

Playgroups

Families Supporting Families

Playgroup Victoria Annual Report 2012–2013



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

in their local communities, Supported playgroups or Intensive playgroups which are run by agencies for children and parents who experience various levels of vulnerability or disadvantage.

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

Playgroup Victoria thanks the following corporate partners.



Message from the Chair



2012/13 has been a busy and profitable year for the staff and Board of Playgroup Victoria Inc. The new membership approach, established as a result of feedback from our members, has been successfully implemented and consolidated. The true benefits to playgroups will be gradually realised over the next few years as we utilise the features of the recently implemented ICT systems.

The Board set itself an agenda to revitalise the Strategic Plan and utilised the skills of our CEO to lead us through a process of redefinition of our strategic objectives into an outcome driven focus. We now have strategic directions established to 2018 to guide our decision making and operations.

The Board has a strong emphasis on risk management and conducted risk assessment and planning for both governance and operational risks as part of our annual governance calendar. In addition to the usual governance business of the board, we led a renewal of our statement of objects in our constitution which facilitated our successful application for full charitable status. These new statements better reflect our purpose of supporting playgroups for all Victorian families.

Another major achievement for Playgroup Victoria Inc. in 2012/13 has been the allocation of \$1.2 million in funding from the Victorian Government to establish a playgroup development project for select rural areas.

This program will provide a valuable resource to rural communities, and the Board thanks the Premier, the Hon Dr Denis Naphine MP and Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, the Hon Wendy Lovell MLC for their support.

The Board has been rejuvenated by the addition of new members, Kate Booth, Felicity Cara-Carson, Jane Watson and Leanne Russell, but also sadly farewelled some long standing expert members in Kath Cape and Rachel Murphy, and highly contributing elected members, Bronwyn Clarke and Christine Chew. The ongoing legacy of their contribution is that they have all chosen to continue to volunteer their expertise and experience through continued involvement on various Board committees. Acknowledgement of Board members would not be complete without expressing my utmost respect for continuing members, Rebecca Middleton and Rachel Flottman. I thank them all for their time and valued contribution.



I also wish to thank the CEO of Playgroup Victoria Inc., Viv Cunningham-Smith, for her leadership and commitment. She has brought great enthusiasm and passion to the role.

Lastly I wish to thank the staff and volunteers of Playgroup Victoria Inc., whose considerable efforts ensure that playgroups continue to thrive across all of Victoria.

Karen Harvey-Collings
Chair

Outcomes Framework for Playgroup Victoria

Victorian Population Outcomes which Playgroup Victoria contribute to:

- 1. Early Years Outcomes For Children Pillars:**
 - Being Healthy: All Victorian Children are born and remain healthy, develop positive health behaviours and achieve optimal health
 - Building Wellbeing: All Victorian children develop socially and emotionally, are resilient and have a strong sense of identity and wellbeing
 - Learning and Development: All Victorian children learn and develop through engagement in meaningful, high quality educational experiences
 - Staying Safe: All Victorian children experience and grow up in safe environments and communities
- 2. Victorian Child and Adolescent Outcomes Framework:**
 - a) Child Outcomes**
 - Optimal social and emotional development
 - Healthy Weight
 - Optimal Physical health
 - Optimal Language and Cognitive Development
 - b) Family Outcomes**
 - Adequate Exercise and Physical Activity
 - Positive child behaviour and mental health
 - Successful in literacy and numeracy
 - c) Community Outcomes**
 - Healthy Adult Lifestyle
 - Parent promotion of child health & development
 - Good Parental Mental Health
 - Free from child exposure to conflict or family violence
 - Positive Family Functioning
 - d) Supports and Services**
 - Accessible Local recreation Spaces, activities and community facilities
 - Low Levels of Crime in Community
 - High Quality Early Education and Care Experiences Available

COAG Population Outcomes which Playgroup Victoria contributes to:

- Children are born and remain healthy
- Children's environments are nurturing, culturally appropriate and safe
- Children have the knowledge and skills for life and learning
- Children benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage, especially Indigenous children
- Children are engaged in and benefiting from educational opportunities.

Department of Social Services [DSS] outcomes which Playgroup Victoria contribute to:

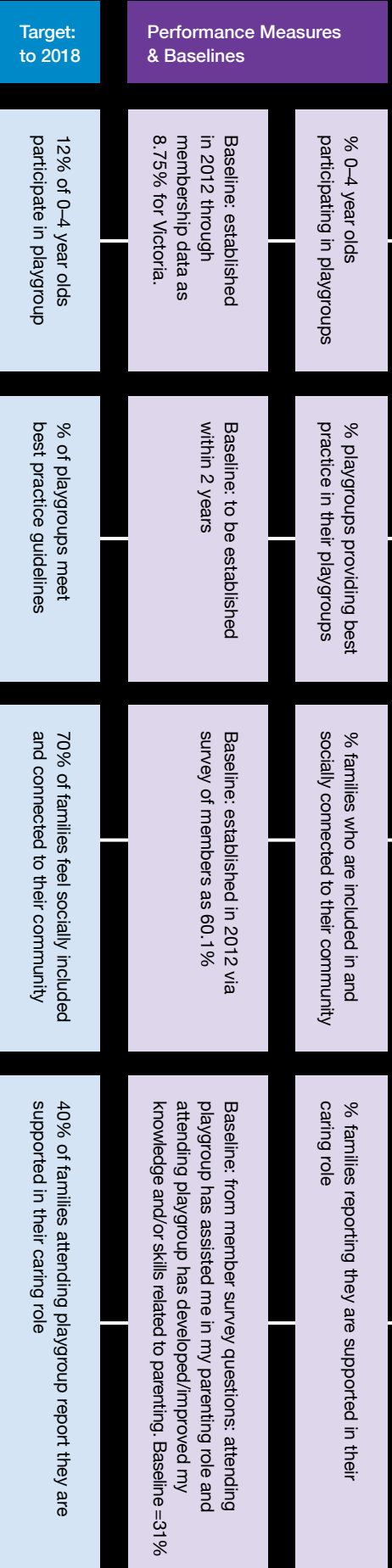
- To improve family functioning
- To increase community connectedness / social inclusion
- To provide services in a manner appropriate to client which satisfies their needs
- To improve family, social and economic participation

And to DEWR outcome of:

- Children have access to culturally appropriate support, care and education throughout early childhood that will equip them for life and learning

Playgroup Victoria's consumers are children and families attending playgroups and funded agencies providing & supporting playgroups

Performance Outcome for our Consumers: Children Learn and Grow through/in their relationships with their families and community





Government funds to help boost rural Victoria playgroups

The Hon. Wendy Lovell Minister for Children & Early Childhood Development announced at Playgroup Victoria's Conference in May this year that the Napthine government was funding a \$1.2 million playgroup development project over three years. The aim of the project is to boost community playgroup participation in rural areas and improve the journey for regional families from birth through maternal and child health services, playgroup, kindergarten and the more formal early year service system.

Playgroup Victoria will work in partnership with Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) to deliver the project for children and families in the areas of Wimmera, Ballarat, Gippsland and surrounds.

In each area a Playgroup Development worker will work with parents, community playgroups and the early years service systems to improve participation of children from birth in to community playgroups. Given what we know about learning through play in the first 3 years of a child's life, playgroup development workers will work with parents, existing community playgroups and the early years' service systems to improve participation of children from birth in community playgroups.

The project will engage the early years service system to ensure an integrated local planning approach which maximises the participation of families in all early years opportunities including Maternal and Child Health Services, local government services, child care, kindergarten and school. The journey of children and parents through the early years should be fun and easy and the project will look at developing innovative models to ensure young families can successfully navigate the pathway of the early years.



What parents do at home with young children has the greatest impact on a child's social, emotional and intellectual development. Strong attachment between a parent and child strengthens the effect of learning experiences and enhances the child's progress and development.

ARACY in the Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story¹ identified that:

- Parents are the strongest influence in determining their children's life chances, and
- The research shows that we cannot achieve our outcomes for children without an investment in families and parents.

1 Eleutheriou K., Emerson L., Fear J., van Bueren D., Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story: Social Marketing Campaign. May 24th 2012 Presentation South Australia and ARACY Annual Forum 2012.

Warracknabeal Playgroup's supported session

Warracknabeal is a small rural community in the north west of Victoria between Horsham and Hopetoun with a population of about 2700. Warracknabeal Playgroup, which won Playgroup of the Month in May 2012 for providing a valuable service to local families, is the only playgroup in town running almost every weekday from a room under the grandstand at local Anzac Park.

The playgroup and Rural Northwest Health nurse Michelle Schilling felt some of the area's more vulnerable families were missing out.

Woodbine Inc is a non-profit organisation that provides accommodation, day programs, supported employment and training for people with disabilities in Warracknabeal some of whom had recently become new mothers. Recently arrived to the area as well were families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Giving these new mums and newly arrived families an opportunity to strengthen their parenting skills in a safe, supportive environment was seen to be ideal. A supported playgroup would help women, their children and families to improve their skills and strengthen connections in the communities leading to better health and wellbeing outcomes.

Playgroup Victoria funded the formation of a supported playgroup at Warracknabeal Playgroup in response to this identified need. Warracknabeal Playgroup and Woodbine Inc work together to identify families to target.

One of the playgroup's members, Narelle Drage, participated in Playgroup Victoria's two day Supported Leader Training held in Horsham in April. Narelle is now facilitating Warracknabeal Supported Playgroup.



