



Celebrating 37 years

2011 Playgroup Victoria Year of Enviroplay!



Annual Report

May 2011

Vision

Fun, learning and friendship at playgroup for all Victorian families

Mission

To promote, resource and encourage vital, resilient and diverse playgroups that meet family and community needs

Values

Play based learning
Parents as first educators
Volunteers and caregivers
Accessibility and inclusion
Empowering others
Community capacity building
Principled governance
Clear communication

Strategic objectives

Be a peak body for Victorian playgroups
Be relevant and responsive to a growing membership
Raise the profile of Playgroup Victoria
Be an accountable, viable organisation

History

During the 1960s and 1970s, hundreds of playgroups were scattered throughout Melbourne and country Victoria and there emerged a need to connect these groups with people wanting to start and join playgroups. To do this, a group of hardworking volunteers and playgroups set up a base in the Brunswick offices of Community Child Care, and interested people were invited to call to discuss points of interest or problems each Monday morning. The response was so great that a steering committee drove the eventual establishment of the Victorian Playgroup Association in 1974.

The playgroup movement grew in Australia and by 1975 every state and territory had set up a playgroup association. The Playgroup Council of Australia was formed in Canberra in 1984. This federation of associations is now known as Playgroup Australia.



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PATRON'S MESSAGE

Congratulations to Playgroup Victoria on another very successful year. This organisation continues to impress me for the support it provides to the children, parents and communities of Victoria, the quality of its operations, its creativity, and its forward thinking.

Time and again we are reminded of the importance of early childhood and the crucial role parents play in their children's development and wellbeing. Research shows us that in the first four years of life a child's brain development is at its greatest and lays the foundation for the rest of the child's life. We also know that parental love, support and encouragement are vital for the child. So as a community we need to be strongly supporting families and investing in their future.

It's wonderful to see how Playgroup Victoria and playgroups are right there, providing opportunities for children's development through play, supporting parents to develop close relationships with their children, and building communities as parents strengthen their networks. What bedrocks of support Playgroup Victoria and playgroups are in our society.



In addition to underpinning community playgroups and all the benefits that these bring, Playgroup Victoria has been funded to deliver a range of supported playgroups, where trained facilitators run playgroups for the more vulnerable children and families. The recent growth of these is, I think, strong evidence of the great value of playgroups and of the high standing of Playgroup Victoria in this field. Take a bow Playgroup Victoria.

Playgroup Victoria has also impressed me with its professional approach to everything it does. Rarely have I seen such attention to getting policies and planning right, to being accountable, and to serving its members. Well done to all the Board and staff.

I've mentioned Playgroup Victoria's creativity and as an example I'll mention the mobile playgroup established after the 2009 Victorian bushfires to reach out to the devastated families left without community facilities. Playgroup Victoria won the Minister's prize in the Early Years Awards for this initiative.

Demonstrating creativity and flexibility like this says a lot about how capable an organisation is and serves it well as it faces the future.

Indeed, Playgroup Victoria faces many challenges in the future as our community changes. Opportunities will open up with paid parental leave as many more parents will be at home with their young babies and will appreciate the support of a local playgroup. There are opportunities to diversify the types of playgroups to include for example, playgroups at shopping centres, and more mobile playgroups in response to natural disasters. Playgroup Victoria has shown itself capable of seizing these opportunities to further its support for children and families.

Finally, I'd like to warmly congratulate Kaye Plowman, our retiring CEO, who has guided and strengthened Playgroup Victoria over many years. Her work and commitment has been outstanding and we all owe her a great debt of gratitude. I wish her all the best in her retirement and anything she chooses to do in the future.



Sherryl Garbutt



CONTENTS

<i>Patron's message</i>	1
<i>From the Chairperson</i>	4
<i>From the Chief Executive Officer</i>	6
<i>2010 Highlights</i>	8
<i>Community Playgroups</i>	8
<i>Member highlights</i>	8
<i>Potential members</i>	8
<i>Certificate of Merit awards</i>	8
<i>Honorary Life Members</i>	8
<i>Professional Membership</i>	9
<i>Register of all Playgroups in Victoria</i>	9
<i>Early intervention programs</i>	9
<i>Koorie Playgroup Enhancement program (KPEP)</i>	9
<i>Supported Playgroups and Parent Groups Initiative (SPPI)</i>	10
<i>MyTime</i>	10
<i>Intensive Support Playgroup program in the City of Greater Dandenong</i>	11
<i>PlayConnect</i>	12
<i>National Supported Playgroups</i>	12
<i>SPPI Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR) Network</i>	13
<i>Intergenerational project</i>	13
<i>ConnectDads projects</i>	13
<i>Bushfire project</i>	13
<i>Publications and online communications</i>	14
<i>Year of Healthy Choices calendar</i>	14
<i>Totline</i>	14
<i>Starting playgroups in aged care facilities</i>	14
<i>Starting playgroups for fathers</i>	14
<i>Website</i>	14
<i>New A to Z playsheets</i>	14
<i>e-newsletters</i>	14
<i>Playgroup National Survey</i>	14
<i>Playgroup training workshops</i>	15
<i>Events</i>	16
<i>World's Biggest Playgroup</i>	16
<i>Melbourne Aquarium Playgroup Day</i>	16
<i>Steve Biddulph parenting talks</i>	16
<i>Fun 4 Kids Festival, Warrnambool</i>	16
<i>Pregnancy, Babies and Children's Expo</i>	16
<i>Romp & Stomp Fun Day for Children</i>	16
<i>Raffle</i>	16
<i>Expos and festivals</i>	16
<i>Forums</i>	16
<i>Partnerships</i>	17
<i>Sponsors and stakeholders</i>	17
<i>Treasurer's report</i>	18
<i>Financial statements</i>	19
<i>Staff as at end of 2010</i>	20

FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

2010 was a year of achievement for everyone involved in playgroups and Playgroup Victoria.

Our volunteers

I would like to acknowledge the silent achievement of Playgroup Victoria's volunteer committees, who work overtime coordinating playgroups across the state. I also acknowledge their partners and families, who generously support these volunteers' passion for community participation, play and the need for playgroups. We have 3,181 playgroup sessions and the resultant hours of volunteer time are largely immeasurable but definitely invaluable, so thank you.

