



Playgroup Victoria

2018/19 Annual Report



Playgroup
Victoria

2018/19

Our year at a glance

Children and adults who attended a playgroup

41,952 

Postcodes with registered
Community Playgroups

482

New Community Playgroups
established

190

Instagram followers after one year

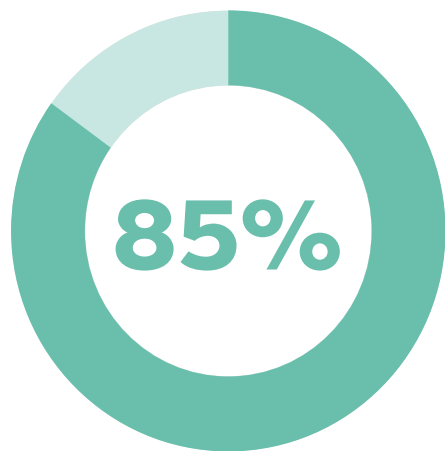
 1830

Facebook followers

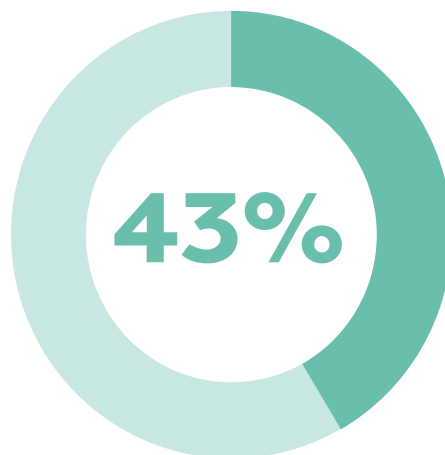
 12,798

Deliver and assess the new engagement model.

From our Member survey



Parents reporting increased social connectedness from attending playgroup.



Parents reporting increased capacity to engage in play with their children.

Website users

80,000

Website sessions

131,000

Events

 26

Our events included:

- Little Kids Day In
- Library Week
- Romp and Stomp
- Pop-Up Playgroups



Playgroup Victoria

About

Playgroup Victoria is a not-for-profit, incorporated association committed to helping all Victorian families discover the benefits of playgroup. We advocate for the benefits of play in a child's early years of learning and act as support base for communities and families wanting to start and successfully run a playgroup.

During the late 1960s and early '70s hundreds of playgroups scattered throughout Melbourne and country Victoria. There became a need for some cohesion and networking between these groups and parents wanting to start and join playgroups. In response to the need a group of hard-working volunteers came together and invited playgroups and interested people to ring in for advice and support on Monday mornings.

The response was so great that in 1974, the Victorian Playgroup Association was formed. Its goals were to set up an advisory service, fulfill the need for workshops, lectures and discussions

related to parenthood and life with children, and to liaise with local, state and federal governments. 44 years on, Playgroup Victoria is still working to ensure families have access to and can participate in Playgroup. Playgroup has evolved to include grandparents, bush and dads Playgroups.

Funding from the Commonwealth and State Governments has enabled Playgroup Victoria to develop a Community Development model of support. This place base approach ensures the needs of the community are understood which fosters relationships within local early childhood services to be developed.

Message from the Chair and CEO

Playgroup Victoria CEO Danny Schwarz
Chair of the Board Felicity Dunn

Our primary focus this year has been on Strategic Engagement. We had planned to launch a new website and membership model to support playgroups and families. Naturally the IT and infrastructure surrounding this took time to develop.

We are excited to have now launched our new and improved website, along with our new membership model.

▶ www.playgroup.org.au

While our website is not designed to replace the richness and integral human interaction, it is a gateway to support, engage and interact. The website is designed to make registering a playgroup easy. It provides clear options for families and professionals. Ultimately, we aim to develop and improve the user experience. We look forward to input and feedback from the playgroup community.

National Playgroup Week was a highlight of the year. The Biggest Playgroup at SEALIFE Melbourne Aquarium kicked off the week, making national news. Pop-Up playgroups were held around

the state including regional towns Bendigo and Gordon. The annual Playgroup Conference closed out the week. The event was sold out and saw more than 300 attendees come together.

The activities during National Playgroup Week centered around our strategic goals, including:

- Develop an evidence-based framework for playgroup development
- Identify and develop evidence-based content that supports the benefits of playgroup
- Develop a clear communication and marketing strategy to promote playgroup and its benefits
- Develop and deliver a learning framework that increases and enhances parent, carer and professional knowledge, skill and practice in their playgroup

Key Strategy - Universal access to playgroup

Strategic Objective

Deliver and assess the new engagement model.

This year we have studied our levels of engagement. We are measuring using a wide range of tools which will enable us to better understand where people access information. We are looking to see what drives people to find and participate in playgroup, as well as the barriers preventing them from attending.

This year:

- 41,952 Children and Adults attended a Playgroup
- 482 Postcodes have registered Community Playgroups
- 190 New Community Playgroups were established

From our Social media

- 12,798 people like us on Facebook
- 1830 Follow us on Instagram after 1 year
- Google analytics tells us there were 80,000 Users on our Website and 131,000 sessions

From our Member Survey

- 85% of parents reporting increased social connectedness from attending Playgroup
- 43% of parents reporting increased capacity to engage in play with their children

Events

Playgroup Victoria ran and participated in 26 events throughout the year including Pop-Up Playgroups, Romp and Stomp and Little Kids Day In. 9975 children, parents and carers attended.

As we announced last year families can now easily register their playgroups, invite families to register or chose to become a Playgroup Victoria member. For paid Family Members, we have added great value including a Loyalty Program that offers discounts at major retail stores such as Woolworths, Coles, Kmart and Myer.

Our aim is the increase the number of playgroups that register with us. By gathering this data, we can continue to work with Government to build the credibility of playgroup as an integral part of early childhood development and parental wellbeing.

The ABC documentary Old People's Home for 4 Year Olds highlighted the intergenerational aspect of playgroup. Playgroup Victoria are eager to embrace this concept and will continue to develop the model. We encourage people to register expressions of interest via www.agelessplay.com.au

None of this would have been possible without the support from the Federal and State Governments, Philanthropic Trusts - Gandel Philanthropy, The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and The Ross Trust.

