



Playgroup
Victoria

2016 Annual Report

“We need, motion, novelty, adventure and to engage with the world with our whole bodies. Let us Play.” (Trust us we are learning) Anon.



Danny Schwarz, CEO



John Wills, Chair

We often come across words that bring everything together and help us see the what, how and why. For Playgroup Victoria the connection between play and learning is at our core. In the adult world we talk about children’s work beginning with play. The importance of the Early Years is widely recognised with significant investment from State and Federal Governments over recent years. The challenge continues however that even with this investment we are not investing in all children.

Playgroup Victoria recognises the significant opportunity to create systemic change which has as our core aim of every child in Victoria in Playgroup. The evidence is in, through the AEDC, participation in playgroup can maximise the developmental potential of all children prior to the start of formal education. In fact, longitudinal research shows that boys from both advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds who attended playgroup had significantly better learning outcomes at Kinder and early Primary school compared to boys from the same groups who didn’t attend Playgroup.¹

It is with all of this in mind that we look back at the past year and can be proud of the achievements of;

- Our 15,000 members who ran and participated in more than 1500 Community Playgroups.
- The Rural Communities who, over the last three years, with the support of our Playgroup Development Consultants established 120 new Community Playgroups.
- The more than 100 nominations for our Playgroup Awards for Supported and Community Playgroups
- The inaugural Playgroup Champion, Donna Ludvigsen and Playgroup of the year Marie Chandler Playgroup
- The 12 Playgroups of the Month
- The PlayConnect and MyTime Playgroups who have engaged with and supported children with disabilities and
- Our Laying the Foundations Conference

In the coming year the systemic change we believe

will change lives and benefit everyone will be, in partnership with all early years’ stakeholders, the launch of our strategy to create Playgroup as the Universal Platform for Children 0-4.

2015 saw both Vivienne Cunningham-Smith and Karen Harvey-Collings resign from their positions of CEO and Chair of the Board. As CEO, Vivienne developed a range of strategies including a results based accountability framework. Karen, joining the board following her involvement in Playgroup, was able to connect directly with Playgroups and ensure that the broader community understood the value and connectedness that Playgroup brings to children and their families. We thank you both for the positive impact you have had for Playgroups and Playgroup Victoria.

Finally we would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank our Staff, Playgroup Volunteers and members of the Board of Governance for your ongoing dedication and professionalism. You have and will continue to make difference in the lives of the children who will be and create our future. Let’s ensure we give them everything to enable them to reach their potential.

Message from the CEO and Chair of the Board



1. Hancock, K., Lawrence, D., Mitrou, F., Zarb, D., Berthelsen, D., Nicholson, J. M., & Zubrick, S. R. (2012). The association between playgroup participation, learning competence and social-emotional wellbeing for children aged 4-5 years in Australia. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(2), 72-81. [Type text]

Summary

For the financial year 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, a deficit of (\$86,323) was recorded, compared to a surplus of \$12,728 for the previous year. This deficit has resulted from a reduction in revenue of \$200,748 offset by a reduction in operating expenses of \$101,697. Playgroup Victoria remains a viable operating entity with nearly \$400,000 held in cash and cash equivalents.

The Association is dependent on continued funding from government grants. Approximately 79% of the Association's revenue is sourced from Federal and State government grants.

The revenue decrease compared to the prior period was as a result of reduced government funding, DGR funding and interest received. Small prior period adjustments were made to depreciation balances and amortisation of the CRM system on audit recommendation.

In March 2016 a new CEO was appointed, who has executed a planned organisational re-alignment to continue the focus on practice and research to deliver on the evidence base for playgroups. The realignment also sees a greater emphasis on business development which aims to reduce reliance on government funding by securing additional revenue streams, and focus on reviewing and delivering value for members.

The equity position of the organisation at year end was \$621,114 compared to \$732,151 at the end of the prior year (a decrease of \$111,037) due to the \$86,323 operating deficit and an expensing of a reserve for future depreciation of \$24,714.

Conclusion

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 2016 and that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Playgroup Victoria Incorporated can continue pay its debts as and when they fall due.

The Association's auditors are present here today to answer any queries that members may have in respect to the financial statements – copies of which are available to members if required.

For full financial information please contact Playgroup Victoria on 1800 171 882 or pgvic@playgroup.org.au.