Our state and national colleagues

Our work at a national level continues to be critical. 2010 was the first year a new independent Board governed Playgroup Australia. Good governance at the national level is critical. Playgroup Australia advocates for State and Territory playgroup associations to the federal government. As a result of this advocacy, Playgroup Australia has received funding for programs such as PlayConnect and Supported Playgroup Program. As well as supporting the work of Playgroup Australia this year, we also invested significant time and energy participating in national CEO forums, which are extremely important for sharing knowledge.



Rachel with Minister Morand

Victoria operating in a highly changing external environment. Elections, new government policies such as paid parental leave and early learning frameworks and changing needs of members all need consideration in future planning. In 2010, the Board had a very strong strategic planning focus, aligning the organisation's strategic plan with annual plans. It also focused on developing meaningful key performance indicators that operated consistently through the organisation cascading into staff priorities and performance management.

Overseeing the financial viability and sustainability of Playgroup Victoria is one of the most critical roles for the Board. In 2010, the Board made significant improvements to Playgroup Victoria's financial reporting, improving transparency considerably. The Board as well has been diligently reviewing the organisation's policies and procedures focusing particularly on ensuring human resource policies and procedures are best practice and relevant to Playgroup Victoria's business needs and people.

I thank our Board members. Karen Harvey-Collings (Deputy Chair), Bronwyn Clarke (Secretary) and Rebecca Middleton (Expert Member) have provided critical governance oversight and continuity on the Board, and given significant time to the HR committee. This year we welcomed a new Treasurer, Christine Chew, who has done an excellent job. As 2010 closed, two new Board members were appointed: Kathy Walker - an expert on play who is already opening our minds to new possibilities; and Jo Oostermeyer - current President of Mill Park playgroup charged to ensure we remain grounded and don't lose our grass roots focus. Jame Lewis, our honorary solicitor, has done another sterling job, supporting the organisation with legal advice in a timely, thorough and professional way. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with Jame.

Our staff

I am extremely proud of the Playgroup Victoria staff. They are the backbone of our organisation. They are highly skilled, passionate, always ready for a challenge, and are the platform for our future success and opportunities. One great example of their resilience this year was the challenges of a state government election and ICT change. ICT changes are inherently difficult

Our government

Collaboration and partnerships are an ever-growing focus for Playgroup Victoria. In 2009, the Board, our CEO and senior staff successfully lobbied the state government for an additional \$1 million for community playgroups in the lead up to the election. This was a significant recognition of the value of play, playgroups and state government regard for Playgroup Victoria. Unfortunately, with the change of Government this additional funding was not provided. However it proved the value of our advocacy and relationships with key Ministers and their offices, departmental staff and the importance of remaining constantly up to date with Government policy. With a new government in Victoria, this will be an even higher priority for Playgroup Victoria moving forward.

Our Board

Strong governance is critical for any organisation, but particularly for a growing organisation such as Playgroup

and this has been the case for Playgroup Victoria. I commend our senior staff for staying focussed and finding a solution that will meet Playgroup Victoria's needs. I am confident we will be online in 2011. We also implemented a number of new programs and seem to have created a niche at being highly agile and able to respond to natural disasters, proven by renewal by the state government of our bushfire program.

Our farewells

We farewelled Lee Tregloan (Expert Member) whose contribution to our governance in a short period was superb. We also farewell our patron, Sherryl Garbutt. We have been blessed to have Sherryl as our patron. Her wisdom, insights and commitment have been invaluable to the Board, especially into our strategic planning, governance and government networking. We wish her well in her future endeavours.

Our CEO

Finally, as the year came to a close, our highly respected CEO, Kaye Plowman, announced her intention to retire. It is with great sadness that the Board has accepted Kaye's resignation. On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution Kaye has made to play, playgroups and Playgroup Victoria. Kaye is regarded nationally as an expert on playgroups, and leaves our association in an incredibly strong position. Achievements this year have included the development of a book on play, the supported playgroup conference, and securing further bushfire funding. It has been a great year for Playgroup Victoria thanks to Kaye and her team. Kaye, of course, has come from the grass roots, and demonstrates the passion and value for playgroups that forms the backbone of our organisation. Kaye is a wonderful inspiration and will be greatly missed. We wish Kaye well in her future endeavours.

Our future

This is my first term as the Chairperson. As we head into 2011, I am proud of Playgroup Victoria and confident that its value is enduring. With the departure of Kaye, 2011 marks an era of new beginnings that I am optimistic will see the organisation go from strength to strength. Thank you to everyone who has supported playgroups throughout Victoria in 2010.



Rachel Murphy
Chairperson"

Board members:



Rachel Murphy
Chairperson



Karen Harvey-Collings
Deputy Chairperson



Christine Chew
Treasurer



Jo Oostermeyer
Elected Member



Rebecca Middleton
Expert Member



Bronwyn Clarke
Secretary

Lee Tregloan
Expert Member

Kathy Walker
Expert Member

FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

It is with many varied emotions that I write my last annual report for Playgroup Victoria before I retire. I commenced employment with the association in January 1988 and have been part of the evolution of Playgroup Victoria and playgroups in Victoria for over 23 years. I am grateful for the many opportunities this has afforded me and for the amazing people I have been privileged to meet and work with.

When I commenced, the association was still using typewriters, and publications were produced by cut and paste, which was done with scissors and tape. Playgroups were undervalued and criticised for being exclusively for white middle class mothers.

The landscape has changed. What a different profile playgroups have in 2010. Multicultural community playgroups abound and supported playgroups, intensive support playgroups, locational support playgroups and PlayConnect playgroups allow many families in vulnerable situations to benefit from connecting and participating in a local playgroup.

Community playgroups make up the majority of playgroups and are run by dedicated community minded volunteers who willingly give their time to benefit their communities. As an association, we applaud their volunteer contribution and their dedication.

Leveraging from the playgroup expertise of our staff, and backed by state and federal grants, Playgroup Victoria is able to support these volunteers and well as assist supported playgroups to provide inclusive playgroup experiences to a diverse range of families who otherwise would not be able to access a playgroup.

Playgroup Victoria is grateful for the ongoing financial support from the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Victorian Government Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

Playgroup Australia

Playgroup Australia Ltd is now functioning as a federation of all state and territory playgroup associations with an independent board. Chairperson of Playgroup Australia's Board, Joan Brennan, is a former CEO of Playgroup Victoria. She is supported by a board of expert members from around Australia. Playgroup Australia plays a pivotal role as a peak body advocating and promoting the value of playgroups nationally.

