

Play For Our Future

Submission to the Review of Children, Youth and Parenting Programs by the Department of Social Services

February 2025



Playgroup NSW is a not-for-profit organisation that helps connect families and children to people and services in the community to positively impact their quality of life.

Our impact at a glance:

- 550 playgroups a week
- 26,000 playgroups a year
- 65,000 members across 99% of postcodes
- 650 volunteers, 75 staff

For over 50 years, Playgroup NSW has delivered and linked families to vital services such as parent support groups and playgroups for those experiencing vulnerability and diversity, and those who value community connections. We also support families to navigate the broader community and tertiary support systems, with playgroups an effective, local, place based soft entry point underpinned by an early intervention and prevention approach.

We are proud to offer valuable volunteer opportunities and experiences through our community led programs, and we support our volunteers to create connections through play within their communities.

All Playgroup NSW programs delivered across NSW and ACT are designed to help families navigate the joys and challenges of parenting and build strong, resilient communities.

Thousands of families connect via Playgroup sessions affiliated with or delivered by Playgroup NSW run every week, building their parental capacity, building their village and helping their children learn.

Playgroup NSW is the leading peak body for playgroups in NSW, committed to inclusivity and community, and at the heart of our playgroups lies the essence of connection. Since 1972, we focus on giving children an equal opportunity in education, health and wellbeing.

We play a key role in ensuring that the voices of children and families are heard on matters that affect them at both the state and federal level, as well as lead a range of national consortia research projects, including building evidence based best practices, inclusive enablers and impact measurement frameworks.

Relevant to this review, Playgroup NSW receives Child and Parent Support (CAPS) Program from DSS, with Playgroup NSW a consortia partner with playgroup association across Australia. Playgroup NSW is not a member of Playgroup Australia and operates independently. Recommendations in this submission reflect the views of Playgroup NSW.

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**"CHILDREN NEED
THE FREEDOM AND
TIME TO PLAY.
PLAY IS NOT A
LUXURY. PLAY IS A
NECESSITY."**

- Kay Redfield Jamison
Professor of Psychiatry



Introduction

We work with passion and pride to ensure that every child and family has the very best start in life. Thriving children, families and communities are firmly at the centre of all we do. Unstructured, creative play is essential to children's development – especially in the first 2,000 days of their lives.

Playgroups provide a safe and fun environment for play and help parents and children develop important social networks. They also help children explore and make sense of the world, and build critical skills that will enable them to interact with others, solve problems, manage stress and adapt to change. **Playgroup gatherings – seemingly informal yet with much practice governance and planning underpinning our approach - serve as a space where children bond with their parents and carers, and families connect with other families, and communities come together to support one another.** Parents experiencing the challenges and joys of parenthood, cite playgroups as offering a valuable source of support and a platform to share experiences and connect to community and services.

Playgroup NSW welcomes to opportunity to provide feedback to the external Review of Children, Youth and Parenting Programs being undertaken by the Department of Social Services (DSS). We commend the work of DSS in compiling such a compelling evidence review, which highlights playgroups repeatedly as a key model. **We are particularly passionate about community playgroups and their vital, place based role in society for all children and all families. Now is the time to review and better invest in community playgroups as critical community assets.** So too, we are thrilled to showcase our innovative approaches beyond playgroups to provide wrap around services and supports to all families.

Having attended a number of online consultations and an in person consultation session, our submission draws not only on our expertise and experience in successfully delivering the Child and Parents Support (CAPS) Program, as well as a range of other child and family services and supports centred on harnessing the power of play to benefit children, families and communities in unison. So too, our models enhance sector capacity and deliver benefits to government in both the short and long term.

Our multifaceted approach to impact sets playgroups apart as unique, early soft entry points that are local, place based and driven by community, for community. Playgroups offer a unique platform for fostering social connection, early learning, and parental engagement. Evidence shows that participation in playgroups:

- Improves children's cognitive, social, and emotional development.
- Strengthens parental confidence and social networks.
- Builds cohesive communities.

Playgroup NSW serves families in metropolitan, regional, and remote areas. Our programs address both mainstream community and diverse supported needs, including disability, multicultural communities, Aboriginal children and families and socio-economic disadvantage. **We love what we do – with children and families firmly at the centre.**

Our Key Recommendations

Drawing on our 50+ years of expertise, our recommendations are aimed at amplifying the strengths of the current CAPS program as well as identifying opportunities to positively move the needle and position playgroups as a recognised community asset accessible to all children and families.

Our work at Playgroup NSW directly aligns with the three goals of the Family and Children Activity:

- Children and young people thrive.
- Adults are empowered.
- Family relationships flourish.

Our recommendations are framed to ensure the following outcomes sought by Playgroup NSW:

All playgroups are free for all children and families in all areas

All playgroups are accessible and inclusive for all children and families

All families are aware of playgroups as early as possible and actively supported to attend

Playgroups are the foundational support of foundational supports - providing timely, place based, local earliest access and navigation to all children and families

Recommendation 1: Continued Investment in current CAPS funded playgroups

We recommend that our current CAPS and FLAG funding to continue as a baseline, and advocate for annual indexation commensurate with CPI and wage increases. Our current CAPS funded playgroups are achieving real outcomes and long lasting impact across a diverse demographic of children and families.