Annette Domanti
Chair, Risk & Audit Committee



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2016

Income	Note	2016	2015
Conference Fees		1,636	-
Contributions Members		350,473	355,953
DGR Revenue		382	38,235
Fee and Charge - Roster Playgroup		1,552	11,214
Fee and Charges - Play Day		2,259	1,311
Fees and charges		84,038	14,725
Grants		14,000	-
Grants - Commonwealth Operating		12,135	956,109
Grants - Local Operating - MVCC		30,000	30,000
Grants - Mission Australia		-	32,500
Grants - My Time		428,339	407,508
Grants - Playgroup Australia		1,076,827	305,966
Grants - Ross Trust		25,000	-
Grants - State Operating		240,783	93,325
Grants - State Operating - DEECD		400,000	490,766
Interest		23,707	60,536
Other Income		58,932	124,287
Sales - Registration		8,480	30,806
Sales - Advertising		5,573	1,264
Sales - Products		2,300	5,562
Sponsorship Revenue - Volvo		-	15,000
Wage subsidies received		7,903	-
Total Income from Ordinary activities		2,774,319	2,975,067
Expenditure			
Depreciation		68,719	75,008
Employment Expenses		1,552,817	1,598,198
Insurance		65,423	64,437
Meeting Expenses		4,193	10,281
Operating expenses		1,068,492	1,091,505
Travel and Accommodation		72,129	87,868
Vehicle Expenses		28,869	35,042
Total Expenditure from Ordinary activities	4	2,860,642	2,962,339
Surplus (deficit) for the period		(86,323)	12,728
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period		(86,323)	12,728

Risk and Audit Committee Report

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2016

Current Assets	Note	2016	2015
Cash and cash equivalents	2	383,634	732,546
Financial assets	5	616,139	805,444
Trade & other receivables		11,048	50,257
Other current assets	6	42,134	44,590
Total Current Assets		1,052,955	1,632,837
Non Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	7	256,204	330,213
Total Non Current Assets		256,204	330,213
Total Assets		1,309,159	1,963,050
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	162,820	305,917
Grants and income in advance	9	328,409	640,639
Short term provisions	8	168,886	202,375
Total Current Liabilities		660,115	1,148,931
Non Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	16,134	57,255
Long term provisions	8	11,796	24,713
Total Non Current Liabilities		27,930	81,968
Total Liabilities		688,045	1,230,899
Net Assets		621,114	732,151
Equity			
Reserves		92,074	116,788
Retained earnings		529,040	615,363
Total Equity		621,114	732,151

200
conference participants
attended the Laying
the Foundations
conference

Laying the Foundations Conference 2016

This year's conference theme, Playgroups creating connections, explored the various ways in which playgroups contribute and support children's learning and development, parent-child attachment, family strengthening and group and community relationships. The conference followed a new format incorporating research, policy and practice, with ample opportunity to encourage participant involvement. 94% of participants who submitted an evaluation agreed that attending the conference provided them with new information and learnings to take back to their workplace, 92% were impressed with the range and quality of the speakers and 94% reported that the conference inspired them in their role as playgroup professionals.

As result we are pleased to announce that the conference, the only Professional Playgroup specific conference in Australia will go National in 2017 with the theme 'Playgroups Embracing Diversity'.

The Playgroup Framework - a Foundation Document

This document is the culmination of a year's work aiming to develop a theoretical framework and model for playgroup. "Our Practice and Research Department works collaboratively to promote effective translation of research outcomes for the broad range of playgroups including: community, facilitated, roster, supported, intensive supported and program playgroups which drives the embedding and implementation of this knowledge and practice into playgroups". It has been very important that Playgroup Victoria is at the forefront of promoting the benefits for children and families coming to playgroup and to provide a clear visual representation of playgroup laying the foundations for children, parents, families and their community, through the development of The Playgroup Model.

4
Conference
presentations by
Dr Jo Tarasuik

**Supported
Playgroup
Practice - A
guide for funding
providers was
completed**

4
Keeping Children
Safe sessions with
67 participants
attending

2
Policy Briefs
prepared and ready
for publication

**The Playgroup
Framework
- a foundation
document was
published**

Practice and Research

Further Resource Development

Our team is currently working on a variety of resources and materials that will enhance and enrich playgroup development and support including: the playgroup manual, GREAT playgroup series, QUALITY supported playgroup series, Keeping Children Safe resources, Policy Briefs and Practice Briefs, professional development opportunities, professional newsletters, and additional research projects

120
New Playgroups
established

389
community
playgroups
mentored

255
partnerships
established

Transition
from MCH
to playgroup
increased
24-76%

Community playgroups; connecting rural families locally project (Rural Project)

This 3 year pilot project was funded by the Department of Education and Training (DET) to grow participation in community playgroups through the employment of Playgroup Development Consultants (PDCs) in three rural communities across Victoria including the Wimmera (6 LGAs), Ballarat and surrounds (5 LGAs) and Gippsland (3 LGAs). The stakeholder reference group included representation from Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA).