With thanks

I sincerely thank Rachel Murphy, Chairperson of Playgroup Victoria's Board, for her volunteer leadership of Playgroup Victoria this year despite busy work and family responsibilities. Rachel together with each Board member has generously contributed their expertise to grapple with governance issues and the challenges these matters present.

I am grateful for the outstanding contribution of our talented staff that makes Playgroup Victoria the vibrant, innovative association it is today. In particular, I would like to thank the General Manager, Jason Doherty, for the many occasions he has deputised for me this year to ease the CEO role. Thanks also to the managers and coordinators who have each excelled in the management of their programs, and to all staff for their dedication and commitment to the association. The harmony and cooperation between staff is a credit to each staff person and allows Playgroup Victoria to achieve great outcomes for playgroups.

2010 Highlights

- Achievements that are a direct result of staff commitment
- Employment of our first Koorie playgroup worker under the Parent and Community Engagement PACE program funded by DEEWR
- Obtaining funding from the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA) for play therapists to visit areas affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires
- Winning the Quality Improvement Award from Barwon Health for the intergenerational playgroup
- Receiving funding from DEECD to register all Victorian playgroups
- A great Supported Playgroup and Parent Group Initiative conference opened by Victorian Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development Maxine Morand
- High number fathers at sold out Steve Biddulph talks
- Healthy Choices calendar distributed to all member playgroup families

2010 Election year

In Victoria, 2010 was a year for both a state and federal election that gave us the opportunity to lobby the major parties to raise awareness of playgroups. Playgroups have received bipartisan support at both state and national level and responses to our lobbying were very encouraging.

Farewell

As I leave the Playgroup Victoria, which has been an integral part of my life for nearly a quarter of a century, I am confident that I pass on the baton to a new generation who will discover the incredible potential of playgroups for child development, parent involvement and building community connections. I know that to discover and experience the value of playgroups will ignite a passion that will make playgroups sustainable for many years to come.



Kaye Plowman
Executive Officer





2010 HIGHLIGHTS

Community Playgroups

2010 was Playgroup Victoria's Year of Healthy Choices for the 3181 playgroup sessions across the state that involved 31,253 families and 42,483 children.

Member highlights

- 11,601 new families became Family Members
- 42 new people/organisations became Professional Members
- 677 new playgroup sessions started
- 23 Five Star Playgroup training modules completed; three playgroups complete all modules to become Five Star playgroups
- 21 successful grant applications auspiced by Playgroup Victoria on behalf of playgroups
- 43 playgroup members awarded certificates of merit for outstanding contributions to playgroups
- Year of Healthy Choices calendars home delivered to Family Members
- New edition Playgroup Manual distributed to member playgroups and online behind the Member login



Potential members

- 480 packs sent to families wanting to start a new playgroup
- More than 1750 playgroups on the Find a playgroup page at www.playgroup.org.au
- Venue available icon added to the 'Find a playgroup page at www.playgroup.org.au to indicate playgroup venues with space for another playgroup or playgroup session

Certificate of Merit awards

More than 40 playgroup members received certificates of merit for outstanding contributions to playgroups and four playgroups received certificates for completing online training modules to achieve Five Star Playgroups status at the Playgroup Victoria's 2010 Annual General Meeting. The Annual General Meeting was at Amora Hotel in Richmond. Playgroup Victoria Chairperson Karen Harvey Collins and Steve Biddulph are pictured presenting one of the awards to Kate Lansbury from Mill Park Playgroup

Honorary Life Members

An Honorary Life Member is a person who has given outstanding service to the association and is elected as such by a majority of the members present at an Annual General Meeting. There are currently eight Honorary Life Members of Playgroup Victoria:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| • Anne Fortune | • Debbie Jephson |
| • Debbie Love | • Ros Van Mierlo |
| • Kaye Plowman | • Vivian Savvides |
| • Christine Straubinger | • Lee Tregloan |



Professional Membership

A growing number of professionals with an interest in playgroups are becoming Professional Members of Playgroup Victoria. There are currently 180 Professional Members from a range of agencies, organisations and councils, who share expertise, knowledge and best practice principles.

Thirty eight new professional members joined in 2010 from all over Victoria. All professional members receive key benefits such as networking opportunities, training, statistical data, access to the website's members only section, free resources, discounts on products and events, Totline magazine and prompt assistance with playgroup questions and concerns.

A new Student Professional Membership was introduced for those studying in the early childhood and education sector who may require extra playgroup and play information, or may wish to complete placements at playgroups.

Promotional playgroup resources for members

Playgroup Victoria assists municipal playgroup professionals and playgroup members to increase the number of families starting and joining playgroup by providing a range of resources, including the new parent group presentation kit.

The kit includes:

- personalised A3 presentation folder and carry case
- six How to Start a Playgroup booklets and DVDs
- a municipal playgroup directory and
- Playgroup Victoria publications and brochures
- Presentation information booklet

This A4 spiral bound booklet is ideal as a reference when explaining playgroup to new parent groups.

- What happens at Playgroup picture series

Pictures show families arriving, playing, sharing snack time, packing up and leaving playgroup and is ideal for non-English speaking families, parents, and caregivers unfamiliar with the concept of playgroup. Includes a membership brochure outlining Playgroup Victoria benefits.

More than 200 Playgroup Victoria volunteers in 68 municipalities throughout Victoria use some of those resources when they speak to new parent groups at maternal and child health centres about the next step, playgroup. Others choose to set up displays at open days, fetes and local expos.

Playgroup Victoria offers further suggestions on ways to promote playgroup in the Playgroup Manual on pages 107-114

Register of all playgroups in Victoria

In July 2010, Playgroup Victoria received 12 month funding from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to produce a register of all playgroups operating in Victoria.