Grandparents Playgroup

Recognising the important relationship that grandparents play in caring for their grandchildren Moonee Valley City Council and Playgroup Victoria undertook a study to identify the support needs of grandparents and their grandchildren in Moonee Valley. The study found that there was an increasing number of grandparents who were caring for their grandchildren on a regular basis which was due to a range of factors including both parents being in workforce, separation or divorce of parents and increasing costs of childcare and local childcare availability.

The study found that some grandparents had even moved from interstate or overseas to help their families with childcare and were feeling isolated since they had left all their networks behind. Grandparents also face the prospect of a changed early years and learning environment compared to when they raised their children and sometimes find it difficult to navigate the new expectations and opportunities available for children.

In response to the study a specific grandparents playgroup was established to provide all the benefits we know playgroup can produce for

children and their carers including a friendly caring environment, learning opportunities for children, a new social network for grandparents and connection to services in their community.

Playgroup Victoria and Council held an information session for interested grandparents which assisted them to set up their own community playgroup run by grandparents for grandparents. The playgroup has been a huge success with more than 12 families now attending regularly. In fact the grandparents have gone on to establish a book club, a gardening club and meet regularly for coffee outside the playgroup. Their families have gotten to know each other and grandparents and their grandchildren are no longer isolated in their home.

Playgroup Victoria and Moonee Valley City Council continue to provide support for the newly established playgroup and many grandparents have attended Playgroup Victoria workshops and network meetings to assist them in their roles in the playgroup.

Lincoln Road Playgroup – Essendon

Playgroup Victoria has had a development project operating in Moonee Valley for 3 years. The Development worker identified as key issues a shortage of playgroup venues in the City and an increasing number of new parents groups emerging from maternal and child health. Existing small venues would only accommodate parent groups for a short time, once their children became mobile they needed to move to a more suitable venue with access to toys and outdoor area.

The City of Moonee Valley provided the Lincoln Road Early Years facility free of charge for playgroups to use. This showed great foresight and commitment. The venue mostly accommodates new parent groups which transition from maternal and child health services to being their own community playgroup. Its also great that next door is the Moonee Valley Toy Library, who shares the amenities.

Playgroup Victoria worked with City of Moonee Valley to place families in this venue. There are currently 8 sessions running at this facility, including a MyTime, a Grandparents playgroup and a Dads Playgroup.

The Playgroups attending the Lincoln Road Early Years facility formed a committee to manage the playgroup sessions. The expectation that the facility would need to be volunteer run was clear to the families in the very early stages of development of the site. Playgroup Victoria development worker and the Council playgroup resource officer chaired the first meeting to form the Lincoln Road Playgroup Committee.

Lincoln Road Playgroup committee members have taken on a volunteering role in their community, are connected and valued and have increased their skills. Their children will learn and grow in communities where strong affiliation and personal connections can make a powerful impact on their sense of belonging, self-worth and attachment.

The Committee consists of President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Enrolment Officer, Fundraising Officer and General Members.

Playgroup Victoria resources were provided to the committee members and members of the Committee attended the “Committees Made Easy” training. This provides a coordinated approach to running the Lincoln Road Playgroup, establishes communication between the

playgroups, City of Moonee Valley, Toy Library and other stakeholders.

The Lincoln Road Playgroup have fundraised for their playgroup, they are also working together with City of Moonee Valley in upgrading the outdoor area and are involved in managing the facility and the playgroup members. The committee members have taken on a volunteering role in their community,

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MyTime

MyTime is a local support group for people caring for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition that gives parents the opportunity to socialise and share experiences with others who are in a similar situation. Playgroup Victoria oversees 32 MyTime groups across the state and each group is led by an experienced worker and a play helper who provides activities for the children who attend with their carer.

According to MyTime facilitator, Maurita Carlisle, MyTime provides parents and carers with some time out from their caring role and the chance to share their stories in a safe and caring environment.

“Parents attending determine what topics are discussed in the group so the information is relevant and specific to their needs. The group also helps to empower parents to have confidence to navigate their way through the disability service sector” she said.

The benefits for the children attending include developing social skills and adapting to routines and structure set during the group time.

The children develop skills to separate from their parents and form relationships with other adults in a safe environment.

“MyTime gives parent and children hope for a brighter future”

A parent who attends MyTime commented that “My Time offers a place where it’s safe to be me. A place where I know I won’t be judged or told that I am wrong for the way I feel. I have a voice and trust in my group that what I share won’t be disclosed for the world to hear. I know I am not another number in the system”.

MyTime groups are located throughout Victoria and are available to those who are eligible to receive the Carer Allowance (Child) for a child with a disability or chronic medical condition. Each group meets on a regular basis either weekly or fortnightly. The groups occur at the same time and venue for each session. To find out more about your local MyTime group, visit www.playgroup.org.au or call the MyTime Manager at Playgroup Victoria on 1800 171 882.