Engagement with existing community playgroups included in-playgroup mentoring, together with ongoing support and advice via email and phone. A strengths-based approach was utilised to ensure playgroup leaders felt empowered to provide the best opportunities for their playgroup families and to access Playgroup Victoria's expertise to further enhance their playgroup practice.

A place-based approach to playgroup development fostered the establishment and maintenance of local partnerships relevant to playgroups so that the PDC role complimented the universal service system in each local community. The primary partner for each site was local government, and in particular, Maternal and Child Health. Through meaningful engagement with the local early childhood service system, PDCs were able to work in partnership with professionals in an effort to ensure all families have access to quality playgroup experiences and to support the continuum of early childhood learning and development from birth to school.

Growth in
playgroup
participation:
Gippsland 5-12%,
Ballarat and
surrounds 2-7% and
Wimmera 5-18%



Playgroup Development

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY (ACU) EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

ACU conducted an evaluation of the Rural Project. The final report highlighted benefits to the PDC role being located in rural communities and also benefits of continued participation in playgroup which closely align to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF, DET 2016).

Service types and families identified a range of benefits associated with continued playgroup participation by parents and families. Benefits identified by service types and families aligned with the five Learning Outcomes in the VEYLDF (DET, 2016) included;

- Encourages learning
- Supports early childhood development
- Promotes social connectedness amongst parents
- Develops children's communication skills
- Develops parents and children's confidence

Supports young families These findings have made a significant contribution to the growing evidence base of the role that playgroup plays in improving outcomes for children, families and communities, particularly in a rural setting.

The evaluation found that PDCs value-add to existing service strategies for promoting community playgroups in rural communities. These strategies increase awareness of playgroups within the early childhood sector and the general community.

What did services say about the project

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

"The PDC provides a reach into the playgroup community ... She has been a really strong supporter and resourceful person, especially around the playgroups that my Aboriginal [service type] program

is involved with. The PDC is someone to bounce ideas off, but really helps us best support our programs with things like our committee (Service stakeholder, Wimmera)."

NETWORKING

"I can, in my role link the [PDC] into my network. So by having a person on the ground [the PDC] becomes like the face of playgroup in our areas (Service stakeholder, Ballarat and district)."

VISIBLE PRESENCE

"It's really important we partner with the PDC in lots of different activities - Children's Week being one of them and anything else where playgroup might fit the PDC will always be there (Service stakeholder, Gippsland).

PLAYGROUP ADVOCACY

"A lot of the time we do talk about the municipality's plan and how important that is to bring all the key players in early years together... PDCs active involvement on municipal early years and early year's network meetings they're good (Service stakeholder, Ballarat and district)."

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

"The benefit is that PDCs are aware of all the diverse things going on with the different playgroups and so they can share this. It's such a scattered area and there are small towns doing big things big towns doing small things and certainly [it's a benefit] to have someone who's able to bring people together for something that's happening no matter how big or small it is... [PDCs get] all the different agencies or different services aware of what's happening (Service stakeholder, Gippsland)."

“I’ve found her playing with the other kids here had improved her speech as well. As I said she was quite young and I noticed that once we started coming here she was talking that much more... also it’s things like playing with the kitchen over there. She’s seen me do it at home so she’s copying me.”

CONNECTING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

This project began in April 2012 and focuses on strengthening community capacity and fostering lifelong learning in the Ballarat region by providing children and families with access to supported playgroups in five local primary schools. The project involves collaboration between the Catholic Education Office Ballarat(CEOB) , Best Start (City of Ballarat), the Australian Catholic University (ACU), Playgroup Victoria and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Playgroup Victoria has been the lead agency since July 2015. This group form the Executive, who oversee the Project and the Reference Group comprises representatives from each of the five schools.