We would like to extend our thanks to our committed staff. Congratulations for an exceptional year.

While this report is from Danny and I, I would like to thank my fellow board members for their support in stewarding the organisation during the past year and Danny for his leadership as we transition to our new website and membership model.

A big thank you to our members, who are at the coal-face of playgroup, helping make the early years fun, friendly and supportive for all children and families.

04

Risk and Audit Committee Report

Financials

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 June 2019			
Income			
	Note	2019 (\$)	2018 (\$)
Conference fees		42,087	0
Contributions members		242,770	292,673
DGR revenue		21	0
Fee and charge - Roster Playgroup		2,779	10,427
Fee and charges - Play Day		4,936	7,480
Fundraising		26,369	0
Grants - Philanthropic		146,879	153,582
Grants - Commonwealth operating		0	885,626
Grants - My Time		445,177	434,688
Grants - Playgroup Australia		1,316,274	367,955
Grants - State Operating Cop's		208,117	0
Grants - State - Program & advocacy		0	199,887
Grants - State- Great Start Funding		50,320	50,000
Grants - State MCH First Time Parents		100,000	100,000
Interest		16,943	26,191
Other income		21,466	21,964
Profit / (loss) on sale of assets		0	10,000
Sales - Registration		0	23,281
Sales - Advertising		2,327	6,520
Sales - Products		272	498
Wage subsidies received		12,948	0
Total Income		2,639,685	2,590,772
Expenditure			
Depreciation and amortisation		57,270	43,561
Employment expenses		1,888,749	1,710,277
Insurance		53,233	46,741
Meeting expenses		3,572	3,839
Operating expenses		687,961	732,545
Travel and accommodation		22,688	13,932
Vehicle expenses		17,927	15,290
Impairment expense	8	1,621	38,706
Total Expenditure	4	2,733,021	2,604,891
Surplus (deficit) for the period		(93,336)	(14,119)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period		(93,336)	(14,119)

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2019

Current Assets			
	Note	2019 (\$)	2018 (\$)
Cash and cash equivalents	2	426,378	236,575
Financial assets	5	300,000	500,000
Trade & other receivables		126,800	18,141
Other current assets	6	59,283	45,228
Total Current Assets		912,461	799,944
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	7	55,126	45,694
Intangible assets	8	58,483	84,086
Total Non - Current Assets		113,609	129,780
Total Assets		1,026,070	929,724
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	10	144,881	152,550
Grants and income in advance	10	337,650	179,022
Short term provisions	9	193,404	167,107
Total Current Liabilities		675,935	498,679
Non-Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	10	0	3,303
Long term provisions	9	46,076	30,347
Total Current Liabilities		46,076	33,650
Total Liabilities		722,011	532,329
Net Assets		304,059	397,395
Equity			
Reserves		70,915	70,915
Retained earnings		233,144	326,480
Total Equity		304,059	397,395

Treasurers Report

For the financial year 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, a deficit of \$93,336 was recorded, compared to a deficit of \$14,119 for the previous year. Revenue increased by \$48,913 to A\$2,639,685 from 30 June 2018, whilst expenses also increased by \$128,130 to \$2,733,021 from the prior year. Increased staff expenditures, coupled with lower than anticipated fundraising income and membership income, were the main factors which contributed to the increased deficit.

Focusing on stakeholder engagement, the Board endorsed a review of the existing Playgroup Victoria membership model at the beginning of 2019. Once completed, significant delays were experienced surrounding related upgrades required to the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and the Playgroup Victoria website to deliver the new membership model. This resulted in lower than expected membership income. The project has since been implemented successfully and has been online since the beginning of October 2019.

Playgroup Victoria remains a viable operating entity with \$426,378 held in cash and cash equivalents, as well as \$300,000 in financial assets. Approximately 72 per cent of revenue is sourced from Federal and State government grants. The Association is dependent on continued funding from government grants. Management and the Board will continue to pursue revenue diversification.



The equity position of the organisation at year end was \$304,059, compared to \$397,395 at the end of the prior year, due to the net deficit. The net cash flow from operations was \$35,826 compared to \$171,914 in the previous year.

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 2019 and that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Playgroup Victoria Incorporated can continue to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

For full set of the financial statements please contact Playgroup Victoria:

Ph 1800 171 882

Email pgvic@playgroup.org.au

Funded Initiatives

Communities of Practice



“The Communities of Practice are very valuable for me as I am pretty isolated up here in Mildura, so I thank you for providing them to us.

The last one in regards to transition, was very informative. I always come back very inspired from these meetings.”

Liv Healy – Mildura

Smalltalk supported playgroup facilitators have gathered in their region to form a Community of Practice.

The Playgroup Development Consultants currently facilitate ten Communities of Practice, covering each region. The supported playgroup program under Department of Education includes every municipality across Victoria.

The team from the Parenting Research Centre also attend, supporting the facilitators in using the *smalltalk* program.

The Communities of Practice sessions provide an opportunity for facilitators to network, share practice wisdom and further develop their facilitation skills. Each term a different practice focus guides the discussion. Within these Communities of Practice, the facilitators have been able to support each other through positive and challenging situations. They have been able to learn and grow as facilitators, emphasising the importance of the supported playgroup platform.

Term one 2019 saw all the supported playgroup facilitators from across Victoria, come together for a Community of Practice in Melbourne. This was held the day after the annual Playgroup Victoria Conference. Attended by over 150 facilitators, the space was lively with practice wisdom conversations.

Words by LEANNE DHAMI Playgroup Development Consultant Team Leader

Maternal and Child Health Transition Project

In partnership with the Maternal and Child Health Service (MCH) and Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Playgroup Victoria has led the *MCH Transition Project*. This has been a two-year project examining the journey of first-time parent groups, transiting to playgroup.

The aim of this project was to provide support and resources to MCH nurses - with the purpose of assisting first time parent groups transition to a playgroup. This is how we envisage the early years journey, ensuring that young families have ongoing support.