Recommendation 2: Investment to incubate new playgroups and nurture existing playgroups

We recommend investment to identify new playgroup needs and better nurture existing playgroups by identifying the barriers and cost drivers to ensure success and sustainability.

Recommendation 3: Pilot new innovative models to target disengaged or vulnerable cohorts of children and families

We recommend investment in tailored and targeted approaches to engaging those not attending, those marginalised and those most vulnerable, including but not limited to:

- Dads
- Children and families from CALD communities
- Parents with intellectual disability
- Children in out of home care
- Children and families experiencing mental illness
- Aboriginal children and families
- Children and families experiencing family and domestic violence
- Dual income families
- Children in non traditional care arrangements (foster, kinship, adoptive)
- Children with disability and developmental delay
- Single parent families
- Children and families recently arrived to Australia
- Families experiencing breakdown
- Rural and remote children and families

Playgroup NSW is piloting a range of innovative approaches to engage to these cohorts, as well as collating stories to raise awareness and engagement across all as the caregivers are the decision makers in attending playgroup – if they attend, children attend. Communities for Children funding is recommended to support some of these initiatives.

Recommendation 4: Playgroups are recognised as a key foundational support

We recommend that playgroups are recognised as a key general and targeted foundational support, providing early and timely support, information, advice, peer to peer support to all children and families, including tailored and supported services and supports children and young people with developmental delay or disability and their families. Playgroup NSW offers the full spectrum of community and supported playgroups, peer to peer supports, parent capacity building, information and advice, community and tertiary referrals and navigation support.

Recommendation 5: Reinvigoration to better attract, support and retain thriving, capable volunteers and workforce

We recommend investment to better attract, nurture and retain quality staff and volunteers, provide volunteer to work opportunities, support early childhood qualifications, deliver intentional workforce planning, investment in facilitation to ensure continuity of services, and mitigation of competition with the broader early childhood and care workforce.

Recommendation 6: Support to formalise partnerships with ACCO's for reciprocal benefit

We recommend investment to support ACCO and playgroup partnerships for reciprocal benefit to ensure that all Aboriginal children and families are included.

Recommendation 7: Transformation funding to improve data and impact reporting capability

We recommend investment to build the data and impact reporting capability across playgroups, underpinned by robust user experience mapping to provide real time data, inform strategic service planning, measure impact and reduce the current administrative burden to ensure more funding goes direct to children and families. With this, we recommend funding includes change management and implementation support for families, staff, volunteers and organisations.

Recommendation 8: Support to better streamline referrals into and out of playgroups

We recommend investment into our prenatal resources and awareness campaign to scale nationally, as well as a campaign across social media, television, print on the power of playgroups. Referrals in from GP's, child and maternal health nurses, family relationship services, mental health services, disability services, ECEC providers, migration specialists, community linkers, ECI partners, FDV specialists, requires additional investment. Referrals from playgroups and transition pathways out to ECEC, schools, health services, community services, disability and tertiary supports is a foundational support playgroups are well positioned to deliver.

Recommendation 9: Invest in playgroups as a local, place based early intervention, prevention, protection service and connectors

We recommend investment to ensure playgroups are providing critical services and supports, as well as connecting children and families to tertiary services and supports. Playgroups are a timely and trusted soft entry point that play a key role in protecting and enhancing child right's and providing access to community and tertiary services and supports for individuals and families in need.

Recommendation 10: Better support for children and families beyond playgroups

We recommend increased investment in building parental capacity and early childhood engagement in addition to playgroups, and for children and families who may not attend playgroups. Our Playgroup NSW parent resource hub is a growing resource, as are our early home learning environment packs and capacity building workshops for parents.

Recommendation 11: Investment in co-designed and co-commissioned research agenda

We recommend investment in research that is codesigned by children and families to better underpin the evidence base for playgroups and drive innovative and best practice, as well as articulate the value of playgroups to all stakeholders across qualitative and quantitative measures.

Recommendation 12: Co-designed child and family journey mapping

We recommend investment in co-designed research to better map the child and family journey in the early years space to identify barriers and enablers, improve navigation, create efficiencies and ensure all children and families are getting the services and supports they need as early as possible. Playgroup NSW seeks to work with DSS to map all playgroup and peer support offerings to reduce complexity and support ease of navigation across mainstream and tertiary services and supports, including fluidity between across duality of supported and community.

Recommendation 13: Improved commissioning approach for CAPS that better reflects the local, place based intent of the program

We recommend discussions to better approach the commissioning of CAPS to better reflect the local, place based intent of the program, ensuring optimal transfer of investment to those who need it most – children and families.

Recommendation 14: Long term funding contracts

We recommend long term funding contracts with option for renewal to:

- Underpin certainty for children and families;
- Ensure continuity of service delivery;
- Provide security for staff and volunteers;
- Assist with venue leasing and partnership agreements;
- Support viability for providers;
- Enable longer term service planning;
- Value expertise, experience and quality organisations.

The Current State of Play : Playgroups as Critical Child and Parent Support

Playgroup NSW is proud to deliver and partner to deliver a range of community and supported playgroups.