Supported playgroups were implemented across five participating primary schools and involved Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) from the Australian Catholic University as playgroup facilitators working alongside a funded playgroup coordinator (employed by Playgroup Victorian since July 2015). These schools were situated in communities which had been identified as having vulnerable families. The communities were identified using AEDI data showing that the South West and Wendouree have children with a high rate of vulnerability in two or more domains, and Best Start Atlas and Early Childhood Community Profile Ballarat data showing that two of the target schools were within neighbourhood renewal areas and four of the schools were identified in the National Partnerships initiative.



OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES:

- increased connectedness and engagement with their community
- improved perceptions of local schools
- Better opportunities for local families to access and experience playgroups

OUTCOMES FOR SCHOOLS:

- Provision of early childhood education experiences for young children prior to school in order to foster the development of oral language, communication and social skills
- Better connections between schools and their community and improved parent perception of local schools

Development Projects

TRANSITION PROJECT

A transition playgroup is one that goes through a process of development from a supported playgroup format (facilitated) to a community playgroup (parent-run). The transition process is a good fit for some playgroups as it allows a group to receive support as they get established but then allows the freedom to direct their own future later.

The Ian Potter Foundation Transition Playgroup Project is now halfway through a two year funding timeframe at Playgroup Victoria and the current focus is working closely with the relevant LGA’s to ensure continuity of the three playgroups in the project. The playgroups are Tarneit Gardens Playgroup (Tarneit), the Welcome Playgroup, (Avondale Heights), and the Banchory Playgroup (Hillside).

Wherever possible data collection is undertaken to gauge parent and provider satisfaction and identify factors contributing to success and failure. A substantial part of the project involves writing up the findings and producing ‘how to’ guides both for both playgroup providers and playgroups themselves. An evaluation report will be submitted to The Ian Potter Foundation in mid-2017 at the completion of the project.

THE MOONEE VALLEY PROJECT

Funded through a Partnership Grant, Playgroup Victoria has continued to work in partnership with Moonee Valley City Council to support and grow playgroups across the City of Moonee Valley.

‘Moonee Valley Playgroups Above and Beyond’ aims to strengthen and support volunteer led playgroups. The project fosters innovative approaches to playgroup development such as playgroups in aged care facilities, schools, nature playgroups, grandparents’ playgroups, culturally specific playgroups and multiple birth playgroups. The project also provided networks to enable playgroups to mentor other playgroups and develop partnerships with agencies and other service providers to enhance the playgroup experience.

A highlight for this year has been the establishment of the Moonee Valley Playgroup Leaders Facebook page. This innovative approach aims to connect leaders and committee members from playgroups across Moonee Valley to share good practice. The Facebook page has unified playgroups across the municipality to reach their full potential by providing a strong support for those in leadership. It is a page where leaders can meet, share information and resources and grow playgroups across the City of Moonee Valley.



PlayConnect

PlayConnect is a program funded by the Federal Government to provide playgroups for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). PlayConnect playgroups provide early intervention by assisting children to learn skills that will prepare them for the school environment. PlayConnect also supports parents by modelling strategies, providing social and networking opportunities and linking families to relevant services.

More than 1 in 100 children are diagnosed with ASD. That figure is only increasing as diagnostic tools are being improved. Children can now be diagnosed as young as 2 1/2 years of age. That means that there will be at least 2-3 children with ASD in every early childhood and school setting. The early intervention that PlayConnect provides will give every child a much better chance to adapt and thrive in those environments.

Over the past year in PlayConnect there were 17 groups delivered at 12 sites across Victoria.

A survey conducted in June 2016 showed results of 95.7% satisfaction with the service.

This year all facilitators were trained in Parent Child Mother Goose program delivery. The training has assisted them to deliver a more engaging program to those children who respond better to music and singing.

During Autism Awareness Month PlayConnect participated in events that took place at: Sunbury, Kyneton and Geelong. a van was taken to each event for a pop-up playgroup and PlayConnect display.



Romsey

Clara came to Play Connect at the age of 19 months with diagnosis of Autism. Clara was non-verbal with sensory issues causing massive meltdowns causing her to smash her head on concrete, pulling her hair out and not eating for days on end.

Clara's mother came with a positive and open mind to take on the world to help her child. Play Connect gave Clara the opportunity to play with other children in a safe environment, not be judged and give mother the support of other parents to confide and share stories with. As a facilitator I made sure that her mother was given tools and the opportunity to educate herself through courses and local service providers. We worked together constantly on strategies for home, then as Clara entered kinder.