PlayConnect

PlayConnect playgroups cater for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) or ASD-like symptoms. Playgroup Victoria supports PlayConnect playgroups in a range of areas and location across Victoria. Research shows that about 1 in 100 children, almost 230 000 Australians, have an ASD and that it is more prevalent in boys than girls. Every child with ASD has unique abilities, symptoms, and challenges, and every individual has problems to some degree with social skills, empathy, communication, and flexible behaviour. However the level of disability and the combination of symptoms varies tremendously from person to person. The effects of an ASD can often be minimised by early diagnosis and with the right interventions, many children with an ASD show marked improvements.

The PlayConnect playgroups are kept small so that the children (and the facilitator) are not overwhelmed. The children don’t have to have a diagnosis and siblings are welcome to join in. The PlayConnect program currently has 13 playgroups spread across Victoria. The number of groups unfortunately has been halved since last year but the demand for playgroups is still very high and growing. As Early Intervention moves away from social skills groups there is a growing demand for PlayConnect playgroups where children with ASD are accepted, catered for and assisted to learn social skills as well as develop a stronger bond with their family.

Playgroups cater for both the parent/ carer and child/children. At PlayConnect parents can breathe a sigh of relief as they will not be judged because their child doesn’t “fit in”. They are supported by the facilitator who assists them with support, information, connections and behaviour modelling for their children. Frequently parents talk about the difference PlayConnect has made to their lives and how it has assisted their children.

“Today I learned that it is OK to feel withdrawn, upset, angry, confused and

questioning everything. Still trying to let the diagnosis sink in so I'm very sorry to my friends to whom I haven't spoken. In a way I feel people are judging me because of my gorgeous

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little boy. We will get there my boy. We all love you. It was nice to have a cry and when someone said "I know what you are going through", for the first time I didn't want to smack them in the head for lying. It's actually inspirational all the mummies at the playgroup today. I felt like I was a part of something and not worrying if my son was going to play up." Mother – Romsey PlayConnect

All of our facilitators have training and experience in ASD and are skilled at working with both carers and children. Playgroup Victoria aims to be a leader in the field of Autism and Play. Currently the entire program in Victoria and Tasmania is undergoing Certification with Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria) so that we will be recognised as implementing a best-practice program. We hope this will assist us in our quest to secure on-going funding from the Federal Government for this important program.



Anchor

Anchor Inc a homelessness agency in the Yarra Ranges started Building Brighter Beginnings supported playgroup with Victorian Government SPPI funding in 2008 to engage homeless children aged 0–5 and their parents in early learning activities in a safe and supportive environment. The playgroup would be an opportunity for parents and children to do what families would normally do in a home, play together to ensure children's critical early learning. These families however did not have the benefit of a stable home and playgroup became the vehicle to ensure these children

Mothers chose a name and the All About Fun Playgroup was born. Anchor Inc paid for Playgroup Victoria memberships for all families who attend the playgroup as they identified that this was the key to sustaining support for this community playgroup.

Anchor's support has gradually reduced over six months backed up with Playgroup Victoria assistance available at any time. Playgroup workshops to assist the parents with organising play activities and the playgroup as a whole will be

The Anchor worker Amelia Harris who had facilitated the playgroup for the last 4 years worked with two committed mothers who became the playgroup leaders. Anchor agreed to continue to provide some low level assistance for six months while the supported playgroup changed into a community playgroup, long enough for the group to become fully established and to ensure mothers were ready to take over the leadership. "I am so proud to be able to be part of this wonderful initiative" – Amelia Harris Anchor.

had their parents as their first and most enduring educators in spite of their homelessness.

This year mothers in the group decided they would like to change from being a supported playgroup to a community playgroup. They felt supported and resourced enough to independently run their own playgroup.

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accessed through Playgroup Victoria's PVTV online channels.

The group has identified that setting up a gold coin donation system will help them support themselves.

Amelia from Anchor has said of the playgroup "Families who attended the supported playgroup faced barriers such as homelessness, isolation, financial difficulty and mental health. For them to take on the responsibility of a community playgroup is a great achievement. With Anchor's support their dream of becoming independent in one part of their life will have everlasting impacts on their self-esteem, parenting and ability to address adversity that comes their way.

Indigenous

The Koorie Playgroup Network has continued to serve a vital role in connecting professionals working with Koorie playgroups across Victoria in 2013.

Koorie Playgroup Network meetings commence with a Welcome to Country, provided by local Indigenous elders. A welcome song using the Aboriginal Flag or parachute provides the opportunity for introductions to take place, while modelling creative approaches to providing a welcoming environment in a playgroup setting. The local Indigenous word for welcome is applied to the song where permission is granted by local language speakers. This approach is also in keeping with the 5 outcomes of the Victoria Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF); Identity, Community, Wellbeing, Learning and Communication.