For our CAPS community playgroups, Playgroup NSW Data is as follows:

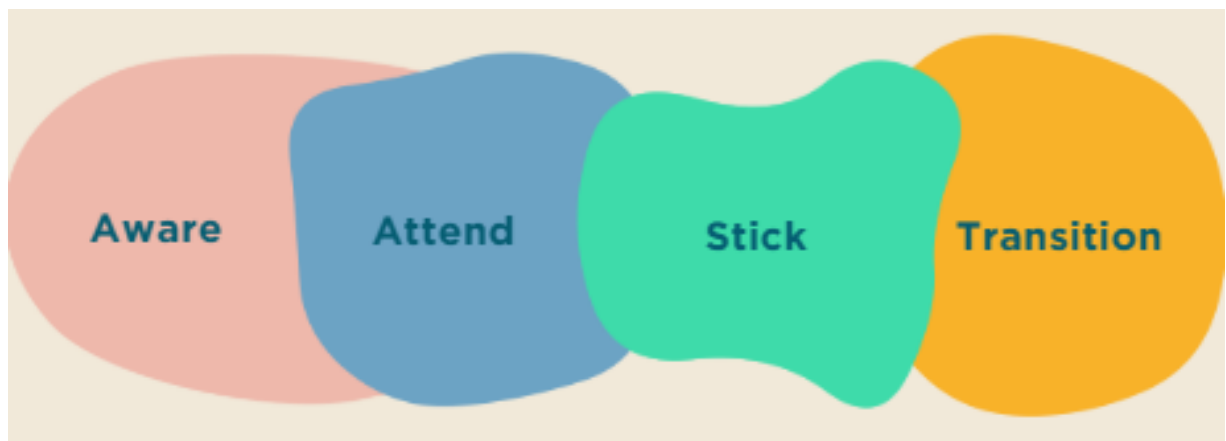
- 354 CAPS/FLAG sessions (some weekly, fortnightly and monthly) - not including pop ups.
- Census data last year which was CAPS/FLAG plus organisational: Adults – 2617, Children – 3229, though generally sit around 4540 adults and 5602 children.

Playgroups are a popular and vital part of our communities, supporting social connections and learning for both children and adults. They are an informal way for parents and caregivers to engage outside the home and can often be the first step in building friendships and developing a supportive community.

Playgroups help families identify opportunities for learning at home by encouraging playing, reading, talking, and singing with children, access to supportive parenting strategies, and helping children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, resourcefulness and confidence.

Playgroups: A Child and Family Journey

At Playgroup NSW, we simplify the child and family journey along these four key domains:



Benefits to Children

Playgroup can help children develop:

- literacy and numeracy skills
- social and emotional skills
- fine and gross motor skills
- sensory pathways, which are important to all learning

- cognitive and executive functioning skills
- dispositions for learning ('habits of mind'), such as cooperation, purposefulness and persistence.

A child's first 5 years of life is the most important time for laying the foundations for all future health, wellbeing, and learning. Brains are built over time and more complex skills are built on the foundations of basic skills as children engage in relationships and experiences in their earliest years.

The first 3 years, before children even enter formal education are the most critical time in the child's brain development, it's when development happens fastest. Parents are children's first and most important teachers and play a crucial role in helping to achieve the best outcomes for a child, therefore what families do every day with their young children affects how they develop and learn.

Children who attend playgroups during early childhood have significantly better child development when they start school. The benefits of playgroup are seen across all domains of child development: physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development, and communication. Learning through play is fundamental to the healthy development of children. Learning for young children happens best in the context of warm, loving relationships.

Benefits to Parents

Attending playgroup can help parents and carers:

- gain an understanding of what and how children learn through play and other experiences
- receive ideas for activities they can do at home to support their child's learning
- develop an increased sense of belonging to the school, preschool, children's centre or community
- interact with educators and professionals, breaking down perceived barriers
- interact with other parents and carers and share knowledge and experiences
- build connections, resilience, peer to peer support
- connect and engage with other services and supports in their community
- reduce family breakdown and mental health impacts

When parents thrive – children thrive.

Playgroups show parents and carers how they can support their child's learning through simple things. This may be talking more about what they're doing or seeing, reading regularly to their child or singing familiar songs. This awareness allows them to become a powerful positive influence on their child's learning, health and wellbeing.

Benefits to ECEC and Schools

Playgroups can benefit preschools and schools through opportunities to

- convey early learning messages to families starting the early learning in playgroups
- identify, support and intervene early

Connections with a local playgroup may lead to:

- increased parent involvement in school boards, governing councils and classrooms
- increased enrolments for associated preschools or schools
- improved transitions into the next stage of a child's early learning journey.