Clara's progress has been more than amazing. She interacts with all the children, her language as developed and she can fluently hold a conversation with her peers. Clara has been taught the tools of self-regulation and can now verbally talk about her feelings and environment. Through mat time she has the ability to sit and engage, through snack time she has tried new foods and now is eating well.

1/100
children are
diagnosed with
Autism

“Mum felt really comfortable to be in a supportive environment with other parents who understood as they shared similar challenges.”



Laverton

Jane is a recently turned 3 year old who has been diagnosed with ASD. Jane is non-verbal and has not had any exposure to group settings other than recently starting with a speech therapist. When she arrived at playgroup Jane ran outdoors and gravitated in the bushes amongst the trees. Jane’s mum could not redirect her with any activities. There was no eye contact or social interaction with mum.

When we transitioned to the indoor space, Jane had meltdowns and was clearly overwhelmed and screamed and dropped to the floor and the family are not sure of her triggers.

When we discussed the events, we discovered that the hand dryer was distressing for Jane and the acoustics in the room when she screamed multiplied.

Another mother approached mum to reassure her that her child also behaved similarly when she started playgroup and was sensitive to particular noises and mum discovered that Jane was may be sensitive to particular noises. As a group we discussed behaviour and the various sensory needs of different children in the group. As a group we decided we would not use the hand dryer in the room. Different strategies were also discussed including fiddle toys and ear muffs and also avoiding areas where acoustics were overwhelming for children like particular shops with loud noises.

The next week mum came to playgroup the facilitator strategically placed our singing time near Jane when she was in the bushes. The facilitator explored songs that Jane liked. Jane turned and looked at the facilitator and gave eye contact and ran around our area.

The next week it was raining. However, despite Jane being distressed at inside time, mum came to group anyway and felt comfortable that Jane’s meltdown would not upset the other parents. There were no meltdowns in the bathroom area or indoor area that week which was so positive as it was raining outside. Mum provided some wonderful feedback about how she valued the playgroup so much with learning strategies to support Jane in the group and help her calm and participate in the playgroup setting and valued the facilitator and other families input and strategies which has enabled her to better understand her daughter’s behaviour and provide support to her. Mum felt really comfortable to be in a supportive environment with other parents who understood as they shared similar challenges. Mum reported she did not need the support of her husband coming each week as she felt really supported in the group.

Mum has displayed great courage and trust in attending the group, as she had never really ventured outside of the home unless necessary. Jane has responded well in exploring the outdoor activities and mum has observed Jane engaging in social contact with another child for the first time.





MyTime

MyTime is a national facilitated peer support program for parents and caregivers of children (aged 0-16) with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical condition. It is funded by the Australian Government and coordinated nationally by the Parenting Research Centre.

MyTime groups receive funding to meet for 64 hours a year with a facilitator in a community setting, allowing parents and caregivers to come together to socialise and find out about local community support and research based parenting information while their children are supervised by play helpers.

This year Playgroup Victoria delivered 29 MyTime groups across Victoria. Each group has attendance of between 3 and 10 parents or carers. 15 of the 29 groups are sub contracted to other agencies.

A number of professional development opportunities have been provided to MyTime staff this year including managing groups, NDIS, Keeping Children Safe and the Playgroup Victoria conference.



Case Study: MyTime North Melbourne

The North Melbourne MyTime group has welcomed a number of new parents to the group that have been referred by the Early Intervention workers at Uncle Bob's Child Development Centre where the group is held.

This group has a mix of parents who have been attending MyTime for many years, as well as some new parents who have recently had their child diagnosed with a disability. This dynamic has been an excellent source of information sharing and those who have been attending for many years have provided valuable support to those parents who are new to this service system.

One mother has started attending the group at the recommendation of her Early Intervention worker. This mother recently moved to Melbourne from China with her parents. She has one son who has recently been diagnosed with Autism. The child's behaviour has been extremely challenging for this mother and up until recently had never heard about Autism. Her relationship with the child's father broke down due to him not managing his son's behaviour. Her parents speak no English and they have all believed that this child is just extremely "naughty" and have used punitive discipline methods to try to manage him.

When the diagnosis of Autism was given, it gave the mother a sense of relief that there was a reason that her child behaved the way he did, but she now faces the challenges of not only trying to educate her parents on Autism, but also trying to get services and support to assist her. She also needs to develop strategies to manage her child at home and in the community. They currently live in a high rise apartment in the city and this child has been known to abscond. There are minimal strategies in place to discourage this child to abscond and there are a number of significant risks including the windows having no locks on them and the child having access to the windows.

The MyTime group has been a fantastic support for this mother, to listen to other people's stories and to receive useful practical support and ideas to help her manage at home. She has a key worker allocated to her son who is supporting her to ensure the child's safety and that he receives the early intervention he requires.

It is still surprising that families that have children with disabilities have very limited knowledge about what

MyTime

services and supports are available to them. Especially for those vulnerable families that require extra support to receive the services they require. MyTime is such a valuable program to enable families to receive information and support in a non-threatening and understanding way.

Case Study: MyTime Roxburgh Park

The Roxburgh Park MyTime group is a thriving group with up to 10 adults and 15 children attending the session. This group has a real mix of people from various CALD backgrounds. The group decided that they would like to do some fundraising as a group to fund an end of term activity. The facilitator supported the group to explore fundraising options, but the group took ownership of the fundraising and completed a pastry fundraiser. The group raised enough funds to go bowling as a group and they all had a great time.



Case Study: MyTime Wodonga

The Wodonga MyTime group decided to run a Biggest Morning Tea to raise funds for cancer research. The morning tea occurred during a MyTime session and the group invited their friends and colleagues to attend to raise money. The group made a bunting that was on display to help decorate the room. Maria (facilitator) stated that the group set up the room with the bunting, set the table with fine china, flowers and delicious treats. Tea and coffee was also served – a lovely morning.

Supporting Playgroups

We provide a range of support to Playgroups across Victoria.

In 2015 the Victorian Government provided funding to support the establishment of new playgroups and new sessions in existing Playgroups through the Great Start Community Playgroup program. The program enabled us to provide some mentoring support as well as a voucher to enable Playgroups to purchase toys and equipment for their playgroups.

In total 65 Playgroups received support in Metropolitan, Region and Rural Victoria. The following Case studies highlights the way in which we were able to support these new Playgroups.

15,274
Family Members

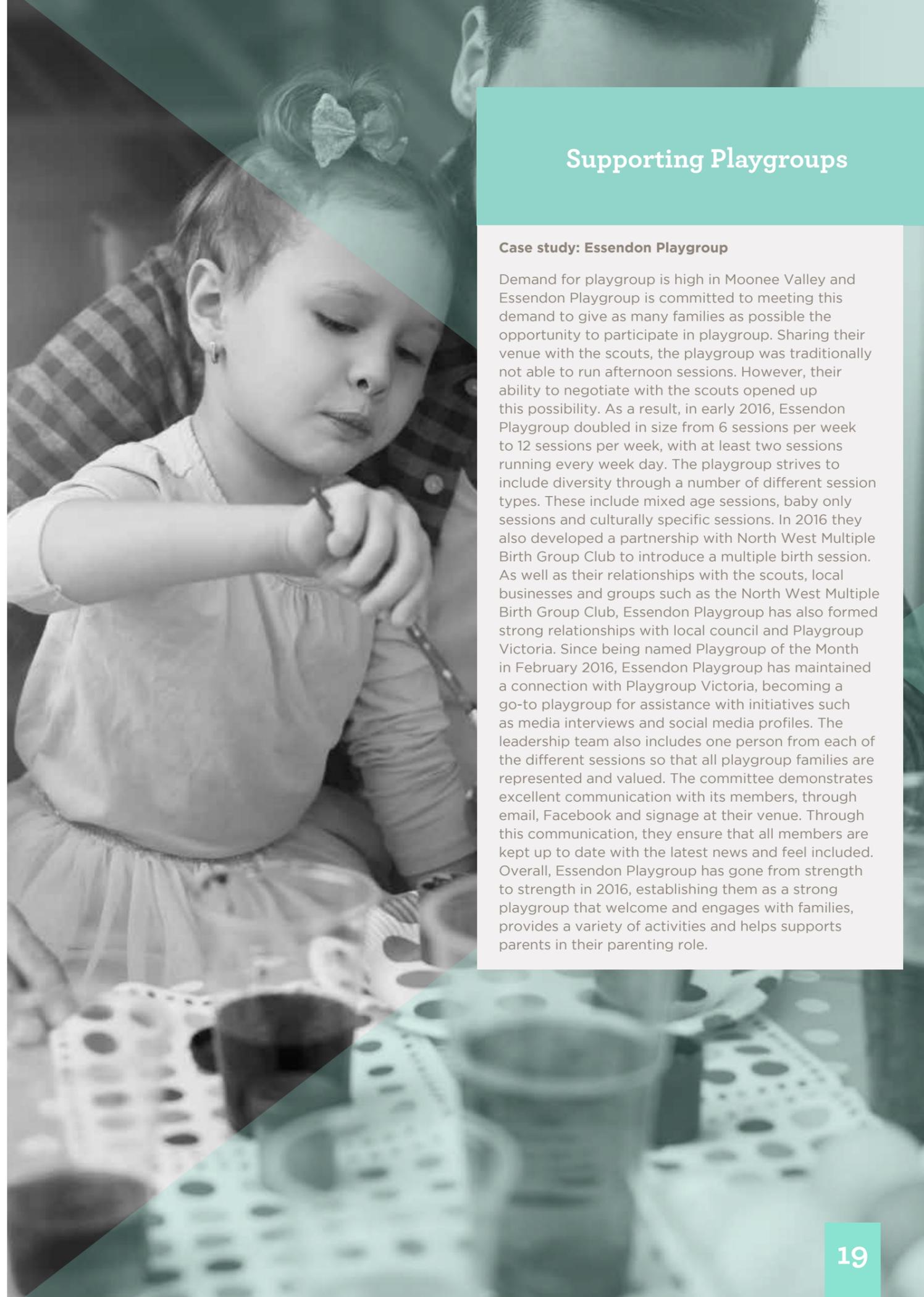
Case study: Skipton Playgroup

Skipton Playgroup has gone to great lengths to maximise their playgroup potential as a rural community playgroup. The playgroup has been proactive in its efforts to engage the 10 families currently attending. Previously, their sessions were roster based, where parents would take turns in implementing activities. Skipton Playgroup was strategic in their decision to alter this structure at the beginning of this year by recognising it wasn't producing effective results in enthusiasm and participation. The playgroup has now integrated numerous activities that promote education and sensory learning on a weekly basis. These include sports days, sensory sessions, bush exploration and science-based activities that facilitate interactive learning for toddlers. Skipton is dedicated to creating meaningful relationships within the community. The playgroup has recently reached out to Skipton Primary School, which has created the opportunity for Skipton to hold a playgroup session at the school. The objective is for the parents to start fostering educational relationships early on and to become familiar with the school.

The playgroup also has a regular column in the Skipton Community News (SCN) Newsletter that allows them to interact with the community as a whole and to provide updates on their latest news. For a small rural playgroup, Skipton have certainly capitalised on the momentum of their pro-activity. In August, Skipton received a community grant from the Corangamite Shire to build an interactive children's garden project. It will include the installation of new shade sails, outdoor seating and custom made planter boxes at toddler height to provide an interactive gardening experience for the children. Corangamite Shire's "Tuning into Kids" program is also held at Skipton Playgroup's play centre, which Skipton actively advertises and facilitates. Skipton has made a notable effort in improving their playgroup in the physical environment, developmental activities and community participation. They encapsulate the spirit of the rural community playgroup.

Case study: Essendon Playgroup

Demand for playgroup is high in Moonee Valley and Essendon Playgroup is committed to meeting this demand to give as many families as possible the opportunity to participate in playgroup. Sharing their venue with the scouts, the playgroup was traditionally not able to run afternoon sessions. However, their ability to negotiate with the scouts opened up this possibility. As a result, in early 2016, Essendon Playgroup doubled in size from 6 sessions per week to 12 sessions per week, with at least two sessions running every week day. The playgroup strives to include diversity through a number of different session types. These include mixed age sessions, baby only sessions and culturally specific sessions. In 2016 they also developed a partnership with North West Multiple Birth Group Club to introduce a multiple birth session. As well as their relationships with the scouts, local businesses and groups such as the North West Multiple Birth Group Club, Essendon Playgroup has also formed strong relationships with local council and Playgroup Victoria. Since being named Playgroup of the Month in February 2016, Essendon Playgroup has maintained a connection with Playgroup Victoria, becoming a go-to playgroup for assistance with initiatives such as media interviews and social media profiles. The leadership team also includes one person from each of the different sessions so that all playgroup families are represented and valued. The committee demonstrates excellent communication with its members, through email, Facebook and signage at their venue. Through this communication, they ensure that all members are kept up to date with the latest news and feel included. Overall, Essendon Playgroup has gone from strength to strength in 2016, establishing them as a strong playgroup that welcome and engages with families, provides a variety of activities and helps supports parents in their parenting role.





80%
 Playgroup Victoria members found the services they accessed were useful

91%
 Playgroup Victoria members believe that they "feel part of my community"

92%
 Playgroup Victoria members found benefit from attending playgroup

96%
 Playgroup parents believe that attending playgroup has assisted in their child's development

99%
 Playgroup Victoria members believe that "I have an active role to play in my children's learning"

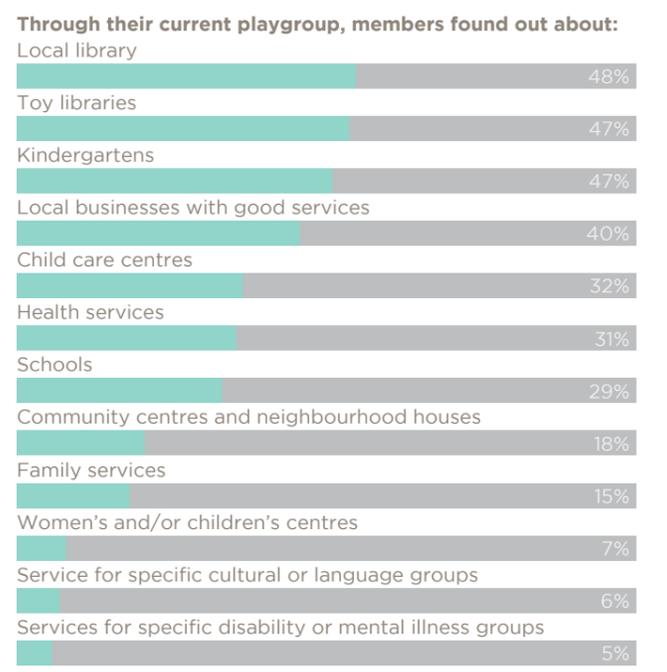
"I benefit from playgroup as it gives me the opportunity to discuss everyday parenting issues with other likeminded parents. We support one another by offering advice and a friendly ear to one another."

What our members said

"I Have made many friends for myself and my children at playgroup. Great social and emotional connections with the mums that attend. Love the community aspect and meeting many different people."



"My grandsons enjoy the interaction with the other children as I enjoy interacting with the other grandmothers. Sharing of information and activities is also beneficial.."



Celebrating Community Playgroups

Winners of the 2015 Playgroup Awards were announced at a gala event in November 2015. The nominations spread across nine categories and highlighted the diversity of playgroups across Victoria.

The former Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, the Hon Jenny Mikakos MP selected St Kieran's Playgroup from Moe for her Ministers Award for excellence and innovation in playgroup.

The overall Playgroup of the Year was Marie Chandler Playgroup.

2015 also saw the introduction of the Playgroup Champion Award. The recipient of this award was selected by Playgroup Victoria to celebrate someone who champions playgroups in their work. The inaugural winner was Donna Ludvigsen.

The winners of the 2015 Playgroup Awards are as follows:

Supported Playgroup Facilitator of the Year:
Libbie McBain, Zoe Support Playgroup

Supported Playgroup Coordinator of the Year:
Jodie Soutter, City of Casey.

Playgroup Agency of the Year:
Meadows P.S Early Learning Centre

Community Playgroup Leader of the Year:
Julianne Beck, Marie Chandler Playgroup

Supported Playgroup of the Year:
Scribbles Supported Playgroup

Community Playgroup of the Year (1-4 sessions-
Metro):
Whittlesea Playgroup

Community Playgroup of the Year (1-4 sessions-
Regional/Rural):
Nar Nar Goon & District Playgroup

Community Playgroup of the Year (5+ sessions):
Marie Chandler Playgroup

Playgroup of the Month

Each month the Playgroup of the Month award was presented to a playgroup identified by staff for doing good things in their community. Playgroup Victoria was proud to present each recipient playgroup with a basket of resources for their playgroup and a certificate to mark their achievement.

Winners of Playgroup of the Month were:

July 2015: Boisdale Community Playgroup

August 2015: Warracknabeal Playgroup

September 2015: Gumnuts Playgroup

October 2015: MEC Playgroup

November 2015: CATS Playgroup

February 2016: Essendon Playgroup

March 2016: TAPS Playgroup

April 2016: MyTime Seaford Gold

May 2016: Skipton Playgroup

June 2016: Dimboola Playgroup



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