playgroup originally met at the local Maternal Child and Health Centre and moved to its current home in 1997.

The playgroup has regular grand parents days and in 2013 were able to have somewhat of a reunion, with many of the grandparents of the current members coming on the same day.

"It was great to see some many of the grandparents of the current children come back to playgroup and be able to celebrate their part in the longevity of the group. The kids loved having their grandparents here and we loved hearing the stories from them on what playgroup was like in their day," Kylie said.

"And it wasn't much different!!".

"It was great to see some many of the grandparents of the current children come back to playgroup and be able to celebrate their part in the longevity of the group. The kids loved having their grandparents here and we loved hearing the stories from them on what playgroup was like in their day".

Kylie Titheridge,
Ocean Grove Playgroup

Carlisle River Playgroup

Carlisle River Playgroup is one of the oldest playgroups in Victoria. As Playgroup Victoria celebrates its 40th anniversary, this playgroup is approaching its 52nd birthday!

Carlisle River is in dairy farming country in the Otways in south west Victoria, about 20 minutes from Colac. It is a small community that has had local maternal and child health services and playgroups for half a century.

Maternal and child health services first began in Carlisle River in 1959 when the maternal and child health nurse visited mothers in their homes. An official centre was opened at the Carlisle River Hall in 1961 and playgroup was introduced. The playgroup joined Playgroup Victoria (then known as the Victorian Playgroup Association) in 1983.

At Carlisle River, a monthly playgroup session coincides with a visit from a maternal and child health nurse. This

“Combining the maternal and child health service with a program like playgroup enables families to get together on a regular basis for children in their early years to have play and social time”.

**Greg Fletcher, Health and Community Services Manager,
Colac Otway Shire Council**

model also exists in nearby Beeac and Lavers Hill.

Colac Otway Shire Council's Health and Community Services Manager Greg Fletcher said 50 years of service to a small community such as Carlisle River was a significant milestone.

“Combining the maternal and child health service with a program like playgroup enables families to get together on a regular basis for children in their early years to have play and social time,” he said.

“At the same time maternal and child health nurses are able to carry out their health and developmental monitoring.

“It's a great opportunity for parents to socialise and get to know other people in their community.”

Carlisle River invited over 150 people back to their 50 year celebration in 2012. Many of the original maternal and child health nurses were there along with people who as children attended playgroup in its early years. Some of the original playgroup children came to the playgroup as adults and brought along their own children.

Carlisle River Playgroup is a shining example of how playgroups can support local communities and provide real support services for families and children.



Supporting families for 40 years

Celebrating 40 years of playgroup *continued*



"I've made so many friends by being part of this playgroup. When I first arrived from Gippsland six years ago I knew no one. It's a great place to take the load off and catch up with other parents."

Kirsten Zwar

Community Playgroups

Community Playgroups connect families in their local area. Whether children and parents live in growing urban areas or country towns, Playgroup Victoria continues to hear their stories of connection and support. In 2013-2014 there were over 1200 community playgroups being run by parents for parents across Victoria. These playgroups held over 3000 individual sessions of playgroup each week. While every family in a playgroup contributes to the group, it is often those who take on leadership roles, such as playgroup committee members and play leaders, who need support to help their playgroup run smoothly.

Playgroup is a vital training ground for parents who later become involved in their kindergarten, school and local sporting club committees.

Community Playgroups provide environments within which children learn and grow with their parents. Playgroup Victoria hears many accounts of young children meeting and forming relationships in playgroup which are sustained through their kindergarten and then school. These children experience solid and stable relationships from birth within a safe and supportive community. What a start for children!

Warracknabeal Playgroup is the only playgroup in town, servicing a population of 2500 and runs in a room under the grandstand at Anzac Park Tuesday to Friday. Members of the playgroup are free to stay as long as they like.

"I've made so many friends by being part of this playgroup. When I first arrived from Gippsland six years ago I knew no one," coordinator Kirsten Zwar said. "It's a great place to take the load off and catch up with other parents."

When a new family arrived and was noticed in the local shops with their small children, they were stopped by 16 different local people and told about the playgroup. How much more connected could that be?

The community playgroup also run a supported playgroup session, where the community playgroup members actively mentor and support vulnerable families in the area to have the experience of playgroup. This is the first of its kind in Victoria and has led to Playgroup Victoria applying for funding to use this model as a way to connect more people in local communities to playgroup.