Following extensive consultations with all parties involved, a suite of resources was developed and successfully piloted in eight Local Government Areas (LGA) across the state.

Project Outcome

The resources were well received by the MCH and allied staff who trialled them. Moving forward, Playgroup Victoria plans to upscale access to these resources on our website.

Those signed up as Professional Affiliates will receive the latest edition. Learn more about professional affiliation on our website:

www.playgroup.org.au/for-professionals

Words by DEBORAH NJEGAC Practice and Advocacy Manager



Pictured: MCH Transition Project resources

10

Great Start Grants

This year Playgroup Victoria received \$50,000 from the state government to support 50 community playgroups through the *Great Start Grant* program. The focus of the grant application was inclusion.

We received many applications from new community playgroups, showcasing inclusion. Their applications demonstrated their ability to be welcoming and accessible.

The grants were distributed to a diverse array of new playgroups including:

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

Playgroups for additional needs

Remote and isolated playgroups

Successful applicants received \$650 to equip their group with resources supplied by Modern Teaching Aids. The grant also includes mentoring and individual guidance from a Playgroup Development Consultant. The consultants will work with the playgroup leader and the group on their journey to become a well-established and sustainable community playgroup.

Words by LEANNE DHAMI
Playgroup Development Consultant Team Leader

The successful recipients for 2019 are:

Playgroup	Suburb	Municipality
Oakhill Playgroup	Bundoora	Darebin
Tiny Tempers	Melton South	Melton
Playland Springside	Caroline Springs	Melton
Eco Kids	Soldiers Hill	Ballarat
Sacred Heart Primary School Playgroup	St Albans	Brimbank
Little Friends Playgroup	Cranbourne	City of Casey
Creative Garden Playgroup	Pakenham	Cardinia Shire Council
Knoxfield Playgroup	Knoxfield	City of Knox
Indonesian Playgroup and Community Gathering	Lynbrook	City of Casey
Language Playgroup	Springvale	City of Greater Dandenong
Weekend Playgroup Montmorency	Montmorency	Banyule
Playgroup for Dads and Male caregivers	Harkness	Melton
CCW Friday Playgroup	Warragul	Baw Baw Shire council
Rainbow Families Playgroup Frankston	Frankston	Frankston council
Yuille Park Buddies	Wendouree	Ballarat City Council
Bridgewood Playgroup	Officer	Cardinia Shire Council
Warrenheip Playgroup	Warrenheip	Ballarat City Council
Fawkner Outdoor Playgroup	Fawkner	Moreland Council

Playgroup	Suburb	Municipality
Flemington Possums Playgroup	Flemington	Moonee Valley Council
Our lady of help Christians playgroup	Wendouree	Ballarat City Council
Bullart Nature & Art Playgroup	Bullarto	Hepburn
Playgroup @ Reservoir Presbyterian Church	Reservoir	Darebin
Aireys Inlet Playgroup	Aireys Inlet	Surf Coast
German Language Playgroup Ballarat	Lucas	Ballarat
Mount Martha Community House Playgroup	Mount Martha	Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
Young Mums Connect - Cranbourne	Cranbourne	Casey City Council
Inglewood Playgroup	Inglewood	Loddon
Winchelsea Playgroup	Winchelsea	Surf Coast
Annadale Playgroup	Mickleham	Hume City Council
Kalkallo Community Playgroup	Kalkallo	Hume
St Columbas Playgroup	Elwood	City of Port Philip
Stawell Neighbourhood House Playgroup	Stawell	Northern Grampians
Tallarook Playgroupw	Tallarook	Mitchell
Little Munchkins Playgroup	Avondale	Moonee Valley
Bright Playgroup	Bright	Alpine
Sebastopol Community Playgroup	Sebastopol	City of Ballarat
Essex Heights (Sunday)	Mount Waverly	Monash
Chinese Connections	Montmorency	Banyule
Pakky Pals Playgroup	Pakenham	Cardinia Shire Council
Mornington Community House Wednesday Group	Mornington	Mornington Peninsula Shire council
South Morang Chinese speaking Playgroup	South Morang	Whittlesea
Little Munchkinz	Eaglehawk	Greater Bendigo
Newlyn Playgroup	Newlyn	Hepburn
Little Parrots	Flowerdale	Murrindindi
Newstead Playgroup	Newstead	Mount Alexander
Grooves and Bounce Arnolds Creed Playgroup	Melton West	Melton
Mansfield Community Playgroup	Mansfield	Mansfield
Orchard Rd Community Playgroup	Doreen	Whittlesea
Burch Memorial Kindergarten Playgroup	Wonga Park	Manningham
Lincoln Road Babies Playgroup	Essendon	Moonee Valley

12

Projects

A Best Practice Framework for Playgroups-in-schools

About the project

The three-year Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project aims to build and strengthen relationships between schools and their co-located community playgroups. This project will create a Best Practice Framework for playgroups-in-schools. The framework will inform the provision of playgroups-in-schools across Victoria as an innovative form of early childhood integrated service delivery.

The importance of the project

It is well established that playgroup participation promotes positive outcomes for families and children. For families, these outcomes include strong social connections and parenting support. For children, these outcomes include increased wellbeing and social and cognitive benefits. Participation in playgroups is known to build parents understandings about the importance of play for children at home. This is important because the quality of play in early childhood is known to influence children's long term learning and developmental outcomes.

Playgroups-in-schools provide an exciting opportunity to strengthen relationships between families and schools in early childhood and expand parents knowledge about play for increased positive outcomes.

Participants Totals

Schools participating in project: 20

School staff participants: 30

Shared Learning sessions (interventions) completed*: 19

Family participants: 101

**Final Shared Learning Session is scheduled for Term 4, 2019*





Playgroup Victoria, drummond street services and Hullabaloo Music for All received a grant from Sport Australia under the *Move it AUS Grant Program*.

The *MoveIt4Kids* program promotes physical activity and a healthy lifestyle using the playgroup platform for delivery. Parents, carers and children aged 0-5 are invited to enjoy this active musical comedy experience via community playgroups.