Our first meeting was hosted by Djeetgun Aboriginal Playgroup, Orbost. The meeting coincided with a presentation to the playgroup as recipients of our June Playgroup of the Month Award for 'Providing a seamless transition from playgroup to kindergarten'. The playgroup is a partnership between East Gippsland Shire Council and Orbost Regional Health and is based at the maternal child health centre close to the town's only kindergarten. The meeting had a focus on the VEYLDF, with information provided about how Playgroup Victoria has engaged with the VEYLDF through training and the development of a series of posters to support playgroup facilitators in introducing families to the Framework. The facilitators of the Djeetgun Aboriginal Playgroup are already addressing the outcomes of the VEYLDF through their playgroup program which reinforced how the VEYLDF is integral to what we advocate as best practise in playgroups. At the DEECD regional level, a VEYLDF

kit to support early years services in engaging with Koorie communities is currently under development and this was highlighted at the meeting.

The second meeting for 2013 was hosted by the Total Learning Centre (TLC) at Mildura Primary School. The TLC is operated in partnership with the school by Mallee Family Care. 9 playgroups operate across the week at TLC, each focussing on an identified need; young parents, postnatal depression, active/healthy living, Indigenous culturally focussed, pre primary, mental illness, books/story telling, pregnant mums and a group geared towards re-entry to education for parents. Outreach has been introduced in a hope to overcome barriers to playgroup participation for families. The centre employs several Indigenous women who work across all of the TLC playgroups and in close partnership with the school and wider community. Aunty Janine Murray, Mildura PS Liaison Officer, commented

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that many local Koorie kids do not attend kindergarten so by having the TLC co located with a school, families can build relationships with staff at the Mildura PS prior to their children commencing school. All members of the staff at TLC feel very strongly about the role that playgroup plays in ensuring children have a positive start to school, with the general consensus being that when you visit classrooms in the school, you can really tell which kids have attended playgroup at TLC.

Our final meeting for 2013 was hosted by Wathaurong Childrens Centre, Geelong. The Milla Milla Playgroup has operated as an integral

activity at the Centre for many years, providing a culturally-based connection for families into the early years service system. Strong links with Maternal and Child Health and Kindergarten ensure that Indigenous children and their parents/carers have a positive start to being part of a formal early learning setting. A team approach to supporting families with young children was apparent with key DEECD Koorie education professionals and the Aboriginal Best Start Facilitator in attendance, highlighting their roles connecting families in and out of the playgroup setting. A VAEIA update was given to meeting participants including the in home support and home based Learning Program, the Indigenous Professional Support Unity Program, the Budget Based funding Forum, the Darebin Best Start Aboriginal Reference group and the SNAICC 5th National Conference at which the VAEIA Early Childhood Sub Committee presented on the history of Aboriginal Early years

services in Victoria. The Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative operates as a hub and provides a one stop shop for the local Koorie community with, in addition to the Childrens Centre, Koorie Maternity Service, medical, dental and general health and well being programs for local families.

Indian Playgroup, Taare Zameen Par Playgroup

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) playgroups are one of the most common playgroups started in Victoria. Many CALD groups are commenced by Maternal and Child Health Nurses, agencies and organisations that see the use of playgroups as a platform for socialisation and a 'starting point' to integrate newly arrived migrant families into local communities.

For many CALD playgroups the isolation of language or culture brings families together and provides them with support from either a paid facilitator in a supported playgroup or a community volunteer in a community playgroup setting.

The Tar Zameen Par Playgroup is one such example of a CALD playgroup integrating seamlessly into their local community.

The local Maternal Child and Health Nurse contacted Playgroup Victoria with the intention of connecting these families via a community playgroup.

After consultation with the staff of Playgroup Victoria a CALD Indian playgroup was formed.

Now after six months, a group of 12 families now attend playgroup each week, the families have a roster for activities such as colour day, everyone

Playgroup has provided these families with parenting confidence, community connectedness, the social networking opportunities, relevant programs, services and support while being able to maintain their cultural identity.

has to wear a particular colour and bring food in that colour, they also celebrate their special cultural days, and the families also meet outside of the playgroup hours at the local park, all of which is organised by the playgroup leader. The fathers also attend an Indian Dads playgroup on the weekend.

Playgroup has provided these families with parenting confidence, community connectedness, the social networking

opportunities, relevant programs, services and support while being able to maintain their cultural identity.

The playgroup leader is actively involved in the local community, providing information to her group about the services available to

them in their local community. The leader advocates for playgroups to her community and volunteers her time in organising playgroup activities and attending network meetings.





Family Day Care Playgroup Warrnambool

Family Day Care is in its 37th year in Warrnambool and for at least 30 of those years, Warrnambool Council has been running facilitated playgroup sessions for Family Day Care educators (formerly known as Family Day Care carers).