The benefits of the register include:

- Assists playgroups needing to attract more members and families or caregivers wanting to join or start a new playgroup in Victoria
- Creates a more unified network of playgroups across Victoria, increasing playgroup participation rates, access to playgroups by marginalised families and accurate data to support establishing new playgroups
- Helps identify deficiencies and growth areas with a need for playgroups
- Becomes a tool to report to local government agencies and DEECD for further planning and segmentation of playgroups
- Helps the Supported Playgroup Program engage families from local target groups
- Ensures playgroups are part of the planning within each municipality and their s Early Years Plan
- Assists maternal and child health centres and other agencies with current playgroup data for referral
- Gives families a greater choice of playgroups and the ability to find the most appropriate group in their municipality

Early intervention programs

Playgroup Victoria is committed to ensuring that all families, regardless of their circumstances, can access a playgroup that meets their needs. Playgroup Victoria's early intervention programs are designed for families who may not otherwise attend playgroup. In 2010 Playgroup Victoria coordinated five early intervention programs: PlayConnect playgroups, national Supported Playgroups, the Intensive Support playgroup program in Dandenong, MyTime, and the Supported Playgroup and Parent Initiative (SPPI). A new program, the Koorie Playgroup Enhancement Program (KPEP) began in 2010.

Koorie Playgroup Enhancement Program (KPEP)

KPEP is funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations under the Parental and Community Engagement program.

Through the KPEP program, Playgroup Victoria aims to collaborate with state wide Indigenous organisations for an integrated approach to enhance Koorie playgroups, promote the importance of playgroup, develop local partnerships and look for opportunities to engage additional families or encourage new Koorie playgroups to start.

The KPEP coordinator connects with playgroup facilitators to reduce isolation and support them in their role, visit Koorie playgroups and conduct workshops with parents/caregivers and coordinators to provide skills to assist in children's learning and development, and enable parents to transfer these skills to

the home environment.

The Koorie Playgroup Reference Group, including representatives from Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI), Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), FaHCSIA, Save the Children, DEECD and DEEWR supports and guides the project. Since the KPEP coordinator commenced in September 2010, she has visited many Koorie playgroups across the state, including playgroups in Bendigo, Cranbourne, Broadmeadows, Dareton, Kerang, Wentworth, and Aboriginal Co-ops in Dareton, Mildura, Robinvale, Swan Hill and Bendigo. She has also participated in many community activities, including information expos of Koorie services and networks, the state Maternal and Child Health Expo and presented at the Koorie Education Workforce (DEECD) Forum in Creswick on the role of playgroups in the early years.

Supported Playgroups and Parent Groups Initiative (SPPI)

A new online reporting process was implemented across the 29 SPPI sites for the January – June reporting period in 2010. Training was delivered by the Playgroup Victoria SPPI team at various locations, which were well attended by municipal SPPI coordinators and the regional Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Program and Service Advisors (PASAs) whom SPPI sites are accountable to for SPPI. Not only did these forums inform SPPI sites of the new process for SPPI reporting, it also provided an opportunity for sites to network with each other and to have another opportunity to connect with the Playgroup Victoria SPPI team.

Many of the SPPI sites were visited during the 2010 year, once again, enabling a productive and supportive working relationship to be further developed between Playgroup Victoria, municipal SPPI Coordinators and playgroup facilitators working in the many supported playgroups operating across the state for families who would not otherwise benefit from the playgroup experience. It was obvious what a huge difference coming to a supported playgroup can make to the lives of families experiencing disadvantage, isolation or very complex needs. Playgroup facilitators do an amazing job, not only do they model and provide age appropriate play activities for children, they act as a key link to services in the local community. Once trust is established, playgroup facilitators can gently introduce services to families such as maternal child health, local libraries, early intervention and kindergarten to engage families at a crucial time in their child/ren's development. We felt very privileged to connect with families who shared their stories and daily struggles with us, many referring to the playgroup experience as having changed their lives, given them practical ideas for play with their children, connected them to other families and/or given them the support they needed to bring them out of their isolation.

A new, revised version of the SPPI Playgroup Facilitator Booklet was developed during 2010 to be distributed at the beginning of 2011. This resource provides playgroup facilitators with a place to record information from families on a regular basis. This information is vital in order for municipal

SPPI coordinators to meet the DEECD reporting requirements twice a year. The resource, refined and further developed following feedback provided by SPPI coordinators/facilitators, is now housed in a ring-bound folder to allow the contents to be updated, emailed and distributed at the local level at the commencement of each reporting period.

Three forums/events funded by SPPI was a great success in 2010 including the Partners in Play Supported Playgroup Conference, Playgroup Professionals Forums, Koorie Playgroup Network and Playgroup Network. It was decided that in 2011 we would combine the Playgroup Network into the Playgroup Professionals Forum. Professionals connected to us are very keen to be part of our networks, forums and conferences and comment on the benefits that these networking opportunities bring to them in their role working with playgroups at the local level.

MyTime

MyTime funding in 2010 was extended for a further three years and the program's criteria eligibility was broadened. As of July 2010, MyTime is a national facilitated peer support program for parents/carers of a child aged 0-16 with disability or chronic medical condition, funded by FaHCSIA and coordinated nationally by the Parenting Research Centre. Playgroup Victoria is a Lead Agency of MyTime in Victoria, and continues to coordinate 32 groups. There are 24 Playgroup Victoria MyTime groups operating in metropolitan Melbourne and eight groups in rural Victoria.

In 2010, Playgroup Victoria established new MyTime groups in Narre Warren South, Endeavour Hills, and two new groups in Braybrook. Groups were also successfully re-established in Thornbury and Werribee.

MyTime caters for all parents caring for a child with disability or chronic medical condition, in both rural and metropolitan areas, and is accessible to families from all backgrounds, particularly Indigenous families and families with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In March 2010, Playgroup Victoria with Extended Families Australia, established the first Vietnamese MyTime group in Victoria in Braybrook and is currently working towards creating an additional group for the Vietnamese community in Springvale.

Playgroup Victoria works in partnership with a range of organisations across Victoria to deliver MyTime groups including early intervention agencies, municipalities and community organisations such as Yooralla, SCOPE, Broad Insight, Frankston City Council, Shire of Yarra Ranges, Extended Families Australia, Gateways Support Services, Pinarc, Coinda Family Support, Uniting Care Gippsland, Knox City Council, Villa Maria and many others. Playgroup Victoria acknowledges the hard work and dedication of these organisations to support families with a child with a disability or chronic medical condition.

Over 400 families attended Playgroup Victoria MyTime groups over the past year, participating in a range of group activities ranging from guest speakers from local agencies, pamper sessions, and outings.