Studies continue to show how vital exercise is, for all facets of life. This program encourages good habits, in the most fun way possible. Families can expect to be inspired, all while developing fine and gross motor skills, language skills and social skills.

MoveIt4Kids is a combination of movement, dance, self-expression, sport, songs and comedy.

The program will be rolling out sessions within Tasmania, Campbellfield, Geelong, Point Cook, Pakenham, Craigieburn, the Wimmera including Horsham and Ararat. This grant is for twelve months commencing April 2019.

Follow this program on Instagram @moveit4kids



ALL Come Out To Play!



ALL Come Out to Play! was presented to over 1300 children and 750 adults in this financial year. The sessions were showcased at major events such as *Romp and Stomp* at the Melbourne Museum, *Little Kids Day In* at Scienceworks as well as conferences including the Family and Relationship Services Australia (FRSA) National Conference and the Playgroup Victoria Conference extending the reach even further. 45 facilitators were trained to deliver the project within their local community and groups.

The project was delivered throughout metropolitan Melbourne, including *MPavillion* and to rural communities including Mildura, Port Fairy, Portland, Warrnambool, Sea Lake, St Arnaud, Ouyen, Colac, Bannockburn, Shepparton and Bendigo.

A collaboration with Victoria University saw lesson plans developed to enable further discussion and embedding of messages around gender equality as part of this project.

This project has been running for three years. It has been granted a funding extension of six months from the Free From Violence Fund and

Playgroup Victoria, in partnership with drummond street services and Hullabaloo Music for All, continue to deliver a program that is committed to harnessing the social structures and influencing the norms and attitudes of parents of young children through this evidence-based initiative to improve gender equality into the future. The sessions are fun and empowering for children of all abilities and cultural backgrounds.

has also received a grant with Gandel Philanthropy - that will see the program deliver to a wider audience over the next two years.

Additional funding will allow the project to deliver a sustainable approach - including a book that can be utilised by playgroup leaders, families and early childhood professionals.

Australian Vietnamese Women's Association (AVWA) joined the *ALL Come Out to Play!* partnership with a successful grant application. The grant came from The State of Victoria as represented by the Department Premier and Cabinet. *Capacity Building and Participation Program Medium Grants (Family Violence)* is a two year grant that will extend the current project to engage the Vietnamese community, in the primary prevention initiative to prevent violence against women.

Additional deliverables include translation of documentation, including a book on the program into Vietnamese. Multilingual trainers will deliver content to an array of professionals in Vietnamese communities. This grant commenced in December 2018 and closes in December 2020.



ALL COME OUT TO PLAY!

RESPECT EQUALITY

JOIN US ON A WHIRLWIND MUSICAL ADVENTURE WHERE FUN IS THE MAIN GAME! ALONG THE WAY WE WILL CELEBRATE RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH STORY TELLING, SONG & DANCE. THIS IS A FUN INTERACTIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER!

BOOKINGS AT PLAYGROUP.ORG.AU

ALL COME OUT TO PLAY! Lesson plans to be followed on with after the musical lesson

LESSON ONE LEVEL: P-1 DURATION: 45min

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn about differences in family structures, traditions and religious views about themselves as an individual.
- Indigenous awareness & other cultural backgrounds (gender, spirituality & languages)
- Health and safety awareness (gender, spirituality & languages)

How I will determine if outcomes have been met?

- Students will be able to understand that other children may have different family structures, traditions and different customs to themselves.
- Value and respect each other's opinions, upbringing and family life.
- Gain an understanding of indigenous culture and other different cultures of other students within the classroom.
- Awareness and compassion towards others.

Safety Considerations:

- Respectful assessment
- Valuing each other
- Listening to each other
- Supportive and respectful of others

Time	Activity/Content	Teaching Tools	Organisations	Equipment	Core Questions
0-10 minutes	Class discussion on different family structures & traditions. Who is in your family? Who else really makes up family systems?	Flash Cards: Family, Grandparents, Parents, Children, Grandchildren, Friends, Neighbours, Pets, Pets, Pets	Class in a Circle, Story Arcs, Story Arcs	Pen	Class discussion Questions to be answered
10-30 minutes	Activity 1: Students to draw an image of their family. Activity 2: Additionally, ask students to draw someone who makes family. Draw upon their discussion.	Class in a Circle, Story Arcs, Story Arcs	Class in a Circle, Story Arcs, Story Arcs	Pen	Class discussion Questions to be answered

MAIN BODY OF LESSON

- Class in a circle
- Students working at their tables
- Paint
- Classroom activity

LESSON CONTINUED...

ALL COME OUT TO PLAY! Lesson plans to be followed on with after the musical lesson

LESSON ONE RESOURCE: I AM UNIQUE WORKSHEET

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT MYSELF?

WHAT MAKES ME SPECIAL & UNIQUE?

WHAT AM I GOOD AT?

SPECIAL THINGS ABOUT MY FAMILY? (eg culture, beliefs and celebrating)

I AM PROUD OF?



16

Playgroup Development

Stories from the field

Transition from smalltalk to community playgroups

Words by LOUISE BUCKLE-SMITH Playgroup Development Consultant South-West Regional and Rural

Strong partnerships have formed with Local Government Areas (LGA), smalltalk facilitators and management through Communities of Practice. Local facilitators have worked closely with the City of Ballarat to transition three smalltalk groups to community playgroups.

In each group, partnerships have developed between the LGA and the schools, who have embraced the playgroups as part of their school and broader community.

It has been inspiring to watch families establish community playgroups after smalltalk due to the relationships and confidence that has been developed within these groups. The newly established community playgroups have shown great leadership and have welcomed others within the community.

Playgroup Development Consultants have provided positive support and mentoring throughout the year, assisting the playgroup to set-up. They have also provided resources, attended sessions, shared advice, stories and activities.

A little about each Community Playgroup:



Warrenheip Community Playgroup

Warrenheip is a town approximately 8 kilometers to the east of Central Ballarat, Victoria and has a population of 669. The current pupil population predominately comes from surrounding areas. The playgroup started as a community playgroup mid-year 2019.