*2013-2014
Snapshot*



2013-2014 Snapshot

Play Map

PlayMap is an online interactive tool to help plan playgroup activities for one or up to six sessions.

It was designed with elements and features from the Victorian Early Years Development Framework and can be used by playgroup contact people to design and run playgroup sessions in community and supported playgroups.



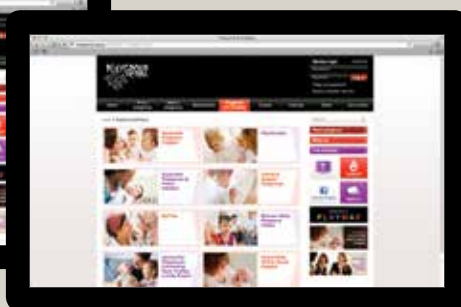
Website redesign and PVTV

The largest undertaking for the organisation over the last 12 months has been the redesign of the Playgroup Victoria website.

It has taken over 12 months to ensure a new look website was easily manageable by members and visitors and contained relevant content for all.

The content was completely stripped back and the design was undertaken by our graphic designer, Louisa Roubin, who has ensured a use friendly and brand focussed website.

We also had to ensure that the content relationship management system and online payment system were both seamlessly included to make it easier for members and playgroups to use the new website.





Laying the Foundations State Conference

The 2014 Playgroup Victoria State Conference – Laying the Foundations provided over 220 participants with an array of keynote speakers and workshops dedicated to ‘Learning through Play’ and how playgroups support play opportunities for children and families.

Marc Armitage and Professor Joe Sparling provided a wealth of knowledge and experience as keynote speakers, while there were over 20 practical workshops for participants to attend and Master class from renowned children’s book author and PV Ambassador Jeannette Rowe.

The Conference theme ensured plenty of thought provoking discussion on play, play ideas, how play interacts for children and families and how we can support play within both community and supported playgroups.

Laying the Foundations 2015 will see the theme of ‘Learning through play’. This will engage researchers, practitioners, facilitators, coordinators and playgroupers in a wonderful array of workshops and plenary sessions.

Playgroup Victoria Ambassadors

Part of Playgroup Victoria’s strategic directions over the next five years is to engage some astute and well known Ambassadors to help highlight the impact of playgroups within the Victorian community.

The organisation has identified some key people to support Playgroup Victoria and we are excited to be associated with them:

DR MICHAEL CARR-GREGG

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg is an adolescent psychologist, author and regular guest on Radio 3AW and Channel Seven’s ‘Sunrise’ program. Michael is a judge of the Annual Playgroup Awards and is committed to promoting the positive impact playgroup has, particularly on fathers.

JAY LAGA’AIA

Jay Laga’aia is a singer, musician, actor, Play School favourite and father of eight children. Jay is a firm believer in playgroup and values the role that playgroup has played in his family’s life.

STEVE BIDDULPH

Steve Biddulph is a parenting author and educator whose books, which have been translated into 31 languages, have influenced the way we look at childhood especially the development of boys and men.

JEANNETTE ROWE

Jeannette Rowe has been a children’s book creator for the past 20 years. Jeannette is the author of Yo Yo goes to Playgroup and has been an influential literary presence in early childhood for many years. She presented a Master class at this year’s State Conference.



Images top row: Dr Michael Carr-Gregg and Steve Biddulph; bottom row: Jay Laga’aia and Jeannette Rowe.

Playgroup Awards



PLAYGROUP AWARDS

The inaugural Playgroup Awards were very successful and the winners were announced in November 2013 at a gala night at the Melbourne Arts Centre. There were nominations across eight categories highlighting the diversity of playgroups across Victoria.

The Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, the Hon Wendy Lovell MP selected St. Andrews playgroup Rosanna for her Ministers Award for excellence and innovation in playgroup across 2013.

The overall Playgroup of the Year was the Woodend Playgroup.