Intensive Support Playgroup program in the City of Greater Dandenong

Playgroup Victoria is the lead agency in partnership with the City of Greater Dandenong for the Australian government funded Intensive Support Playgroup (ISP) program. The program, known as PlaySpot is run from a fully equipped van staffed by a coordinator, play assistant and peer support workers at six different locations. Four of the current peer support workers previously attended PlaySpot with their own children.

Families are referred to PlaySpot by local community groups and agencies, including maternal and child health nurses, migrant resource centres, and housing and family support services. PlaySpot targets families with young children who are vulnerable and isolated, or affected by issues such as financial disadvantage or homelessness. PlaySpot as well targets families who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, recently arrived migrant and refugee families or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

ISP Dandenong Plaza PlaySpot playgroup has an average of 25 families attending each week. In the last half of 2010, a total of 88 families visited the Plaza playgroup and were offered resources about local playgroups, playdough recipes, local community events, child immunisation schedules, child care and kindergarten enrolment.

PlaySpot has a positive partnership with staff from the Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-Operative (DDACL) in organising and facilitating ISP Koorie PlaySpot. PlaySpot attends DDACL monthly barbecues during school terms and regularly consult families and Koorie peer support workers to ensure activities and experiences at playgroup are culturally respectful. A key highlight was the attendance of a Koorie peer support worker to a five day playgroup leader training course held by the City of Greater Dandenong.

Key relationships between PlaySpot and members of City of Greater Dandenong Early Years, maternal and child health and library outreach teams ensured that PlaySpot families had access to information to assist in individual ongoing capacity building.

PlaySpot participated in events within the City of Greater Dandenong including the Koorie Back to School day, Teddy Bear's Picnic and the Playgroup Fun Day.

PlaySpot staff surveyed families at the end of 2010 with an overall positive response. One parent surveyed responded:

If it wasn't for playgroup, I wouldn't have as much support and friends for me and my wonderful son. We both really enjoy playgroup and feel very happy and love to learn new things. Thanks for the support.





PlayConnect

PlayConnect playgroups are part of the Australian government's \$190 million Helping Children with Autism package, addressing the need for support and services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). PlayConnect playgroups offer play activities suited to the needs of children with ASD and connect families who have a child between the ages of 0-6 years with ASD or ASD-like symptoms to relevant services.

The PlayConnect playgroup program developed rapidly in 2010. The 18 initial groups in January increased to 24 groups by December with a further eight groups approved to commence in 2011 bringing the total number of PlayConnect Playgroups across Victoria to 50.

Feedback from parents attending has been overwhelmingly positive. Many families acknowledged PlayConnect playgroups were a place they could go and not feel judged and importantly, have the support of other parents in similar situations. A parent, Kelly Hussey, wrote about her experiences at Thornbury PlayConnect:

I don't know where to begin praising the efforts of all those involved with my local PlayConnect playgroup. My son and I just love it!

In the many long months leading up to an Early Intervention placement, PlayConnect filled a pretty frightening void in our lives, becoming my main source of support and education, and a comfortable and wonderfully supported play environment for my three year old autistic son.

Our facilitator, Narelle, has been simply fabulous with all the children, understanding the importance of routine and language, including visual aids to support the various activities. Providing appropriate activities and sensory experiences are all must-dos in every session she runs. She models ways to manage difficult behaviours without fuss or fluster and frequently invites experts in from the health and disability sector to share their knowledge with us.

Then there are the other parents, so many of whom I hope to remain connected with after our children have grown and gone off to school.

Listening to other mums, dads, even grandparents share their 'journey to diagnosis' has been truly touching. We share stories, help and refer each other onto a whole host of resources and professional services. We understand those journeys and are sympathetic to each other's high and lows.

In 2011, Thornbury PlayConnect successfully secured a grant for almost \$10,000 from the Commonwealth Bank to develop their outdoor play area, which will also be enjoyed by a second PlayConnect playgroup.

National Supported Playgroups

The national Supported Playgroup program is funded by FaHCSIA to establish supported playgroups for families who would not normally access a playgroup. This program targets



families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous communities, families with mental health or disability issues, teenage and young parents, socially isolated families or grandparent carers.

Playgroups formed under this program are funded for up to 12 months. A key focus of this program is to build the capacity of parents. Development workers have done a fantastic job working alongside families mentoring them and providing encouragement, support and guidance, and linking them into their local community. Many parents developed their parenting and personal skills through their participation at playgroup.

In 2010, 15 national supported playgroups were operating and another three were approved to start in 2011. Of these groups, two transitioned successfully into self-managed playgroups. The rest are due to transition in 2011. A playgroup worker from the Indian Playgroup in Sunshine wrote:

Children are learning to play much better together, developing really good social skills, such as sharing, waiting their turn and showing concern for other children. Parents are engaging more with each other both at playgroup sessions and outside sessions. [They] often meet for play days at the park or private homes. A lot more peer to peer support and advice on strategies that have worked for them with regard to parenting issues, and where to go if they need to find specific services within local community.

They are all working as part of a team helping with playgroup set up, snack time and cleaning up at the end. Each member has found themselves a job that they like to do, and are responsible for that task.

SPPI Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR) Network

The SPPI SMR Network, comprising Playgroup Victoria staff, five SPPI coordinators and the regional DEECD Program and Service Advisor, continued to be a highlight of SPPI in 2010. Funding was extended for another 12 months, allowing for further networking and explorations of good practice in supported playgroup development. A number of agreed themes for the year included SPPI reporting requirements, developing a family-friendly brochure outlining the benefits of supported playgroups, giving Five Star training to supported playgroups and developing a resource about how playgroups support outcomes of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

The SMR Network has created a forum for SPPI coordinators to share, explore and develop strategies and resources to implement SPPI in the southern region and across the 29 DEECD funded municipalities. The involvement of Playgroup Victoria has enabled a targeted response to the needs of SPPI sites and a greater understanding of program development and evaluation.

Intergenerational project

The award-winning Intergenerational Playgroup Project provided a wonderful opportunity for playgroup research and service delivery in the setting of an aged care facility. The project was funded by the Department of Human Services (DHS). Playgroup Victoria partnered with the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) to deliver the program and undertake the research. The project started a supported playgroup at Percy Baxter Lodge in Geelong and up to 12 families attended weekly.