Sebastopol Community Playgroup

Sebastopol is a low socio-economic area. The families that attend the playgroup mostly do not have links to the school but live within close proximity. The Sebastopol Primary School provides a space for seven playgroups over the course of the week. The playgroup started mid-year 2018.

Yuille Park Community Playgroup

Early Years and P-8 Community College. Yuille Park is in a low socio-economic area and one of the most disadvantaged schools in the state. Most of the families that attend the playgroup have links to the school or live within close proximity. The playgroup started as a community playgroup mid-year 2019.



Smalltalk to Community Playgroup

Words by BELINDA DAVIES Playgroup Development Consultant South-West and North-West Metro

This year we have had the opportunity to put together a transition package for a supported playgroup model to move to an independent playgroup model.

The aim of the presentation was to impart ideas and information about ways to run a playgroup and what benefits it provides families.

The presentation was delivered to migrant information services. This group of parents have only been in Australia for 5 years and have limited English skills. The children and parents, and extended family members are welcomed the support, learning what they can access in their communities.

Playgroups provide a platform for making new friends, practicing English skills, understanding how the education system works and stimulating children's interests.

The space was set up with activities and each area provided a summary of the purpose of the activity. Children and their parents were invited to sit and experience the activity together. The conversation naturally became about the purpose of play and why children will benefit from it.

Parents and children tried each of the activities. Interpreters assisted attendees to ask many questions about how the activity was helpful for their child's age and stage of development. Activities included: playdough, dinosaur play, making maracas and playing with puppets.

Feedback from parents stated that they enjoyed the activities and learned how to run their own playgroup.

Bullarto Primary School Nature and Art Playgroup

Bullarto is a small town located in the Shire of Hepburn. It is seven kilometres south-east of Daylesford, with a population of approximately 73.

This rural playgroup runs Tuesdays 10am -12pm during school term.

“I immediately felt relaxed and at home in this amazing environment. I encourage any families with a passion for nature, a penchant for recycled materials and a child-size pair of gumboots to give it a go.”

- **Maureen Hatcher** Playgroup Development Consultant South-West Regional and Rural



20

Ballarat and District Playgroup Facilitator's Network

Words by MAREE RYAN Playgroup Development Consultant South-West Regional and Rural

Values

Situating the child and their families as the most important consideration, modelling and maintaining respect, inclusion, goodwill, professionalism, a willingness to share ideas, resources, challenges and joys within the spirit of generosity.

In our local area we identified a need for facilitators to communicate with their wider network. The Ballarat and District Playgroup Facilitators Network formed for this reason.

The first meeting, held on 24th April 2019, provided an opportunity for facilitators to meet each other, share their thoughts about the various aspect of the group, including: communication guidelines, administrative details, and the many possibilities available. For example – topics to explore, workshop ideas, developing our own Facebook page, sharing resources and ideas. It was a very positive meeting.

Many local facilitators expressed their interest in joining the group. Support, friendship and information sharing has been fostered in relaxed meetings, regular updates, suggestions and information sharing on the Facebook page.

In my Playgroup Development Consultancy role, I have also visited some of the playgroups represented in the group. This has been a fantastic way to build on the relationships we have developed.

The network has been fortunate to hold their meetings at Parent Place, run by City of Ballarat Council. It has been a comfortable, family orientated space. The Facebook page has 30 members. It is here we upload minutes, photos and sharing of events. It has been a great way to communicate quickly and efficiently, with most participants reading updates. Despite lots of

encouragement, participants have tended to read, rather than upload ideas and resources. My goal for the year ahead would be to share the role of contributions.

The highlights for me, have been the personal connections that have been made, across a diverse range of settings. It has reinforced the importance and value of facilitators – who are largely volunteers. It has been a pleasure to help facilitate support, and hopefully reduce feelings of isolation. Groups members are committed, hardworking and interested in supporting families, and that is a passion we share.



Pictured: Visiting a network member in her playgroup.





Professional Engagement



Playgroup Victoria have developed an online magazine for our professional audience which is published four times a year, during each school term. Each edition is centred around a theme identified as important at the time.

Each edition typically contains a *News* section, a *Feature Story*, a *Focus On* section, a *Research* section, a *Playgroup Stories* section, a *What's On* section and a *Tools, Resources and Media* section.

We have created four editions this year, and seven editions on a whole.

Those signed up as Professional Affiliates will receive the latest edition. Learn more about professional affiliation on our website:

www.playgroup.org.au/for-professionals

Early Years News, Studies and Insights

It is an essential part of the Playgroup Victoria evolution to share up-to-date information about the benefits of play and playgroup. This is a multi-faceted process, one that involves a consistent feed of news and insights from academics, researchers, early years educators, writers and professionals working in the early years field.

Pictured: Monash University Conceptual Play Lab Academics



This year we have connected with a wide range of people including Dr Sandro Demaio, Author Jackie French, Play Therapist Bridget Dooley, academic Gabriel Eichsteller, Assistant Professor Dana Frantz Bentley and Australian Early Years Laureate Marilyn Fleer, to name a few. We have delved into topics such as nutrition, STEM, literacy, disability, anti-bias education, health, wellbeing, early childhood development, nature play and more. You can explore more about these topics on our blog.

We also aim to have a wide discussion online, sharing articles and news stories that link to early years education and our monthly themes: Summer Fun, Healthy Habits, Creative Play, Active Play, Messy Play, Music, Science, Letters and Numbers, Nature Play, Dress-Up and Play, Sustainability, Celebrations Month. These themes act as a guide for the year and invite our audience to consider topics that impact children, family life, society and education.



Pictured: Two children who attend the Monash Windermere Early Years Learning Centre

“We need to know more about what families do to support and nurture these beautiful minds that are wondering, are creative. We want to open up their minds, we don’t want to shut them down. Families can do that really beautifully. Playgroups for instance, and kindergarten educators, all have the capacity to continue to develop that inquiring mind so that these young children can become the future chief scientist or be the lead engineer in Australia, the leading advocates for engineering, but in that process, we want to make sure we have the research to feed into it and that’s what we are going to be doing.” - **Marilyn Fleer**

Marilyn is the Foundation Chair in Early Childhood Education and Development at Monash University and Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellow

26

Events

Playgroup Victoria events

Library Week August 2018



Library Week was a celebration of culture, language, community, inclusion and friendship.