Winners in 2013

COMMUNITY

Community Playgroup of the Year (1–4 sessions)

Daytime Dads Playgroup Narre Warren

Community Playgroup of the Year (5+ sessions)

Woodend Playgroup

Community Playgroup Leader of the Year

Sasha Barrow & Corrin Buckett, Alexandra Playgroup

Community Committee of the Year

Marriott Waters Playgroup Lynbrook

SUPPORTED

Supported Playgroup of the Year

PlayConnect Playgroup Romsey

Supported Playgroup Facilitator of the Year

Monica Kanbang, South Sudanese

Supported Playgroup Coordinator of the Year

Jenny Rukuwai, Hobson's Bay City Council

Playgroup Agency of the Year

Kangan Institute



2014 finalists

Community Playgroup of the Year (1-4 sessions)

YMCA Craigieburn West Playgroup

Little Angels Playgroup Richmond

Merinda Park Learning and Community Centre
Playgroup Cranbourne North

Eagle Point Playgroup

Murumbeena Playgroup

Yallourn North Playgroup

Community Playgroup of the Year (5+ sessions)

Je Joue Playgroup Pascoe Vale

Marie Chandler Playgroup Boronia

Billoo Park Playgroup Wantirna

Rosswood Playgroup Dandenong Nth

Community Playgroup Leader of the Year

Ryoko Williams, Bundoora Japanese Playgroup

Rebecca Calvert, Epsom Playgroup Huntly (Bendigo)

Kathy Frolley, Lakeside Playgroup Pakenham

Glenda Hateley, Melton Uniting Church Playgroup

Community Committee of the Year

Concord Playgroup Bundoora

Billoo Park Playgroup Wantirna

Yallourn North Playgroup

Dutch Playgroup Melbourne (Port Melbourne)

Supported Playgroup of the Year

Multicultural Mums and Supported Playgroup Swan Hill

Nourish and Nurture Playgroup Hastings

Djilay Lidjy Supported Playgroup Moe

Gregory Lodge Intergenerational Music
Playgroup Flemington

Tiny Turtles Supported Playgroup Pakenham

Malvern Special Needs Playgroup Windsor

Supported Playgroup Facilitator of the Year

Jean Reed, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities
(SMECC) Mildura

Shantelle Grant, Romsey PlayConnect Playgroup

Sue Wood, St Peters Playgroup Ballarat

Viv Yetman, Tempy Patche Playgroup Yarriambiack

Ross Morgan, Me and My Dad Playgroup Ballarat

Supported Playgroup Coordinator of the Year

Laura Parente, Butterflies Playgroup Mildura

Libbie McBain, Zoe Suport Playgroup Mildura

Jodie Soutter, City of Casey

Karen Diacono, Vicseg New Futures

Playgroup Agency of the Year

Total Learning Centre - Mallee Family Care Mildura

Robinson Reserve Neighbourhood House Coburg

Cranbourne Community House

The Arbour – DHS

Improving Our Services to Members

This year has seen us consolidate our delivery of services to our members. These services are the life blood of playgroups providing them with the infrastructure and support they need to keep them happening and growing in their communities.

- An online system for payment and management of community playgroups.
- PVTv to provide workshops, information and support for leaders and professionals in playgroup.
- A continued branding program which more successfully targets the recruitment and retention cycles of playgroup.

Playgroup Victoria has also reached out to its members throughout Victoria by bringing our services direct to metropolitan, regional and rural areas in 2013 and 2014 through playgroup platforms. In addition we have provided a range of events:



Events

Our events have included:

- National Playgroup Week ALDI Roadshow
- Romp & Stomp
- Laying the Foundations Conference
- Werribee Zoo Playgroup Day
- State Library Playgroup Day

Corporate Partners

We have had support from our Corporate Partners this year who are invaluable in the support of playgroups and the promotion of the value of playgroups.

ALDI: Supports Playgroup Victoria to hold an ALDI Roadshow throughout Victoria during National Playgroup Week. This year we visited Geelong, Bendigo, Ballarat, Werribee, Bacchus Marsh, Pakenham, Sunshine, Rye and helped celebrate playgroups and families with over 5000 people.

bankMECU: We have created a vital link with bankMECU to provide financial services information to playgroups and families. Many playgroup contact

people have already used the direct service of bankMECU to open bank accounts and provide a solid platform for their playgroup.

Melbourne City Volvo: Melbourne City Volvo are supporting Playgroup Victoria through a range of initiatives including major support for the Rural Playgroup Project. They are also providing discounts to families for child restraint fittings and prizes for competitions and through PV events.

Playgro/Nuby: Have been long-time supporters of Playgroup Victoria and provide many resources for playgroups and families through their relationship with our organisation.

Crayola: Another long-time supporter who provides quality products for use in playgroup promotions and marketing, including our Playgroup of the Month packs.

V/Line: Supports our relationship with rural and regional playgroups and integrates work through Fun4Kids each year. Provides support for metro groups to also access regional excursions.