The project was the winner of the Barwon Health Quality Improvement Award for aged care services; a positive reflection on the impact this program had on residents and staff of Percy Baxter Lodge, and the children and families involved. The playgroup continued after the funding ceased and the research concluded.

Playgroup Victoria is seeking funding support for the intergenerational model to be implemented in other areas of Victoria.

ConnectDads project

The Victorian Government Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) funded the ConnectDads project to engage fathers in the playgroup setting and create an outlet for physical activity for fathers and their children.

The funding helped support new and existing playgroup members, offering active play packs to dads' playgroups to encourage active participation among males. We rebranded all dads' playgroups as ConnectDads to build the awareness of the importance of dads' playgroups. The project was supported by the expertise of author and psychologist Steve Biddulph through his "Manhood" talks across the state.

Bushfire project

Funding was secured in 2010 through DEECD acting under the oversight of the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund (VBAF) advisory panel for 2011-2012. The project's aim is to identify and meet the psychological needs of children traumatised by the 2009 Victorian bushfires. Severely traumatised children will be identified and receive ongoing specialist help through case management by play therapists.

Intended secondary outcomes are parents will learn about appropriate strategies for dealing with children's behaviour that will assist the healing process. This learning will be transferable to the home environment from the playgroup setting and be appropriate for individuals and groups of children.

Adults will gain a greater understanding of what children's behaviour is communicating and be better equipped to identify the triggers that upset individuals. A valuable result of understanding behaviours in children is that adults gain an understanding of other people's children as well as their own, which is a great advantage in a playgroup setting.

This program will commence in the first half of 2011.

PUBLICATIONS AND ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS

Year of Healthy Choices calendar

V/Line sponsorship helped make it possible to develop a 2010 Year of Healthy Choices for members with healthy food ideas and easy activities to make each month up to February 2011.

Totline pic of latest edition

Playgroup Victoria joined other state and territory playgroup associations in May to be part of the first national playgroup magazine, Totline, sent to 90,000 members around the country. Content in May, August and November issues included play ideas, latest playgroup news, features and health tips.



Starting playgroups in aged care facilities

Starting playgroups in aged care facilities was written drawing on research conducted by the National Ageing Research Institute into an intergenerational pilot project at Percy Baxter Lodges and the experiences of Bupa Bellarine Treasures, an established playgroup based at an aged care facility. It brings to three a series that includes Starting playgroups at neighbourhood houses and community centres and Starting playgroups in schools. A fourth booklet in the series will be published in 2011.

Starting playgroups for fathers

The Starting playgroups for fathers brochure was developed as an accompaniment to the Starting playgroups for fathers booklet due out in 2011.

Website

Content on the website continued to grow in 2010 and made it Playgroup Victoria's main communication tool. To improve its usability, a bank of visual navigation bars was added, text on the homepage was reduced, and new Research, For Parents and monthly Featured Playgroup pages were added.

A Facebook page was created in July to add to Playgroup Victoria's communication tools, reach a wider audience and increase website traffic.

New A to Z playsheets

New A to Z playsheets were added to the 100 already in the Member login. Titles of the playsheets were: Healthy choices with water, Planting vegetables with children, Healthy choices at snack time, Discover Spring and 20 holiday play ideas.

eNewsletters

ePlaygroup News and ePlaygroup Professional were redesigned to be consistent with the website. To keep open rates high and enable subscribers to quickly scan headlines, layout of both publications was streamlined. ePlaygroup News were emailed to an average of 6500 people each time in March, April, June, August, September and November. Two issues of ePlaygroup Professional were emailed in April and August to a growing number of professionals and people with an interest in running playgroups.

Playgroup National Survey

The report summarises the findings of 1,100 surveys from Playgroup members and non-Playgroup members from a questionnaire administered both online and through Totline magazine. The designated survey period was August 15 to October 1, 2010. The target population in this research project was approximately 90,000 families across Australia, mostly Playgroup members from different socio-economic groups.

Key survey results for Playgroup Victoria

98% of respondents to the survey were female, and 68% of those were aged between 30-40. 15% of respondents stated that they were over 40, the highest percentage from across Australia. 50% of respondents had a child 18 months-3 years of age attending playgroup, and 45% had a child 3-5 years of age attending playgroup. Half the people surveyed were not in the paid workforce, with 83% of them stating that their partner was in full time employment.

Of the people surveyed, 88% were satisfied with Playgroup Victoria's services offered, which is above the mean average of 85% across Australia.

The website was rated the most useful to individuals and their playgroup (72%), followed by playgroup insurance cover (68%), and the eNewsletter at 56%.

When respondents were asked about receiving assistance from Playgroup Victoria, 54% had received assistance on setting up a new playgroup, 38% discussed management or administration issues, and 33% called regarding insurance issues.



92% people surveyed said they were satisfied with their local playgroup experience. 78% of respondents stated that playgroup had assisted in their child's development, and 90% felt included at their playgroup.

The survey asked people how they heard about playgroup: 39% discovered playgroup through maternal and child health, while 32% heard through word of mouth.

Playgroup training workshops

In 2010, training workshops were offered to playgroups, local government, agencies and other organisations that run or support playgroups. Workshops and resources were continually evaluated and refined to meet the needs of members. More than 50 workshops were held all over the state.

- Two day Supported Playgroup Leader training was run at the start and end of the year.
- CALD Playgroup Leader training was run in Hobsons Bay and City of Greater Dandenong.
- Playgroup Leader training was developed and presented as part of the Early Home Learning Study by PRC.
- Training was delivered throughout Melbourne and regional areas including Mornington Peninsula, Morwell, Sale, Bendigo, Shepparton, Frankston and Wonthaggi.

Partnerships continued with workers in many municipalities, which led to Playgroup Victoria working collaboratively with community playgroups, associations and agencies including VAEAI, Anglicare Victoria, Simpson Army Barracks, Kilmany Uniting Care, Bendigo Health, Best Chance Child and Family Care, The Extended Schools Partnership, ISIS Primary Care and Parenting Research Centre.



EVENTS

World's Biggest Playgroup

Playgroup Victoria's major National Playgroup Week event was the World's Biggest Playgroup at Melbourne Museum. Children drew, sang, danced and heard stories. They dressed up as firefighters and explored the MFB fire truck, joined in the Indigenous animal dancing with Nikki Ashby and participated in craft activities. They also saw some live exhibits in the Forest Gallery. Babies played in a specially designated baby play area. There were many giveaways for everyone.