Mandarin, Dutch, Arabic, Italian, French, Spanish, Polish, Japanese, Urdu and English were the featured languages at our local libraries as we shared stories, songs and crafts. Melissa Thompson from Signee Tots Playgroup signed Auslan for the children at the North Fitzroy Library and together the group did a unique rendition of The Rainbow Song, which beautifully tied in with our featured picture book, *The Rainbow Fish*, by Swiss author Marcus Pfister.

Head to our Facebook to watch the bilingual storytimes.

Children's Week at Melbourne Museum - Romp and Stomp October 2018



As the end of the year nears, Children's Week comes at a good time, allowing us to reflect on that year that has been and what is to come.

Families, friends and colleagues came together at various events across the state. Local play days took place in Hobsons Bay and East Gippsland. As well as a wonderful Pop - Up Playgroup in Yambuk.

It was a big week for Playgroup Victoria's *ALL Come Out to Play!* project. In partnership with drummond street services, *ALL Come Out to Play!* showcased their lively education project at MPavilion and at *Romp and Stomp*.

Over 2,800 people attended our Romp and Stomp event at the Melbourne Museum. The theme was Little Explorers and explore we did! The main stage was full of fun and excitement as ARIA nominated Teeny Tiny Stevies took to the stage with their family friendly tunes. Sing&Grow therapist Meredith Drinkell had everyone singing along with her catalogue of classic children's songs and nursery rhymes. While the event was aimed at children, the activities and exhibits at the museum captivated the adults, too.

"It's all about that connection between us, it makes you feel good." - **A thought shared as Romp and Stomp 2018 ended.**

Thank you to everyone who came along and made Children's Week wonderful, fun, interesting, inspiring, imaginative, musical, loving, relatable, funny and creative. You are all making a difference in the lives of young children. Huge thanks to the Melbourne Museum. You continue to bring joy and new discoveries to us all.



Conference March 2019



Playgroup Makes a Difference- Living Well in our Community

The topics featured at the 2019 conference were fascinating and thought provoking. Discussion ranged from social capital, to nutrition, to indigenous culture, gender, nature play, self-care and new research.

These are issues highly relevant in our lives and great knowledge will aid us as we move forward, creating wonderful early years experiences for our kids and families.

Highlights were presentations given by Playgroup Victoria patron Dorothy Scott, Social Pedagogy guru Gabriel Eichsteller, Kids In Nature Network, Play Therapist Bridget Dooley, Professor Richard Fletcher, Author Jackie French and Executive Director of the Sandro Demaio Foundation Natalie Molino. There truly are too many good moments to mention in this short synopsis. You can now jump on our website and read more about the presentations given on the day. Explore more about the speakers on our blog.

Thank you to all involved as we strive to 'Live well in our community'. Playgroup does make a difference, in so many diverse ways and we look forward to building on this knowledge.



Little Kids Day In June 2019



It was wonderful to see so many happy, inquisitive faces exploring Scienceworks for our annual *Little Kids Day In* event in collaboration with Scienceworks.

The wintry weather did not dampen spirits at *Little Kids Day In* in June. The grand adventure was sunny and bright thanks to all contributors: Sing&Grow, The Dreaming Space, Hullabaloo Music, Hobsons Bay Library, Auslan Stage Left and all 1,800 plus attendees.

Scienceworks wowed attendees with their *Ground-Up* exhibit, designed for children aged 0-5. The planetarium was a hit for all ages and the arts and crafts play spaces were lively fun, as too was the music play area. The baby play area was a wonderful retreat from the lights and action of the day. It was fantastic to have the opportunity for rural playgroupers from Ballarat and Hillside to attend the event as part of the Science Morning Tea access program grant. Read more about this event on our blog www.playgroupblog.org

“The funding from the grant was based on the Science Morning Tea program which assists families in accessing Museums Victoria. In this case we wanted to ensure families in areas who may be isolated or not always able to make it to Melbourne, have access to Scienceworks and Melbourne Museum with greater ease, especially leading up to National Science Week.”

“This is probably one of the most rewarding parts of my job to see families access Museums Victoria and I love giving away free tickets to them so they can come back whenever they want.” - **Suzie Luke, Museums Victoria**

Pop-Up Playgroups

Playgroup Victoria has run a series of Pop-Up Playgroups across the state. We have a van full of activities and resources, tailored to the specific play experience.

Some of these pop-ups have included ongoing sessions with Glen Eira City Council. We also held sessions with Melton Councils during National Playgroup week. Our pop-ups are open to community members and can be booked on our website. These pop-ups continue to add to our community offerings and enable us to network in the field- most importantly, promoting play.



Pictured: Moments captured at Pop-Up Playgroups this year

“It is wonderful to be able to create play spaces, to bring people together in their communities” - **Mylie Nauendorf** Playgroup Victoria Events Coordinator



Celebrating Playgroup Playgroup Stories

Throughout the year, we feature a diverse array of playgroups stories. Their stories live on our blog. These stories give voice to the people and communities of Victoria - from bush playgroups, to supported playgroups, to grandparents playgroups, to deaf playgroups, to playgroups for families with a child with ASD or ASD-like characteristics. Our playgroup stories allow us to learn more about people's daily lives and rhythms, hardships and triumphs. We gain an insight into societal changes, organisational changes, and personal changes. We discover what contributes to playgroups longevity. We meet the stalwarts

and the community minded. We hear from first time Dad's and playgroup facilitators keeping an eye out for the most vulnerable. These stories highlight that playgroup isn't an aside for little children, playgroup is a central meeting place for families, parents, carers, siblings, grandparents and educators.

The early years impact the years to come and our playgroup stories are a vital part of the fabric of our society. They provide an insight into where it all starts and creates positive experiences that shape the future to come.