Benefits to Community

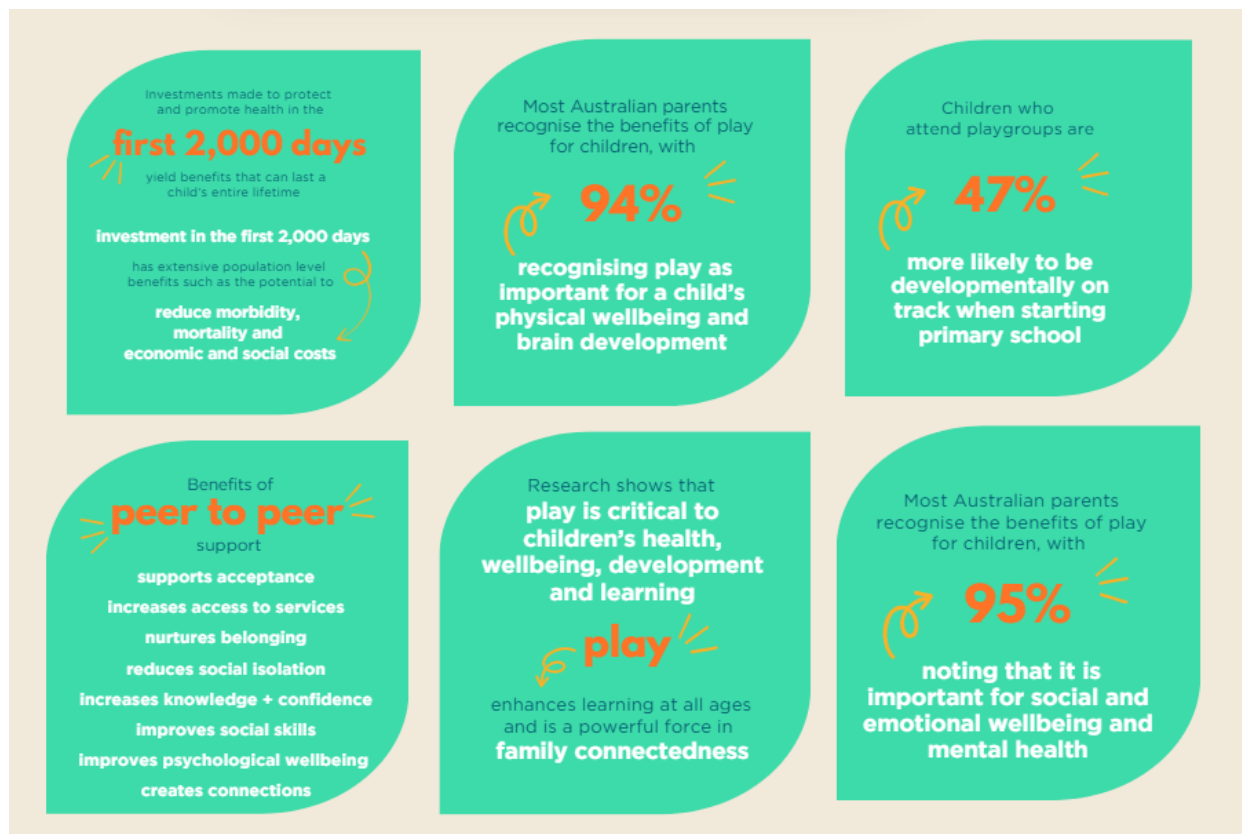
Playgroups can benefit communities by providing opportunities to:

- connect parents, caregivers and children to services and experiences within the local community.
- earlier access for health or development support for parents and caregivers, that will strengthen children's inclusion and involvement in the community.
- support more diverse, thriving, connected and inclusive communities for all.

Benefits to Government

Research shows that for every \$1 invested into playgroups, there is a \$3.60 return on investment.

Further, we know that investing in the early years paves the way for better outcomes and cost efficiencies in the short, medium and longer term through the lens of government expenditure.



Play For Our Future : Reframing Playgroups for Changing Need

The context within which playgroups are operating is changing – both in terms of the landscape and family trends. Playgroup NSW presents here a scan of the key factors driving the need to reframe playgroups to better meet changing needs now and into the future.

Whilst we don't have the answers, we raise these key lines of inquiry as current priorities for Playgroup NSW and welcome opportunities to work with DSS, our state and territory playgroup colleagues, the broader sector as well as children and families to navigate the way forward.

The Significant Impact of Declining Volunteerism

The proportion of Australian volunteering is in decline. A recent study by the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(AIHW\)](#) cited that:

- In April 2021, close to 1 in 4 (24%) people had undertaken voluntary work in the previous 12 months, compared with 1 in 3 (36%) people in late 2019.
- In 2020, two out of every three volunteers stopped volunteering, equating to a loss of 12.2 million hours per week of community-focused work.
- An estimated 2.3 million less Australians volunteered in April 2021 than in late 2019.
- The total number of hours of volunteering is estimated to have fallen by around 293 million hours over a 12-month period since COVID.
- The loss in economic output due to the pandemic would be 16.1 per cent higher if volunteering was included, compared to considering paid work only.

This is having a significant impact on playgroups and requires urgent attention and investment. Playgroup NSW strongly advocates for a thriving volunteer sector, however this will require a reconfiguration of strategic investment into community playgroups. If we can get this right through investments into volunteer to work programs that Playgroup NSW is piloting self funded, capability and professional development for volunteers, micro-credentialing, reducing the administrative burden, providing better support and resources and investing in paid facilitated community playgroups, we would aim to thus see an increase in volunteering as a result. So too, this gives children and families more certainty as we aim to ensure that all children and families can access free playgroups in all areas.