Playgroup sessions are run by two of the council's Family Day Care Children's Resource Officers at Warrnambool's Aquazone aquatic recreation centre every Monday for one and a half hours.

Most of the Family Day Care educators are already out in the community with children in their care but often on their own, in isolation from other adults and other children. They meet other educators at Warrnambool Council run meetings and training sessions but at weekly playgroup sessions they get to chat and catch up more informally. The carers have the chance to share experiences with each other and friendships form.

Activities to interest the different ages and stages of children attending are set up indoors and outdoors and children are free to engage in them whenever they please during the session.

Family Day Care educators sign in on arrival and sheets of paper and

drawing implements are set up for children to sign themselves in "as long as they make a mark, any kind of scribble on a piece of paper is okay or if they don't want to that's okay too," Resource Officer Haley Stacey said. Giving them an opportunity to make their mark on paper like their carers is a way of engaging children. If they bring their lunch they'll eat that. At the end children often like to sing and play Ring a Ring a Rosie.

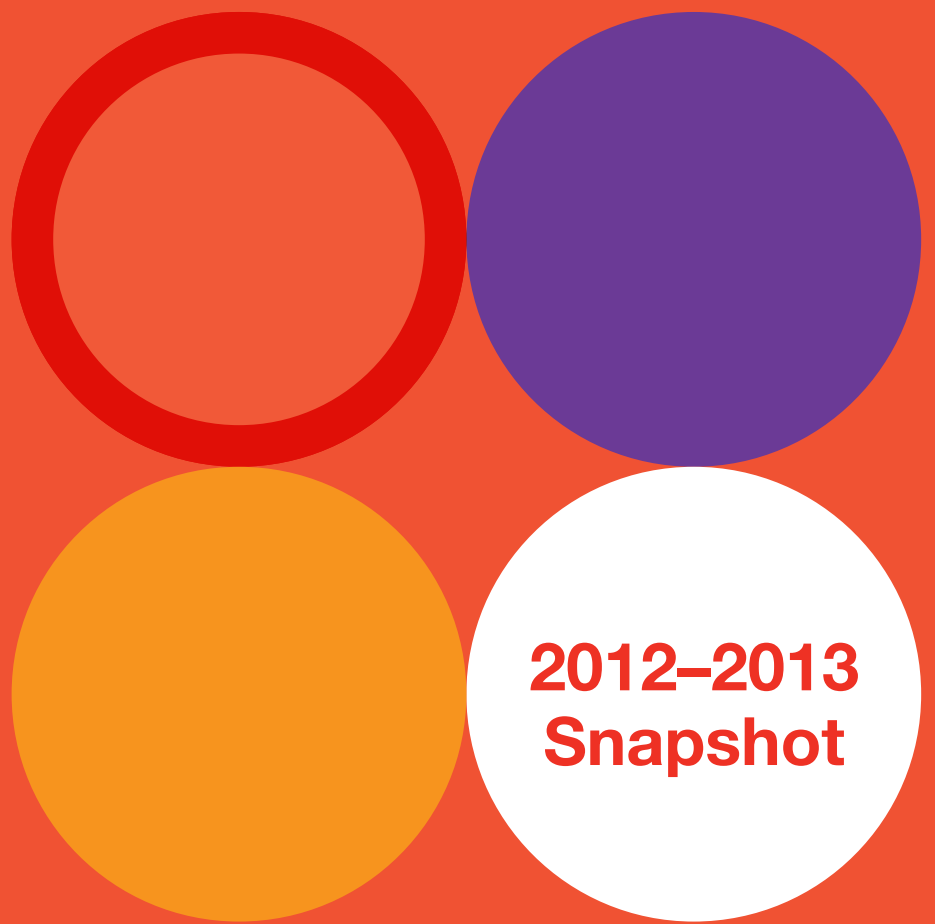
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playgroup sessions they get to chat and catch up more informally. The carers have the chance to share experiences with each other and friendships form.

It goes to show that playgroups are not only great for children but for parents and carers too and they can be held anywhere in the community that matches the needs of the group.



**2012-2013
Snapshot**

Playgroup Awards

The inaugural Playgroup Awards has been very successful with 92 nominations across eight categories highlighting the diversity of playgroups across Victoria.

Included in the finalists are a range of community and supported playgroups and individuals that work in and with playgroups on both a volunteer and paid basis.