To read all playgroup stories visit our blog - www.playgroupblog.org

Stories worthy of note:



Signee Tots Playgroup

“Deaf people have lots of language barriers as it is and then, as it is for all mothers, you are isolated even further at home, losing the connections you had before at work and that sort of thing. Signee Tots is definitely to fill a hole and connect people, and I think that is why it is growing.”- Melissa Thompson, Signee Tots Playgroup Facilitator



Brunswick Dad's Playgroup

“Early childcare feels undervalued these days,” said Mitch at Brunswick Dad's Playgroup.

“From birth to age five, a child's brain develops more than at any other time in life! This stage is important, and to me staying at home is like giving them their own private tutor. I'd be happy to work a couple of years extra at the end of my career in exchange for being able to dedicate this time to him now, when he needs my attention the most.”



Eco Explorers Bush Playgroup

“Out here they are climbing logs, jumping in puddles, getting dirty and muddy. They are getting all of those networks firing.”- Forest School Leader and playgroup facilitator, Adam



MyTime Ferntree Gully

“We lead really isolated lives.”

What it's really like to care for a child with a disability.

34

Playgroup in the Media

Local



September 1, 2018

The Courier Ballarat

Award-winning play group offers supportive role for dads

[Read full article here](#)



March 18, 2019

The Hepburn Advocate

Children and parents invited to an event for National Playgroup Week

[Read full article here](#)



March 25, 2019

Nine News Melbourne

The Biggest Playgroup at SEA LIFE Melbourne

[View video here](#)



March 22, 2019

East Gippsland News

Making a play for funding

[Read full article here](#)

National



March 25, 2019

Nine News Now

The Biggest Playgroup at SEA LIFE Melbourne - National Playgroup Week

[View video here](#)



September 8, 2018

Mamamia

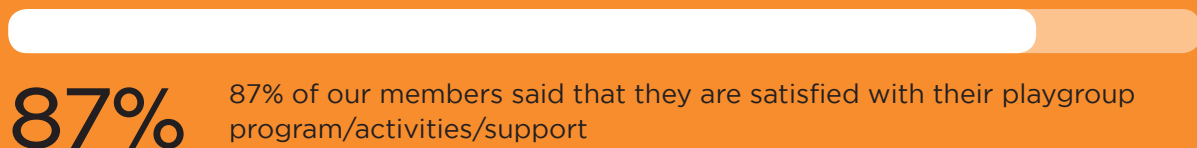
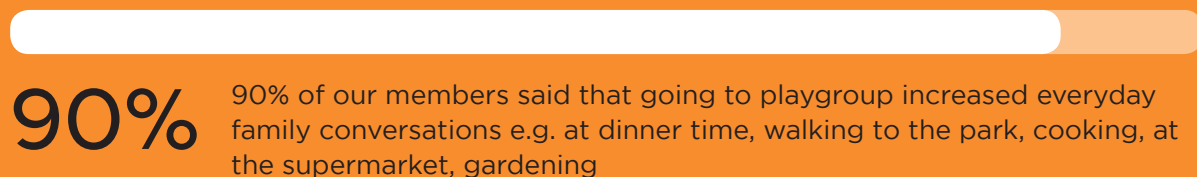
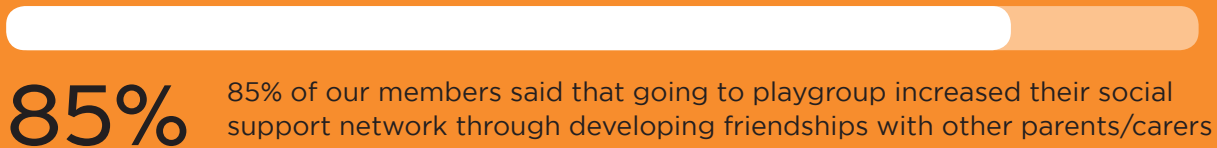
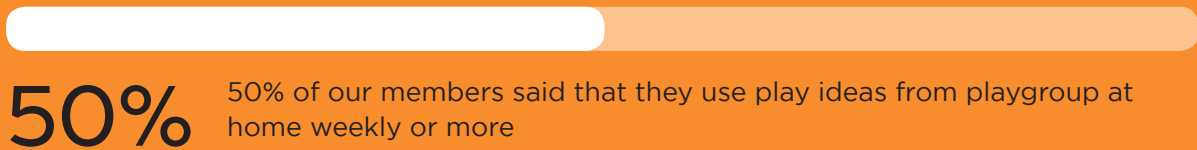
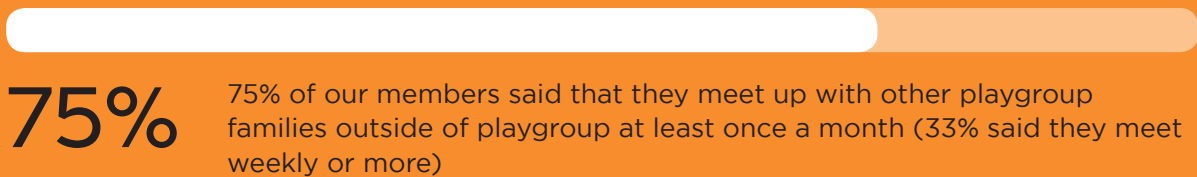
A World of their Own - article written by Sinead Halliday on behalf of Playgroup Victoria. "We lead really isolated lives." What it's really like to care for a child with a disability.