By nature of how and when playgroups are established, so too we operate in an environment of high turnover of volunteer playgroups facilitators. This adds further to the impact of the decline in volunteerism in Australia.

To ensure playgroups are operating in the areas of highest need, Playgroup NSW has self funded a range of facilitated community playgroups. This is not sustainable nor equitable,

leading to the need for a review of the over reliance on volunteering without the investment required to make it sustainable. The backend costs to Playgroup NSW for managing high turnover of volunteers and closures of playgroups are also significant.

Improving Access to Venue Barriers and Reducing Cost Drivers

Playgroups provide a lean and efficient model of service to government by not requiring investment into capital intensive facilities. This is both a strength and a weakness, as access to suitable venues becomes increasingly difficult. Unreliable weather is only one challenge we face for our outdoor playgroups, coupled with outdated and dangerous community venues, inaccessible venues, lack of shade and lack of amenities.

Playgroups NSW is currently leading a national research project funded through the Ian Potter Foundation to map venues across Australia. We are also facilitating meetings with local government and harnessing shopping centres as community places for playgroups.

Playgroup NSW believes that all children and families should have universal access to free playgroups in all areas across Australia.

This can be achieved by strategically improving the cost drivers for community playgroups, and reducing the administrative burden. The cost to playgroups and Playgroup NSW to audit and reconcile these funds is greater than the funds collected in most cases, so too is the cost of volunteer churn, which we would prefer see used on children and families. So too, coordinated federal, state, local government and corporate partnerships can be better corralled to reduce venue, equipment, resource costs.

An investment into universal Early Childhood Education and Care cannot leave playgroups off the agenda. Playgroups are the earliest and most timely avenue of support for children and families, building the capacity of both within our unique model. Universal access to playgroups provides a necessary and enabling stepping stone into ECEC and school settings, particularly those most marginalised or facing additional barriers to access.

Enhancing Intersectionality with the ECEC Sector

Playgroups play a critical role in the early childhood space, providing key pathways into and alongside ECEC settings, as well as transition to school options. Playgroups by nature of starting from newborn stage are often the first port of call for many families before they enter the ECEC arena. The unique difference that playgroups offer are that the parent and child attend together, building the capacity, peer to peer connection and community engagement of both cohorts simultaneously – which is something ECEC settings do not provide.

From a policy lens, playgroups do not form part of the formal ECEC sector or investments which Playgroup NSW recommends is reviewed. The recent Three Day Guarantee announced by the Australian Government and removal of the Activity Test are welcome

announcements to enhance ECEC attendance. Playgroup NSW advocates that the same lens of removing barriers and universality are applied to playgroups, particularly when the Three Day Guarantee still allows two days a week for playgroup attendance. Playgroup NSW warmly welcomes recent investments into the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector and announcements of the \$1 billion fund.

Consideration of the broader early childhood workforce is another recommendation, as there is a clear correlation between playgroups and the early childhood education workforce. Many of our staff at Playgroups NSW are studying to become Early Childhood Educators, seeing playgroups as a viable pathway while balancing study, family commitments and relevant work experience. Through attending and volunteering at playgroups, a number of our staff and volunteers developed an interest in pursuing careers in early childhood education. Considerations need to be given to both the benefits of this correlation and investment to strengthen this pathway as well as the risks posed to the playgroup workforce when wage increases occur in complementary yet competing sectors, with the recent ECEC pay rise a key example.

Playgroups NSW is currently piloting and exploring a range of measures including micro credentialing, volunteer to work programs, access to professional development and resources, ECEC secondments and more which we would gladly share with DSS in an effort to better bring the ECEC and playgroup sectors together as partners for children and families.

Driving Inclusion and Accessibility For All

Playgroups are driven by the community, for the community which we are deeply passionate about. No two playgroups are the same – our unique model is local, place based and responsive to community need. We are seeing a trend towards tailored and supported playgroups for various target cohorts or cohorts with shared interests, existing relationships, aligned cultures or religions, which Playgroup NSW actively nurtures. This presents the potential for some playgroups to be as inclusive or accessible as we would like or as community members expect. Investment is recommended to build the capacity and capability of staff and volunteers in the playgroups sector on cultural competency, diversity and inclusion, balanced with investing in tailored playgroups.

Cost of Living Impact and Dual Family Incomes

The impact of cost of living is well evidenced, including but not limited to:

- In October 2024, the [Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute](#) reported that over half of respondents (53%) said their household's financial situation was worse than it was two years ago;
- In August 2024, the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) reported that all household types recorded an increase in quarterly living costs in the June 2024 quarter;

- In 2024, Markousis, V., & Ragusa, A. T. published [Sociologically Considering Australia's Rising Cost-of-living as Structural Violence](#), assessing the impact on families, accommodation, mental health and other factors;
- In November 2023, the [Australia Institute](#) reported that 7 in 10 Australians (72%) say their income grew slower than the cost of living over the past year, with 38% saying their income grew much slower.

With a larger number of working parents and dual income families, access to playgroups within the traditional model is increasingly difficult. We have piloted a range of out of hours, weekend and virtual models to meet this need and advocate that CAPS investment better reflects the additional costs of this model. Playgroup NSW advocates that parents going to work should not be a barrier to playgroup attendance.