Melbourne Aquarium Playgroup Day

Playgroup Victoria in partnership with the Melbourne Aquarium hosted playgroup days in April, July and October. Hundreds of families attended. Members received a 10% discount on admission fees and children under 5 years old were admitted free. Free goodie bags were snapped up early. Activities included fishing games, sand tubs and sea creatures, home corner, baby play area, drawing and special appearances by PG Bear and Sharkie.

Steve Biddulph parenting talks

Australian psychologist and parenting speaker Steve Biddulph gave his two most popular talks Raising Boys and The Secret of Happy Children in Caulfield, Ivanhoe, Moonee Ponds and Wendouree and presented his new talk Road to Manhood at Nunawading and Wendouree. More than 1800 people attended these talks.

Fun4Kids Festival, Warrnambool

Playgroup Victoria supported South West TAFE students to organise early activities for children 0-5 years old at the Fun4Kids Festival hosted by the Warrnambool City Council during the first week of term two school holidays. In 2010, it attracted more than 31,000 people over eight days.

Pregnancy, Babies and Children's Expo

Playgroup Victoria has had a stand at the Pregnancy, Babies and Children's Expo since 1994, giving staff the opportunity to explain the benefits of playgroup to thousands of new parents. Playgroup Victoria in partnership with the expo team sends out over 16,000 discount vouchers to member playgroups each year. 18,838 ticketed adults attended the 2010 Pregnancy, Babies and Children's Expo in Melbourne.

Romp & Stomp Fun Day for Children

Romp & Stomp Fun Day for Children highlights the value of education, experiences and diversity in early childhood development. This year marked its eight successful year with an attendance of close to 3000 people.

On the organising committee are not for profit organisations including Playgroup Victoria, Early Childhood Management Services, Kindergarten Parents Victoria, Gowrie Victoria, Berry Street, Toy Libraries Victoria, Vic Roads, Melbourne Museum and Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

Activities provided included active play, baby play, music, dress ups, live exhibits, sand play, story time, drawing, and Aboriginal shield making. Special guest appearances were from the Town Crier, Weedy the Seadragon, PG Bear, bug puppets, One African dancers and Maurial Spearim.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) provided a \$3000 grant towards the events and Crayola Australia Pty Ltd donated products used on the day.

Raffle

In 2010, Playgroup Victoria joined Kindergarten Parents Victoria's Caring for Kids Raffle. First prize was a Ford Fiesta valued at \$19,885. Playgroups received \$1 for every ticket sold. Playgroups in Victoria raised \$23,700 in 2010.

Tom Patton from North Geelong (link to picture below) won first prize. Tom's grandchild attended Hamlyn Heights Playgroup.

Playgroup Victoria has helped playgroups raise more than \$503,000 since the Raffle first ran in 1998. Playgroups use money raised to pay for toys and equipment, rent, Christmas parties and excursions.

Expos and festivals

Playgroup Victoria participated at nine expos, festivals and displays during 2010:

- Ballarat's Biggest Playgroup
- Knox Playgroup network meeting
- Best Start Forum, Northcote
- Autism Victoria Conference, Preston
- Pregnancy, Babies & Children's Expo, Southbank
- Maternal Child Health Nurses conference, Melbourne
- ISP & CFC Playgroups, Dandenong
- ISP PlaySpot & Best Start Dandenong, Dandenong Plaza
- Moreland Council Children's Day 2010
- Maribyrnong Early Years Expo

Forums

Cultural Diversity - City of Whittlesea
Wednesday 21 April

38 attended; 19 municipalities/organisations were represented

Culturally Competent Playgroups - Aborigines Advancement League

Friday 6 August

40 attended; 24 municipalities/organisations were represented

PARTNERSHIPS

Sponsors and stakeholders

Playgroup Victoria would like to thank

Corporate partnerships



Stakeholders

Brendan Collins, Michelle Dickson - Austral Anglo

Sacha Karner - VMIA

Chris Keenan - Create IT

David Jones, Semaphore Consulting

Neil Scott, Sam Lamari, Natasha Quinn - CSG

Kevin Treacey - KevCom

Peter Shields - Saward Dawson

Jame Lewis - Lewis Holdaway Lawyers



SunSmart

Playgroup Victoria and The Cancer Council Victoria continued to promote the importance of sun protection for playgroups through the SunSmart

program. Playgroups were able to complete a checklist to become a SunSmart playgroup. There are currently 58 SunSmart playgroups in Victoria.



Sing & Grow

Sing & Grow, in partnership with Playgroup Victoria, provides children aged three years and under and their parents from vulnerable backgrounds, access to this early intervention group music therapy project.



Victorian Cooperative on Children's Service for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG)

Playgroup Victoria has a partnership agreement with VICSEG which provides many innovative services and training programs for recent migrants including refugee women. Playgroups help break down the isolation experienced by newly arrived families by building friendships and strengthening connections with both mainstream and ethnic communities. Playgroups offer many opportunities for children from these families to socialise and learn through play.



PANDA

Post and Antenatal Depression Association

Post and Antenatal Depression Association Inc (PANDA)

PANDA provides a range of services to families affected by post and antenatal depression.

This partnership has been enhanced through funding from the DHS Best Start - Supported Parent Group and Playgroup Initiative.



Christian Playgroup Network (CPN)

CPN is an incorporated member based organisation run by a volunteer committee of playgroup representatives from major Christian denominations. Playgroup Victoria recognises the valuable work done by CPN in assisting, training and encouraging its member churches to establish and run quality playgroups and provide links through professional membership.

This mutually beneficial partnership supports many well established and newly forming playgroups based both in churches and in the community.



City of Greater Dandenong (CGD)

Playgroup Victoria partners with the City of Greater Dandenong to deliver the Intensive Support Playgroup program across six sites. Families are linked to CGD's Family Support Program.



raising children well

Parenting Research Centre (PRC)

The Parenting Research Centre is responsible for the MyTime program across Australia and the Victorian Government funded Early Home Learning Environment study (EHLE). Playgroup Victoria has been involved with both projects.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Summary

The financial statements presented for the year to 31 December 2010 disclose an operating surplus of \$14,405.