Playgroup of the Month

A Playgroup of the Month award was presented in July, August, September, October, November, February, March, April, May and June to playgroups identified by Playgroup Victoria staff as those that were doing good things within in their community.

Playgroup Victoria staff travelled to present awards to the winning playgroups.

Barnawatha Playgroup won the August 2013 award for putting the play back into playgroup and providing families with a valuable way of linking in with the community. The playgroup has been going for about ten years and only recently relocated to the school, a more child friendly environment where playgroup children interact with children in their first and second years at the school through story reading either at the playgroup or at the school. Onsite as well is a maternal and child health nurse who is available for health checks.



Playgroup of the Month from July 2013 to June 2014

July: Riddell Road Playgroup

August: Barnawatha Playgroup

September: Bendigo Dads and Kids Playgroup

October: PlayConnect Laverton

November: Jack and Jill Playgroup

February: Malvern Special Needs Playgroup

March: Je Joue Playgroup

April: Little Footprints Playgroup

May: Clunes Playgroup

June: Welshpool and District Playgroup



Malvern Special Needs Playgroup was February's Playgroup of the Month for its strong tradition of providing respite for parents of children with a broad range of disabilities.

The playgroup started 35 years ago as a way to help out local families in need and now runs two sessions a week for a total of 24 children aged from 0-5 years old.

Children attending are affected by a variety of genetic disorders, general global developmental delays, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, Angelman's syndrome and autism spectrum disorders.

What our members said

85%

of members prefer to receive their membership services online

What works to tell people about playgroup?

45% of members found out about playgroups through their Maternal and Child Health Nurse.

47% found out about playgroup through word of mouth.

19% found out about playgroup through the Playgroup Victoria website.

What playgroups mean to members

92% of members say their playgroup is friendly

82% find their playgroup affordable

73% say their playgroup is relaxed

74% say its fun and safe at playgroup



96%

of members would recommend Playgroup Victoria membership to a friend or colleague

93%

of parents read regularly to their children in the home

Outcomes of playgroups for members children

95% of members saw their children get the chance to develop social skills through interaction with other children

80% felt their children had opportunities to build relationships

60% valued the improved physical activity playgroup offered for their children

60% felt their children were improved in turn taking and sharing

Outcomes of playgroup for parents

95% of parents said attending playgroup has provided them with a sense of friendship, community and/or connectedness

88% felt attending playgroup had assisted them in their parenting role

83% said attending playgroup has developed/improved my knowledge and/or skills related to parenting



Playgroups connect people in their community

43% of members found out about their local kindergarten/preschools or schools through playgroup

37% found out about good local businesses through their playgroup

49% of members found out about toy libraries through their playgroup

34% found out about council libraries through their playgroup



90%

of members felt attending playgroup had assisted them in their parenting role

Our Team in 2013–2014

Playgroup Victoria Board of Directors for 2013–2014

Chair Karen Harvey-Collings

Director Dianna Belbin (elected November 2013)

Director Kate Booth (resigned May 2014)

Director Felicity Cara-Carson

Director Rachel Flottman (resigned May 2014)

Director Rob Giles (elected November 2013)

Director Dr Tim Gilley (appointed November 2013)

Director Rebecca Middleton

Director Leanne Russell

Director Jane Watson

Board Committees

Risk and Audit

Chair Jane Watson, Karen Harvey-Collings, Rebecca Middleton, Dianna Belbin, Felicity Cara-Carson

Nominations

Chair Karen Harvey-Collings, Bronwyn Clarke, Christine Chew

Performance and Remuneration

Chair Karen Harvey-Collings, Rebecca Middleton, Rob Giles, Bronwyn Clarke

Strategy and Policy

Chair Rob Giles, Katherine Cape, Karen Harvey-Collings, Viv Cunningham-Smith, Jason Doherty

Playgroup Victoria Management Team

Executive

Chief Executive Officer Vivienne Cunningham-Smith

General Manager Jason Doherty

Corporate Operations Team

Manager Corporate Services Carolyn Eley

Manager Events Jane Bezzina

Manager Training Deb Sedlarevic

Manager Communications Denise Lucey

Manager Rural Project Cath Healy

Manager Membership Nancy-Lee Merzel

Program Management Team

Manager Practice and Research Janine Regan

Manager PlayConnect/SPG Isabella Rosinsky

Manager My Time Genevieve O'Connor

Manager SPPI Deborah Njegac

And the wonderful staff of Playgroup Victoria



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