Dual income families also see an increase in grandparent and nanny carers – an area we are proactively targeting to ensure our communications and marketing resonate with these audiences. Working mums tell us that if they are working, they didn't feel that playgroups could be attended by their child's grandparent or the nanny.

At Playgroup NSW, we have a range of carers and caring figures attend and we ensure our marketing extends beyond just highlighting the mother and child relationship.

We are currently collating stories across mums, dads, grandparents, nannies, aunts, foster carers, siblings, adoptive carers across regional, rural, remote, CALD, ATSI demographics on the benefits of playgroup to them to raise awareness and increase engagement across all, which in turn ensures that all children have access to the power of play. So too, we are capturing children's voice and experiences of playgroup – both present and past to share impact direct from children. We seek funding from DSS to gather written stories, videos and photo assets to support this initiative and share nationally, as at present we are self funding this as we see it as important, partnering with a range of peaks to reach each cohort.

Investing in Research, Data and Impact Measurement

Currently, no investment has been made through the CAPS program to collect and interpret data and access real time data, yet it is a requirement of the grant to do so. Given the geographically diverse and volunteer nature of community playgroups, investment in data and impact measurement is urgent in order to not only understand current attendance but also better map future services and supports.

Beyond attendance data alone, we see real opportunity to better capture and articulate the value of playgroups to all stakeholders, as well as referral pathways and foundational supports. We recommend looking at the annual CAPS survey as one avenue to better capture and determine the value and impact of playgroups, as well as investment into playgroup pathways into ECEC and robust economic modelling of playgroups and the return on investment. Drawing our national research lead expertise with Ian Potter Foundation and the DSS ILC grants as well as our in house research capability and our broad research and university partnerships, Playgroup NSW seeks to work with DSS and our state and territory colleagues to support research, data and impact measurement initiatives.

Incubating and Nurturing New Playgroups

At Playgroup NSW, we employ Community Coordinators across the state to proactively engage with local communities to identify the need for new playgroups. In this, in recent years we are hearing of new, innovative and responsive models of playgroups emerging that our current CAPS funding does not support.

So too, we know there are areas without playgroups with strategic and proactive investment sought to identify growth corridors, remote areas and marginalised groups. Playgroup NSW recommends that Communities for Children funding is considered for Playgroup NSW in order to meet the needs of these particularly isolated and remote areas to build necessary infrastructure for children and families to thrive.

Playgroup NSW currently does not receive Communities for Children funding, though will be seeking to be a Facilitating Partner in the future to support our work in disadvantaged areas to implement very targeted and tailored solutions to promote early literacy, children's counselling, child rights and safety delivered in playgroup settings, nutrition, activate community engagement events, provide early intervention and implement tailored parent capacity programs and supports.

Playgroup turnover and closure is another perennial issue we face, with investment sought to better incubate and nurture new playgroups, along with better support and resourcing.

We currently provide some incubation support though are limited in our capacity due to the funding available. Investing in this incubation early will save costs over time, as well as ensure that all children and families have access to playgroups in all areas.

Supporting Children in Non-Traditional Family Settings and Out of Home Care

The power of play for enhancing early childhood development is well evidenced. Traditionally, playgroups have been attended by mothers and children. With over 45,000 children in out of home care in Australia, we are working with the sector to look at ways we can ensure that playgroups are accessible to children in emergency care, temporary arrangements, foster care and adoptive care.

This child first approach will lend us to change our language, inclusion and approach to playgroups.

Our Innovative Approaches to Amplify Playgroups

In light of the changing landscape within which we are operating and the changing dynamics of families, Playgroup NSW has piloted a number of innovative approaches to feed into this review to inform future service planning and investment.

Here, we share some of many of our key innovative initiatives Playgroup NSW has piloted largely through our own self funding to test and evaluate efficacy and outcomes, with all proving to be successful and requiring investment to share learnings and scale.

We believe that all children and families deserve to access playgroups.

Pilot One: Engaging Dads in Early Childhood Development

Dads play a critical role in early childhood development and in the modelling of safe families, yet are often not aware of or engaged in these first 2,000 days to the same extent that mothers are.

At Playgroup NSW, we have been working with dads to pilot a range of innovative models to increase engagement in early childhood, including our dedicated and thriving Dads and Bubs Playgroup at Rosehill which takes place on Saturdays mornings to allow dads to attend outside work hours. So too, we are developing a range of resources and capacity building opportunities tailored to dads, play at home activities for dads and collating lived experience stories of dads at playgroup to share more broadly to drive awareness and engagement. We are also deeply conscious of and actively reflecting upon our language when marketing, to ensure that dads are welcome to and included at all playgroups, not just our dads specific playgroups.

We are also advocating in the early childhood space more broadly for dads to be better included in early childhood health checks, immunisations, early childhood education and care.

Similarly, we are taking a “whole family” approach by engaging grandparents in dedicated community playgroups, who are often providing care to working parents, as well as inclusion of siblings through our valued partnership with Siblings Australia.

Pilot Two: Engaging CALD Children and Families

Language is so critical to connection – proven by a groundbreaking new study published this month by the expert team at the [MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour, and Development at the Western Sydney University](#) which Playgroup NSW is proud to work with as part of their BabyLab initiatives.