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

Of the 92 nominations, finalists were selected in each category:

COMMUNITY

Community Playgroup of the Year (1–4 sessions)

Yallourn North Playgroup

Te Puawaitanga Playgroup Hampton Park

Daytime Dads Playgroup Narre Warren

Charlton Playgroup

Italian Playgroup Brunswick

Eynesbury Bugs Playgroup Eynesbury

Community Playgroup of the Year (5+ sessions)

Woodend Playgroup

St Andrews Playgroup Rosanna

New Gisborne Playgroup

Murrumbena Playgroup

Community Playgroup Leader of the Year

Tony Megna, James Cook Playgroup

Iman Mojaled, IQRA Playgroup Moreland

Sasha Barrow & Corrin Buckett, Alexandra Playgroup

Cherie Hazelman, The Concord Playgroup

Kate Marie Davis, Eynesbury Bugs Playgroup

Community Committee of the Year

Marriott Waters Playgroup Lynbrook

Northern Moreland Playgroup Fawkner

Murrumbena Playgroup Hughesdale

The Concord Playgroup Bundoora



SUPPORTED

Supported Playgroup of the Year

Djeetgun Aboriginal Playgroup Orbost

YMCA Playgroup Craigieburn

Little Owls Playgroup Darley

PlayConnect Playgroup Romsey

Supported Playgroup Facilitator of the Year

Annette Jager Glover, Simple Pleasures Playgroup Berwick

Sandra Palmer, Afghan Connection Playgroup Hampton Park

Monica Kanbang, South Sudanese Playgroup Deer Park

Shantell Grant, PlayConnect Playgroup Romsey

Supported Playgroup Coordinator of the Year

Julie Wilson, Djeetgun Aboriginal Playgroup Orbost

Jade Moerenhout, Moorabool Shire Council

Jenny Rukuwai, Hobson's Bay City Council

Sue Ellis, City of Greater Geelong

PLAYGROUP AGENCY OF THE YEAR

Anchor Inc

Kangan Institute

VICSEG New Futures

Golden Plains Shire Council

Gowrie Street Primary School

Laying the Foundations Conference

The 2013 Playgroup Victoria State Conference – Laying the Foundations provided over 220 participants with an array of keynote speakers and workshops dedicated to the mental health and wellbeing of families and how playgroups support those families.

Prof Dorothy Scott, Dr. Sally Cockburn, Kate Carnell and Dr. Sonia Sharpe provided a wealth of knowledge and experience as keynote speakers, while there were over 20 practical workshops for participants to attend.

The Conference theme ensured plenty of thought provoking discussion on family centred practice, the use of playgroups in supporting families and children and how playgroups can make a difference to all people.

Laying the Foundations 2014 will see Playgroup Victoria return to its roots with the theme of 'Learning through play'. This will engage researchers, practitioners, facilitators, coordinators and playgroupers in a wonderful array of workshops and plenary sessions.



Playgroup Victoria Ambassadors

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

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

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg is an adolescent psychologist, author and regular guest on Radio 3AW. Michael presented a masterclass at this year's conference and is committed to promoting the positive impact playgroup has, particularly on fathers.

Jay Laga'aia

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

Steve Biddulph

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

Jeannette Rowe

Jeannette Rowe has been a children's book creator for the past 20 years. Jeannette is the author of *Yo Yo goes to Playgroup* and has been an influential literary presence in early childhood for many years.

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



Improving Our Services to Members

This year has seen a radical shift in the way we deliver services to our members. These services are the life blood of playgroups providing them with the infrastructure and support they need to keep them happening and growing in their communities. Our major changes have included:

- Going online with our own PVTV to provide workshops, information and support for leaders and professionals in playgroup.
- A new branding program which targets more successfully the recruitment and retention cycles of playgroup.
- A new online system for payment and management of community playgroups online.

Playgroup Victoria has also reached out to its members throughout Victoria by bringing our services direct to regional and rural areas in 2013 through playgroup platforms. We will be extending these to metropolitan areas in 2014. In addition we have provided a range of events for members and to promote playgroup to new or pondering parents to be.

Events

Our events have included:

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

Corporate Partners

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

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

bankMECU: We are creating a vital link with bankMECU to provide financial services information to playgroups and families. Many playgroup contact people have already used the direct service of bankMECU to start bank accounts and provide a solid platform for their playgroup.

Melbourne City Volvo: Melbourne City Volvo are supporting Playgroup Victoria through a range of initiatives including major support for the Rural Playgroup Project. They are also providing discounts to families for child restraint fittings and will be visible across many playgroup platforms.

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

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

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

OUR RANGE OF MEMBER BENEFITS INCLUDES:



Playgroup Member Consultant



Free induction workshops



Member products



PVTV online video portal



Discounts on selected Playgroup Victoria events and at our online shop.



Member magazine



Playgroup Victoria membership card – Australian Baby Card



Affiliation pack



Playgroup of the Month

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

Congratulations to Callignee and Traralgon South Playgroup, ReGen Playgroup, Gowrie Street Primary School playgroups, Taar Zameen Par (Indian) Playgroup, Christ Church Playgroup, OurTime Playgroup, Woodend Playgroup, MS Peer Support Playgroup, Grandparents Playgroup and Djeetgun Aboriginal Playgroup.

September 2012 Playgroup of the Month was Shepparton's Gowrie Street Primary School which at the time ran three playgroups as part of the school's overall outreach program to engage families.