Financial performance

Revenue from operating activities in 2010 was \$2,477,737 (2009 - \$2,520,400). Our major sources of funding were from government grants (\$1,764,446) and membership fees (\$434,946), representing 71% and 18% of total income respectively.

Playgroup Victoria acknowledges the generous financial support received from FaHCSIA and DEECD.

Financial position

Playgroup Victoria's equity stands at \$607,385 (2009 - \$592,980). Playgroup Victoria has a solid balance sheet with sufficient liquid assets to meet all known contingencies.

In conclusion

On behalf of the Playgroup Victoria Board, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Kaye Plowman for her dedication and professionalism in managing the financial health of the organisation as well as to the staff for yet another successful year.

I would also like to recognise and thank Peter Shields from Saward Dawson Chartered Accountants for his role in managing the audit of the Playgroup Victoria accounts. Playgroup Victoria appreciates his ongoing assistance and professionalism in the work he has done for the organisation.



Christine Chew
Treasurer



**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT
31 DECEMBER 2010**

	2010 \$	2009 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	152,367	231,411
Financial assets	1,244,057	659,565
Inventory	2,221	2,221
Trade and other receivables	141,511	53,187
Other current assets	15,034	249,699
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	1,555,190	1,196,083
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	97,584	93,589
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	97,584	93,589
TOTAL ASSETS	1,652,774	1,289,672
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	786,011	455,577
Short term provisions	171,816	163,031
Short term borrowings	(458)	6,973
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	957,369	625,581
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	45,690	45,690
Long term provisions	42,330	25,421
Long term borrowings	-	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	88,020	71,111
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,045,389	696,692
NET ASSETS	607,385	592,980
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Reserves	162,554	145,090
Accumulated funds	444,832	447,890
ACCUMULATED FUNDS AT END OF YEAR	607,385	592,980

Playgroup Victoria Inc.
ABN 13 094 186 877
Inc Association # A0012387K

**STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE
YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2010**

	2010 \$	2009 \$
REVENUE		
Grant funding	686,253	652,991
SPP funding	50,459	94,964
PlayConnect	152,231	97,947
Bushfire Relief Fund	-	277,059
SPPI funding	145,293	152,144
KPEP funding	20,205	-
C4C funding	-	60,145
ISP funding	173,049	178,403
Count Us In funding	8,312	20,631
MyTime	491,910	260,732
Connect Dad funding	36,734	-
DEST & Koorie Kits	-	16,555
Membership income	434,946	472,642
Product sales	-	6,034
Playgrouper income	2,400	35,391
Fundraising income	64,148	64,475
Playgroup Registration Funding	12,946	-
Administration income	198,851	130,287
TOTAL REVENUES FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	2,477,737	2,520,400
EXPENDITURE		
Grant expenses	686,253	652,990
SPP expenses	50,459	94,963
PlayConnect	152,176	99,248
SPPI expenses	143,880	144,298
Bushfire Relief Expense	-	222,430
KPEP expenses	19,323	-
C4C expenses	-	60,145
ISP expenses	172,790	178,403
Count Us In Funding	8,362	20,633
MyTime expenses	464,315	260,732
Connect Dad expenses	36,734	-
DEST & Koorie Kits exp.	-	18,723
Membership expenses	206,210	233,863
Product expenses	-	3
Playgrouper expenses	116,266	144,559
Fundraising expenses	36,217	36,519
Playgroup Registration Funding	12,051	-
Administration expenses	358,296	335,412
Surplus for the year	14,405	17,479
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	14,405	17,479

PLAYGROUP VICTORIA STAFF IN 2010

Executive

Kaye Plowman	Chief Executive Officer*
Jason Doherty	General Manager
Linlin Jin	Bookkeeper
Louise Fischer	Executive Administrator
Mary Osrecak	Bookkeeper's Assistant

Membership and IT

Carolyn Eley	Membership and IT Manager*
Carol Gray	New Playgroup Hotline Consultant
Nancy-lee Merzel	Membership Coordinator
Rita Caruana	Receptionist
Rosie Dymus	Playgroup Development Consultant
Thu Nguyen	IT Administrator
Trudy Jordan	Membership Assistant
Vicki Ringrow	Membership Administrator

Marketing and Community Development

Jane Bezzina	Events Manager*
Deb Sedlarevic	Playgroup Training Consultant
Denise Lucey	Communications Coordinator*
Diana Fouracre	Marketing Administrator
Rosanna Di Grazia	Playgroup Development Assistant
Wendy Veber	Training Consultant

Programs

Janine Regan	Program Manager*
Chiara Squeo	Program Administrator
Cath Healy	SPPI Program Coordinator
Deborah Njegac	SPPI Project Worker
Wendy Veber	Project Coordinator
Yawen Su Assistant	Intensive Support Playgroup Play

Paula Jormakka ISP Coordinator

ISP Peer Support Workers:

Nadia Abu-Duhou
Liza Jackson
Nyaluak (Elizabeth) Kuon
Leah Sandow
Rebecca Scholes
Teremoana (Mona) Topa



Leonie White MyTime Coordinator

MyTime Facilitators:

Lynne Wood
Jade Fraser
Lyndall Edwards-Davenport
Mieke De Koning
Sue Lenzi
Helen O'Brien
Andrea Day
Melda Doruk
Fiona Long
Raylene Cullen
Kerryn Moore
Eliza Lee

**More than 10 years' service at Playgroup Victoria*

Isabella Rosinsky Supported Playgroup Program Coordinator
PlayConnect Coordinator

Playconnect workers:

Michelle Andrews
Brigid Cantwell
Nga Do
Narelle McNaughton
Sharon Middleton
Anne Shute
Elissa Plumridge
Tracey Kenyon
Eva Dimou
Sue Stewart
Rose McKenna
Jennifer Hayes
Marg Hartshorn
Sue Wiederman
Anna Ng
Seb Papadimitriou
Jenny Malamaci
Leanne De Groot
Heidi McCormack
Kym Oakley
Remy Cormanes
Liz Scales

Supported playgroup workers:

Catherine Lam
Louise Willis
Linda Franco
Sue Lenzi
Tanya Doig
Belinda Gadsby
Michelle Atlas
Lynne Baker
Hanady Saoud
Durbra Dhiman
Aanchal Bejaj
Cindy Young
Suzan Saka
Nyaluak Kuon (Elizabeth)





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