This study challenged the classical view is that perceptual attunement to the native language, which emerges by 6–10 months, developmentally precedes phonological feature abstraction abilities. That assumption is challenged by findings from adults adopted into a new language environment at 3–5 months that imply they had already formed phonological feature abstractions about their birth language prior to 6 months.

Enter playgroups in native languages as a critical to development and connection to country and culture. Strongly aligning to this philosophy, Playgroup NSW is piloting a range of playgroups in native language across CALD and ATSI communities.

Pilot Three: Engaging Children with Disability or Developmental Delay

Early intervention and prevention is central to all playgroups, providing a soft entry point for all children and families to connect, learn and grow together.

Further investment is needed to build the capacity and capability of our staff and volunteers to better recognise, support and refer children with disability or developmental delay in community playgroup settings.

Playgroup NSW is proud to be the NSW lead for PlayConnect+ funded by DSS under the National Early Childhood Program (NECP) which we are proud to partner with Autism Queensland to deliver with significant impact. With the benefit of scale and breadth of our offerings, Playgroup NSW is able to offer the full spectrum from community to supported playgroups.

Pilot Four: Engaging Children in OOHC Settings

Over the past year, we have piloted a partnership approach at our community playgroups in Wagga Wagga to engage children in out of home care settings at the request of the NSW Government, with Playgroup NSW identified as a trusted partner.

We are committed to ensuring that all children benefit from the power of play and recommend further investment to engage children in out of home care.

So too, we are reflecting on our use of the word 'parents' in our marketing and exploring ways to better engage children in non-traditional settings, foster care, adoptive families, kinship care through a range of expert partners in the Kinship Alliance Australia, Adopt Change, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

Pilot Five: Playgroups as Community and Tertiary Connectors

We are currently piloting collocating a PlayStrong Playgroup within a National Child and Family Hub, as a way of playing a key connection and navigation role. So too, we are developing a more personalised, tailored and warm navigation and support approach for children and families – both within and beyond our playgroups.

Pilot Six: Engaging Mothers Experiencing Family and Domestic Violence

Playgroup NSW is soon to launch a self funded pilot partnership with a women's refuge in Sydney, where we will host facilitated playgroups at the women's centre for mothers experiencing family violence and their children in a safe, familiar space with expert support

on hand. This is a pilot we would like to expand to five other partners across NSW and seek funding for this through the CAPS program, with evaluation learnings to be shared.

So too, we advocate for greater investment in building the capability of staff and volunteers to better understand and support families experiencing family and domestic violence. Investment is also needed to strengthen the ties between playgroups and family and domestic violence services, including both in reach into playgroups and referrals from playgroups.

Pilot Seven: Engaging Aboriginal Children, Families and Community

Our Ngurra hub in Wagga Wagga is an exceptional example of co-locating services to match community need, and the importance of being driven by community, for community. Our playgroups are delivered in Wiradjuri language with Elders to nurture connection to culture and country, and are fully staffed by local community members. We are currently working with Aboriginal children and families across NSW to scope playgroup ideas that currently fall outside scope but we know will have immense impact.

Similarly, we are working with Northcott through the NDIS ECI program as well as the NSW Department of Communities and Justice to build the capacity and capability of all playgroups to be more inclusive of Aboriginal children and families. Our Playgroup NSW Chief First Nations Officer plays a key role in providing expertise and lived experience to these critical pilots that are restricted to our NECP and DCJ funded playgroups. We recommend investment into CAPS funded playgroups to ensure all are accessible to and inclusive of Aboriginal children and families.

Playgroups NSW is working with Yaali Collective to expand their current provision of Aboriginal educational resources to our Aboriginal supported playgroups for interactive learning, to expand this to be provided to all community playgroups. We recommend investment from DSS to support this partnership. The founders are Wiradjuri entrepreneurs who we are deeply proud to work with. Yaali resources promote audiences “to be yourself, be proud of your identity or how you support the positive narrative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities.”

Pilot Eight: Raising Awareness and Engaging Community in Rural NSW

Playgroups require targeted community engagement to raise awareness, support new playgroup establishment and promote attendance. Last year, to reach an underserved area in rural NSW, we held a family day in Albury with over 200 people attending – far greater than we had anticipated. This highlighted to us the need for better service system mapping to inform supply side incubation, as well as the importance of local, place based community engagement.

More Than Just Playgroups: Our Integrated Approach

With over 65,000 members across 99% of postcodes in NSW, our scale is the secret to our success, balanced with ensuring we take a local, place based approach to play – driven by community, for community. Our impact on the first 200 days is multifaceted, extending beyond just playgroups to take a holistic approach to early childhood development:



Response to Consultation Questions

With people from a CALD background less likely to access services, what (if any) change should be made to FaC children, youth and parenting programs?

Background

Alongside FaC evidence paper, two phases of Stronger Starts Brighter Futures research in 2024 and 2021 by SSI found that children from CALD backgrounds are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable at school entry than other children and much less likely to attend most types of early childhood education (e.g. preschool). There is additional evidence that the barriers/impacts of English language proficiency and lower socio-economic circumstances also affect the developmental trajectories of children from CALD backgrounds.