The playgroups provided facilitated learning opportunities to families who may not have the financial capacity to access other activities and gave parents a choice of different playgroups to suit their children. Since winning the award the school has increased the number of playgroups from three to five and is a finalist in the 2013 Playgroup Awards.

Christ Church Playgroup in Warrnambool was November 2012 Playgroup of the Month for providing a warm, welcoming environment. The playgroup is auspiced by the Anglican Mothers Union which has been operating in Warrnambool for over 100 years to foster family life.

Grandparents Playgroup Essendon won the May 2013 Playgroup of the Month for providing an outlet for grandparents socialise and feel part of their local community and for their grandchildren to play and learn.

Orbost based Djeetgun Aboriginal Playgroup was June 2013 Playgroup of the Month for creating a seamless transition for local Koorie families from playgroup to kindergarten. Djeetgun Aboriginal Playgroup is a partnership between East Gippsland Shire Council and Orbost Regional Health and is based at a maternal child health centre close to the town's only kindergarten.

Playgroups named Playgroup of the Month from July 2012 to June 2013 were:

July: Callignee and Traralgon South Playgroup

August: ReGen Playgroup Coburg

September: Gowrie Street Primary School playgroups Shepparton

October: Taar Zameen Par (Indian) Playgroup Essendon

November: Christ Church Playgroup Warrnambool

February: OurTime Playgroup Lalor

March: Woodend Playgroup

April: MS Peer Support Playgroup in Ivanhoe

May: Grandparents Playgroup Essendon

June: Djeetgun Aboriginal Playgroup Orbost

What our members said

What works to tell people about playgroup?

42.5% of members found out about playgroups through their Maternal and Child Health Nurse.

39% found out about playgroup through word of mouth.

17% found out about playgroup through the Playgroup Victoria website.

Local communities spread the word about playgroups

89%

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

Playgroups connect people in their community

49% of members found out about their local kindergarten / preschools or schools through playgroup

38% found out about good local businesses through their playgroup

46% of members found out about toy libraries through their playgroup

34% found out about council libraries through their playgroup

Nearly all of our members saw their children get the chance to develop social skills through interaction with other children

What playgroups mean to members

92% of members say their playgroup is friendly

83% find their playgroup affordable

80% say their playgroup is relaxed

74% say its fun and safe at playgroup

Outcomes of playgroups for members children

97% of members saw their children get the chance to develop social skills through interaction with other children

65% valued the improved physical activity playgroup offered for their children

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

96%

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

85%

of members prefer to receive their membership services online

Outcomes of playgroup for parents

97% of parents said attending playgroup has provided them with a sense of friendship, community and/or connectedness

89% felt attending playgroup had assisted them in their parenting role

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

A large proportion of members reported feeling that their children were improved in turn taking and sharing

Members = those responding to the annual state survey in 2013

Our Team in 2012–2013

Playgroup Victoria Board of Directors for 2012–2013

Chair Karen Harvey-Collings

Director Rebecca Middleton

Director Rachel Flottman

Director Kate Booth

Director Christine Chew (resigned December 13)

Director Rachael Murphy (resigned January 13)

Director Rosemary Calvert (resigned February 13)

Director Katherine Cape (resigned August 13)

Director Nicole Mina (resigned July 13)

Director Felicity Cara-Carson (joined May 13)

Director Jane Watson (joined July 13)

Director Leanne Russell (joined August 13)

Board Committees

RISK AND AUDIT

Chair Rosemary Calvert (resigned Feb 13), Kate Booth (appointed Feb 13), Karen Harvey-Collings, Rebecca Middleton, Jane Watson

NOMINATIONS

Chair Karen Harvey-Collings, Bronwyn Clarke, Christine Chew

PERFORMANCE AND REMUNERATION

Chair Karen Harvey-Collings, Rebecca Middleton, Rachel Flottman, Bronwyn Clarke

STRATEGY AND POLICY

Chair Rachel Flottman, Katherine Cape, Lisa Dundas, Rachel Murphy, Leanne Russell

Honorary Solicitor

Roland Burt

Playgroup Victoria Management Team

EXECUTIVE

Chief Executive Officer Vivienne Cunningham-Smith

General Manager Corporate Operations Jason Doherty

CORPORATE OPERATIONS TEAM

Manager Corporate Services Carolyn Eley

Manager Events Jane Bezzina

Manager Training Deb Sedlarevic

Manager Communications Denise Lucey

Manager Rural Project Cath Healy

Manager Membership Nancy-Lee Merzel

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TEAM

Manager Practice and Research Janine Regan

Manager PlayConnect/SPG Isabella Rosinsky

Manager My Time Genevieve O'Connor

Manager SPPI Deborah Njegac

Manager ISP Rachael Nicholson

And the wonderful staff of Playgroup Victoria



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