[Read more here](#)

36

What our Members said

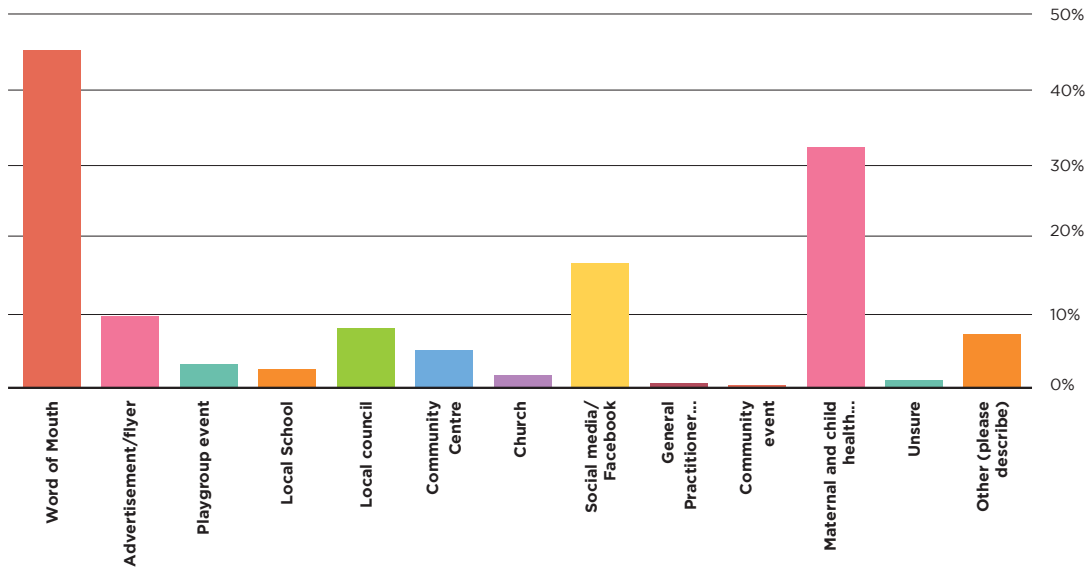
Survey snapshot



How did you find out about playgroup?

Answered: 370 Skipped: 133

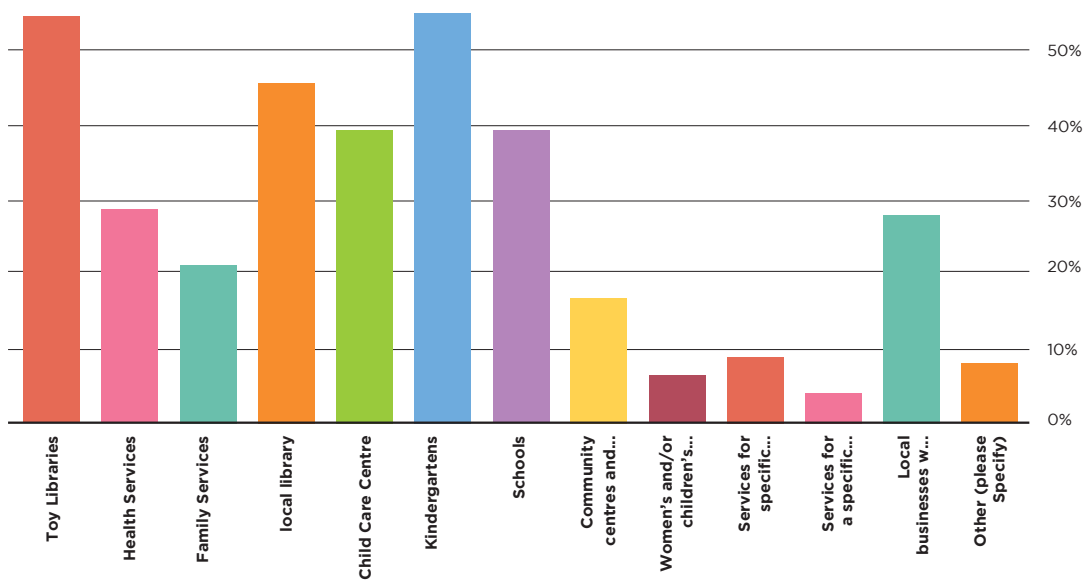
37



We noticed an increase in the percentage of members who learnt about us through social media and Maternal and Child Health nurses

Which of these resources/services/businesses have you heard about at playgroup?

Answered: 348 Skipped: 155



We asked members which of the following resources/services/business had they heard about at playgroup



“It is nice to meet other people who are like-minded and hear what they are doing with their kids.”

- Parent from Darebin Creek Bush Playgroup

Social Connections



Facebook

12,798 Followers

Playgroup Victoria's public Facebook page has evolved this year, adapting to the changing algorithms of the platform. As the existing algorithms favour popular content, we build on this. We share lots of popular content that highlights the importance of playgroup, the early years, parenthood, inclusion, play, diversity and creativity. We use our Yearly Calendar as a guide, featuring content that delves deeper into the theme. We share topical news articles, artwork, memes and video content. Video content is popular and we continue to monitor the types of things that appeal to our audience, and what resonates with our playgroup philosophies.



Wonderful World of Playgroup

1,000 Members

This closed Facebook group was brought to life with the aim to gather members of the playgroup community, in a safe space. We have guidelines to minimise any commercial posting, advertising of inappropriate material.

Playgroup staff are part of the group to provide advice, offer assistance and share local news.

This group is a safe space for parents and educators to share news, ideas, events and questions about playgroup. It is slowly growing, and we hope that it continues to blossom.



Instagram

1,830
Followers

Instagram has been a great tool. As a popular visual medium, this provides us with an opportunity to inspire people to connect with their local playgroup community. It allows us to share articles, illustrate different types of play, such as bush play, intergenerational play plus events.



Blog

14.7k
Page Visits YTD

Our blog is home to our playgroup stories. It is here that we delve deeper into the everyday lives of people, towns and communities. It gives a voice to playgroupers and professionals invested in the early years- whether that be as a facilitator, educator, researcher, author, dad, grandparent, or carer.

We keep an eye out for interesting and topical news, and often reach out to people in the public who have something to offer.



Resources

As an organisation we thought long and hard about what playgroups need - what inspires them in a changing world where technology has made a big impact on how we connect and communicate. We aim to create in sustainable ways and connect with each other and the outside world. We don't want to buy plastic toys or buy

brand new things. Bearing this in mind, we started to create downloadable monthly booklets, that have blossomed as the year has progressed. Each month we feature a different topic. These topics are diverse and touch on a range of themes that are important to the early years, to families and to society.



Pictured: Samples of our activity booklets



Playgroup Victoria
playgroup.org.au

346 Albert St, Brunswick, 3056
1800 171 882 toll free (within Victoria)
or (03) 9388 1599 (outside Victoria)

9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday