



2017 Annual Report



CHAIR AND CEO REPORT



Felicity Dunn
Chairperson
Board of Governance



Danny Schwarz
CEO

Creating an environment for children where they can develop all the skills and attributes of a person who can learn, love and live a life to its fullest is not straight forward.

As a society we create structures that are designed to assist us to navigate the breadth of options and opportunities in life, from birth and throughout life. Playgroup can be the place where these foundations are laid.

This is what we know about the development of children aged 0-5:

- children’s wellbeing, good nutrition, health, and exercise are critical to brain development and learning
- children are born ready to learn, and the best learning happens in nurturing relationships
- children learn language by listening to it and using it and
- children learn through being engaged and doing, watching and copying²

So what better place than Playgroup to add to the extraordinary opportunity we have with children when they are young? Playgroups are fantastic places for babies and children to learn. They get to watch and copy other children, engage in age/development appropriate play-based activities.

Parents learn too – exchanging tips on food, sleep and forming friendships. The Telethon Kids Institute research showed that, even after adjusting for socio-economic and demographic differences, children who attend playgroup have significantly better child development when they start school.

Those who do not attend playgroup are 1.78 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census at school commencement.

1. ABS 2013a

2. Pam Winter, Ph.D., Early Childhood Services, Department of Education and Children’s Services, South Australia, March 2010

Playgroup Victoria is proud to have supported over 2,000 Playgroups and more the 10,000 families to engage and make a difference in the lives of future generations.

In the last 12 months we have achieved a lot together including:

- Continued developing our significant partnership with the Australian Catholic University as the Industry Partner in an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant - A best practice framework for playgroups-in-schools. <http://bit.ly/2l5MoSe>
- Development of an Innovative Pilot Program with Drummond Street Services which will
 - PROMOTE women's independence & decision-making (in families, communities and workplaces)
 - CHALLENGE gender stereotypes particularly around stereotypical roles of girls and boys and mothers and fathers
 - STRENGTHEN attitudes around positive, equal and respectful relationships.
- Funding from the State Government as part of their 81.1 Million dollar investment in early childhood, to work with Maternal and Child Health nurses to encourage new parents to set up or join playgroups.
- Recognition of more than 80 nominations from

Playgroups and Playgroup Leaders demonstrating excellence at The Playgroup Victoria Awards

- Completed our Ian Potter funded Transition Project which worked to:
 - Establish three playgroups for transition to self-managed community playgroups with cooperation and support from local government areas concerned and
 - Build competencies of parents/carers to manage the provision of evidence based play activities to provide early learning for their children and
- Together with the Board and staff developed our Strategic Goals of
 - Enabling Inclusive Access to Playgroup
 - Investment in Playgroup (Revenue Diversification)
 - Recognition of Playgroup

All of this was only possible as a result of efforts of our dedicated Staff, Volunteers and Board of Governance Members to whom we say thank you and congratulations on a fantastic and importantly fun year.

PROGRAMS

PLAY CONNECT

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.

As the diagnostic tool improves, the number of people who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) continues to rise in Australia. Autism, once considered rare, is now 31% of NDIS participants, the largest disability group in the scheme according to recent the NDIS Quarterly Report issued in June 2015.

In 2012, A4 (Autism, Aspergers Advocacy Australia) observed that at least 1 in 63 Australian school children has a formal autism diagnosis and was registered to receive Carer Allowance (child).

A4 Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia; <http://a4.org.au/prevalence2015>

Such rates equate to 1174 children born in Victoria each year who will receive an ASD diagnosis prior to school entry; 5873 children yet to begin school, at any one time. Whilst these children and their families would likely benefit from the social support, engagement and other opportunities that playgroup affords, there are current only 11 ASD specific playgroups in Victoria, and other playgroups do not appear to be equipped to engage and support these children.

Families that attend ASD specific services (playgroups), report that beyond that environment there is a lack of information about linkages to and referrals to ASD supports. Furthermore, such families have not felt comfortable accessing mainstream playgroups with a sense that other families cannot relate to their circumstances and thus not support them, and believe they will be judged and not accepted. This has been the case for some families with children with ASD who have tried accessing mainstream playgroups.

Families of a child with ASD need support, as stated in the recent Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into services for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder:

The Committee heard that parents of children with ASD had higher rates of mental illness, stress, anxiety, depression, relationship breakdowns and social isolation. Dr Sandra Radovini, the Director of Mindful told the Committee at a public hearing in Melbourne that families needed support throughout the lifespan: Parents of children with ASD have some of the highest mental health difficulties. The stress of being a parent of a child with autism is quite enormous, even when compared to children with a range of other disabilities – there has



been quite a bit of research in this area — so we strongly believe that families need to be supported, again throughout the life span.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

The Victorian Government through the updated State Autism Plan ensure that families living with ASD are provided proper supports, including ongoing, viable and affordable respite care available across the state...

Children are now being 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.

A survey conducted in June 2017 showed results of 95.5% satisfaction with the service.

Case Study:

Geelong PlayConnect has a family with a 3 year-old girl with ASD and epilepsy who has been attending for the past year. When they first started attending the 3-year-old was not talking or making contact with other children, and was unable to be more than a meter away from her mother without a tantrum. A year on and the little girl is saying single words and will go outside without her mother, but more importantly she is interacting with the other children and the parents. Last week she led every adult to the treehouse, one by one and directed us to climb the ladder. She then very slowly climbed the ladder herself, which is the first time she has ever climbed something. She also enjoys playing with another little boy who will run in circles around her, while she follows his movements and laughs. As a group, we have been able to celebrate many of the milestones that this little girl has reached. We all cheered when she climbed the ladder. Her mother has remarked to me, that it is good to have a space where they can celebrate these milestones, which to parents of neurotypical children may seem mundane or standard.

MY TIME

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 28 MyTime groups across Victoria. Each group has attendance of between 3 and 10 parents or carers. 13 of the 28 groups are sub contracted to other agencies.

Professional development opportunities have been provided to MyTime staff this year including, Working with Families and the Playgroup Victoria conference.





PROJECTS

ARC LINKAGE GRANT

In 2012 Playgroup Victoria commenced a Connecting Schools and Communities Through Supported Playgroups Pilot Project. It was a unique partnership including the Catholic Education Office (CEO Ballarat), Ballarat Best Start, Australian Catholic University (ACU) the then DEECD and 5 regional government and Catholic primary schools.

Evaluated by ACU the project highlighted the important role that playgroups play in improving:

- children's social, emotional development and school readiness;
- social connections for families;
- positive parental perception of their local school;
- teacher effectiveness and enhanced skills to engage with vulnerable families.

With continued support the project is now being funded by schools and the CEO.

During 2016 Playgroup Victoria worked with ACU in the development of an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant. These applications are considered Category One Nationally Competitive Grants - they are highly prestigious in the University context - awarded only to projects and researchers at the highest level nationally and to those considered to also have international impact. The application was submitted in December by ACU with Playgroup Victoria as the Industry Partner. The basis for the application was the Connecting Schools project and Evaluation.

In the round of ARCLP applications in which we competed there were 225 submissions. Only 89 grants were successfully awarded (29% success rate). The ACU and PV ARCLP application was one of these 89 grants. Of these 89 grants ONLY THREE were awarded in the field of Education nationally. Our shared application was the sole successful application in the field of early childhood education. Typically, such applications are submitted two to three times prior to being successfully awarded. Our application was awarded on the first submission. This is a truly exceptional achievement from our partnership.

The partnership lead by ACU includes; Oxford, Deakin and Monash Universities. Associate Professor Maria Evangelou, from Oxford is internationally renowned for her research on the evaluation of Early Childhood interventions.

Read more at <https://lsia.acu.edu.au/projects/a-best-practice-framework-for-playgroups-in-schools/>



IAN POTTER TRANSITION PLAYGROUPS PROJECT

The Ian Potter Foundation funded Transition Playgroups Project (2015-2017) has been delivered and reported on by Playgroup Victoria. Its goal was to test a model of transition for facilitated playgroups to become community playgroups through mentoring and support. The three playgroups involved in the project were located in Tarneit, Avondale Heights and Hillside in the inner and outer West of Melbourne. The project was completed in June 2017 and the resulting evaluation report is being distributed

through the MAV and professional networks. In addition to the resulting project report, tailored 'how to' guides for playgroups and professionals have also been made available. The project contributes to the body of knowledge from a other transition projects and investigations to increase access to and participation in playgroups. A driver for the project is also to provide families with the opportunity to create their own playgroups and develop the skills to make these groups sustainable.

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY PLAYGROUPS

THE PLAYGROUP AWARDS

The Playgroup Awards evening was held on Thursday 10 November 2016 at Melbourne Convention Centre.

With over 70 nominations received, our judging panel had the enormous task of selecting four finalists and a winner for each category.

The judging panel consisted of:

Libby Langford
Jeannette Rowe
Fiona Norman
Dr. Suzy Edwards

Congratulations to our winners in 2016:

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

Active Dads Playgroup

Community Playgroup of the Year (1-4 sessions)- Regional/ Rural

St. Kieran's Playgroup Moe

Community Playgroup of the Year (5+ sessions)

The Basin Playgroup

Supported Playgroup of the Year

Zoe Support Australia and Whizz Kids Supported Playgroup

Community Playgroup Leader of the Year

Elizabeth Kovco- Boisdale Community Playgroup

Supported Playgroup Facilitator/Coordinator of the Year

Shantelle Grant- Sunbury/Romsey PlayConnect

Playgroup Agency of the Year

Australian Vietnamese Women's Association

Playgroup Champion

Maureen Leahy

Minister's Award for Excellence and Innovation at Playgroup

Mirboo North Playgroup

Playgroup of the Year

St Kieran's Playgroup Moe



PLAYGROUP OF THE MONTH

Each month during the playgroup year, Playgroup Victoria recognises a playgroup for their outstanding work and contribution to the local community.

Congratulations to our Playgroup of the Month winners for the 2016-2017 financial year:

Read more about our recent Playgroup of the Month winners on the Playgroup Victoria blog: playgroupblog.org.au

July 2016: Tarneit Gardens Playgroup

August 2016: Brighton PlayConnect

September 2016: Toongabbie Playgroup

October 2016: Playtime in the North

November 2016: Eureka Playgroup

March 2017: Grasshoppers Playgroup

April 2017: Selandra Playgroup

May 2017: Buddha Hands Playgroup

June 2017: Avondale Heights Grandparents Playgroup

GENERATIONAL GIFTS

If there is any anecdote to aging, it may be returning to a source of youth; readjusting our purpose in the turning chapters of life. For many grandparents, caring for their grandchildren is a joy that continues to give them meaning. Young children are good at reminding us of innocence and in many ways, simplicity. Children have the knack of erasing the complexities that swarm the grownup world. They bring us back to the present, connecting.

In the modern world, grandparents are adopting the primary carer's role as traditional parental duties are modified to suit contemporary living. Often families require greater incomes, careers are of importance and naturally, the moulding of family life has been reshaped through the course of time.

Elizabeth Vescio is part of a very popular grandparent's playgroup in Avondale Heights. It is so well loved that there has been a waiting list for some time. She said that she loves every minute she now gets to spend with her grandchildren.

"The love and hugs I get in return are priceless."

Elizabeth was still working part time when her children had children of their own and in the end, she chose to spend more time with them than time spent in the working world. Young children are adept at gently letting the grand worries of life drift downstream and for Elizabeth, and many like her, her grandchildren have transformed her daily existence. Her grandchildren have encouraged her to slow down and smell the roses.

"My grandchildren have taught me patience, they have given me the opportunity to do with them things that I was unable to do with my own children."

As Elizabeth soon found out, playgroup gave her an added dimension of learning and drive, all the while exercising her mind.

"After working for so many years, becoming a playgroup leader has enabled me to still keep my mind active, researching and organising activities, fundraisers and liaising with both MVCC and Playgroup Victoria to make sure we provide a safe and happy enjoyable environment for all our members."

At first a mentor, Elizabeth soon jumped ahead, with ideas and enthusiasm to contribute in bucket loads. As time has trundled by, the playgroup has become a cornerstone of the local community, proving an enriching source of companionship and meaning for many grandparents in the area, and in surrounding suburbs.

"From my experience at playgroup, all the grandparents that care for their grandchildren, whether it be for a couple of hours, a few days or all week, they do it for the love of their grandchildren and it is their choice, while at times it can be tiring they give you the energy to keep going."

"Most say their children are grateful for what they do and make themselves flexible to take days off if they can't for whatever reason be available to look after the grandchildren for any reason, whether it is due to illness or for a vacation. I know my children do."

Avondale Heights has made an impact. It continues to grow.



“This Playgroup has been extremely successful and our numbers grew quickly, we have both grandmothers and grandfathers who attend as some grandfathers are caring for the children because the wife is still working.”

After so many years, playgroup is still an important part of communities, it is part of the fabric that forms a patchwork of people and cultures, of varying ages, backgrounds and ambitions.

“I believe community playgroups are important as they provide a safe and enjoyable environment giving the children a place to socialise, learn and play together, preparing them for kinder and school and at the same time it gives their carers somewhere to spend a couple of hours a week sharing their experiences and supporting each other at times when they could otherwise become isolated from the community.”

While it is helping her grandchildren, it has also given Elizabeth opportunities to meet other grandparents doing the same as she is. The grandparents have become friends, they share stories and support one another.

Our Playgroup of the Month demonstrates that generational connections are profoundly valuable. It has shown that in the course of life, there is much that can be shared between the ages. Grandparents have great insight, wisdom, experience and care to give, and grandchildren bring so much unrestrained love, reliance, curiosity, learning and affection.

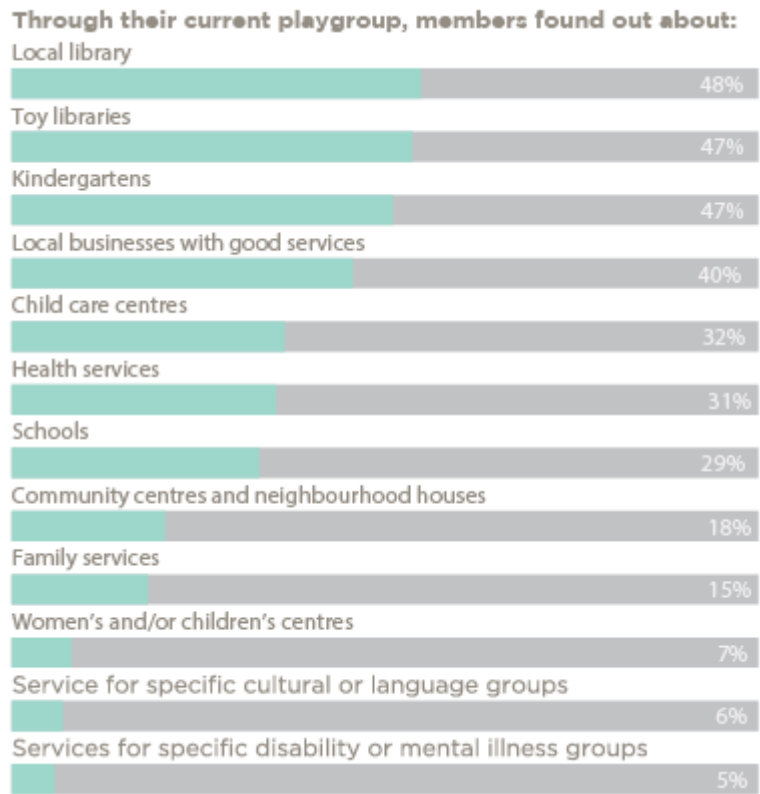
As the years drift by, people fondly remember old memories and wonder why they stopped doing certain things that they once loved. Grandchildren can take their grandparents by the hand and together they embrace the freedom and imagination of play once more.

Article by Sinead Halliday

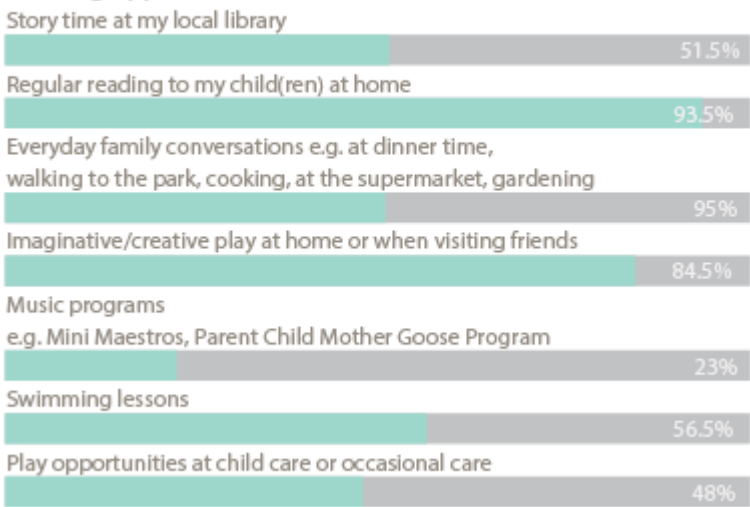
WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAID



“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.”



Our Members partake in the following early learning opportunities:



“Playgroup makes me feel sane. When I find challenging moments with the kids, I talk to the playgroup mums and feel alot better. If we miss due to illness, I feel that we’ve missed out on something.

Our kids LOVE the craft, we wouldn’t do as much at home if we didn’t go to playgroup. It’s a great outlet for both me and the kids.”



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 benefit from attending playgroup

96%

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

RISK AND AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Summary

For the financial year 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, a deficit of (\$209,600) was recorded, compared to a deficit of (\$86,323) for the previous year. This deficit has resulted from a reduction in revenue of \$381,068 mainly as a result of the completion the State Government funded Rural Project (\$400,000). This was offset by a reduction in operating expenses of \$257,791. Playgroup Victoria remains a viable operating entity with \$377,348 held in cash and cash equivalents.

The Association is dependent on continued funding from government grants. Approximately 72% of the Association's revenue is sourced from Federal and State government grants. There was a slight increase in Membership Contributions as well as a significant increase in Philanthropic Grants compared to the prior year.

This year's operating expenses included an accrual of (\$127,066) for unpaid wages and superannuation for the period between 2012 and 2017 where an audit revealed that existing and former staff had not been paid at their correct award rate. This back-payment was due to be paid in the first quarter of the 2017/18 financial year. Also included in operating expenses was an impairment to the CRM system of (\$39,938) based on its planned replacement in the next 12 months.

The equity position of the organisation at year end was \$411,514 compared to \$621,114 at the end of the prior year (a decrease of \$209,600 due to the net deficit).

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 2017 and that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Playgroup Victoria Incorporated can continue pay its debts as and when they fall due.

For full set of the financial Statements please contact Playgroup Victoria on 1800 171 882 or pgvic@playgroup.org.au.

Annette Domanti
Chair, Risk & Audit Committee

**STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER
COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2017**

	Note	2017	2016
		\$	\$
Income			
Conference fees		336	1,636
Contributions members		369,967	350,473
DGR Revenue		207	382
Fee and charge - Roster Playgroup		11,586	1,552
Fee and charges - Play Day		6,136	2,259
Fees and charges		1,150	84,038
Grants - Philanthropic		80,337	14,000
Grants - Commonwealth operating		821,103	12,135
Grants - Local operating - MVCC		15,000	30,000
Grants - My Time		433,504	428,339
Grants - Playgroup Australia		320,638	1,076,827
Grants - Ross Trust		4,998	25,000
Grants - State DEECD - Program & advocacy		160,050	240,783
Grants - State DEECD - Operating		-	400,000
Grants - State DEECD - Great Start		50,000	-
Interest		20,180	23,707
Other income		52,693	58,932
Profit / loss on sale of assets		6,368	-
Sales - Registration		23,040	8,480
Sales - Advertising		10,193	5,573
Sales - Products		1,729	2,300
Wage subsidies received		4,036	7,903
Total Income		2,393,251	2,774,319
Expenditure			
Depreciation and amortisation		68,945	68,719
Employment expenses		1,708,272	1,552,817
Insurance		62,422	65,423
Meeting expenses		3,586	4,193
Operating expenses		681,175	1,068,492
Travel and accommodation		17,177	72,129
Vehicle expenses		21,291	28,869
Impairment expense	7	39,983	-
Total expenditure	4	2,602,851	2,860,642
Surplus (deficit) for the period		(209,600)	(86,323)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period		(209,600)	(86,323)

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 30 JUNE 2017**

	Note	2017	2016
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	2	377,348	383,634
Financial assets	5	600,000	616,139
Trade & other receivables		111,338	11,048
Other current assets	6	44,995	42,134
Total Current Assets		1,133,681	1,052,955
Non Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	7	44,567	89,853
Intangible assets	7	94,776	166,351
Total Non Current Assets		139,343	256,204
Total Assets		1,273,024	1,309,159
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	356,384	162,820
Grants and income in advance	9	342,213	328,409
Short term provisions	8	138,994	168,886
Total Current Liabilities		837,591	660,115
Non Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	9	10,193	5,573
Trade and other payables	9	9,458	16,134
Long term provisions	8	14,461	11,796
Total Non Current Liabilities		23,919	27,930
Total Liabilities		861,510	688,045
Net Assets		411,514	621,114
Equity			
Reserves		70,915	92,074
Retained earnings		340,599	529,040
Vehicle expenses		21,291	28,869
Total Equity		411,514	621,114