Their recommendations include “Governments should work with ECEC providers to co-design service models that include ‘soft entry’ points (e.g., supported playgroups) which are non stigmatising and integrated approaches such as the National Community Hubs program. Growing evidence indicates that ‘stacking’ approaches and sustaining them over time is more impactful than single approaches to improve the early development of disadvantaged children including children from CALD backgrounds.

<https://www.ssi.org.au/policy-advocacy/research-insights/children-and-families/>

Key points from PGNSW:

- Soft and easy access is important. Playgroups need to be located within communities, and even in micro-communities, to reduce barriers of transportation and support word of mouth referral. Play vans can support this e.g. Parramatta Play Van
- Hybrid model so that playgroups can be supported by both staff and volunteers. Build capacity of CALD parents to play informal leadership and potentially paid roles in the playgroups to support cultural safety
- Playgroups frameworks that are genuinely inclusive of CALD diversity (e.g. Include2Play resources)
- Leverage formal and informal hubs e.g. FICFH and SACC models where families feel safe and/or have existing relationships, as locations for playgroups

What (if any) change should be made to FaC children, youth and parenting programs to account for the different service needs and preferences of families?

Background

Working parents - labour force and census data shows that in 2022, the proportion of dual-earner families increased to 71 per cent, nearly double the level of 1979. In 2021, nearly a third (31 per cent) of families had both parents working full-time, though it remains more common for one parent to be full-time and the other part-time (36 per cent). The number of

both parents working full-time has jumped from around one in five (22 per cent) in 2009. (ABS data reported in SMH).

Range of diversity – we know that families have become more diverse and that the meaning of the word family has changed. Intersectionality is high.

<https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/what-is-family>

Key points from PGNSW:

- More services and supports funded for out of business hours and school holidays delivery to engage working families, fathers, etc.
- Services going “beyond the parent” to consider alternative caregivers e.g. OOHC, kinship etc
- In-language, culturally specific, First Nations, LGBTQI+ specific playgroups and programs.
- Embedding parental capacity building supports (e.g. PEEP LTP) within trusted programs where families can attend with their children (e.g. playgroups). This is not to replace stand-alone parenting information and capacity building but to leverage the value of soft access programs where families may feel safer.
- Funding and KPIs in contracts to support effort in the above.

What changes (if any) could be made to increase awareness and improve navigation of available supports for families?

Background: What works:

- a. <https://www.communityhubs.org.au/start-and-run-your-own-hub/hubs-in-action/community-outcomes-connecting-families-with-additional-support/>

In reach and outreach to programs, linker roles, community networking, relationships and collaborations, enabling warm referrals, case work/linking, hub approaches

- b. [Beyond survival: Strengthening community-based support for parents receiving a family service intervention](#)

“A significant finding was parents' desire to address material constraints, including physical access to and accessibility of services, as well as financial barriers and limited opportunities to support each other through peer-related activities. A further barrier related to concerns about stigma and judgement about their life circumstances, particularly when seeking new bridging capital.”

- c. [Raising community awareness of the importance of parenting](#), how good parenting helps children and supports available to them. Reliable and freely available information, along with social messaging, is important for achieving this.

Key points from PGNSW:

- Playgroup models that specifically support warm navigation e.g. linker roles
- Peer navigation/peer support

- No wrong door referral models, including hubs
- Locating hubs in trusted community spaces. In some communities, this could be schools
- Modelling both community and supported playgroups to further increase in reach and outreach capability. Not just within local communities but facilitating partnerships at more strategic levels e.g. Health
- Practical support e.g. transport, internet
- Greater visibility of CAPS programs to enable complementary service provision

Apart from the issues outlined above, are there any other changes to FaC children, youth and parenting programs that should be considered to strengthen the community sector? (If yes, please specify)

Key points from PGNSW:

- Investment in, and sufficient funding for, volunteer and staff capability, recognising the impact that well-trained people can have
- Integrated models where funding is available for a variety of “plug-ins” to a core model. For example, if the model is playgroups, ensure that funding also covers linking/warm navigation, parenting programs, community development.
- Greater visibility of who is funded to deliver these services so that better connections and networks can be established between providers
- Improved understanding from the funder and its representatives about what these services look like on the ground, so that funding can be adapted and flexed in response to needs

What changes (if any) should be made to FaC children, youth and parenting programs to help achieve the outcomes set out in the Early Years Strategy?

Key points from PGNSW:

While they are currently a part of the CYP, playgroups should be further considered as integral to the program. The continuum of playgroups from community, volunteer led to supported and specialised groups should all be part of the CYP to ensure alignment to the Early Years Strategy.

All 8 outcomes in the EY strategy are achievable within the continuum of the playgroup ecosystem. Specifically:

- Children are nurtured and safe.

Playgroups can provide a universally accessible, early prevention model of support. For example, a [recent evaluation of the Targeted Early Intervention Program \(NSW\)](#) found that supported playgroups offered child/family safety, connection to culture, strong parenting support and pathways to other services.

- Children are socially, emotionally, physically and mentally healthy
- Children are learning

Regarding both above, evidence is strong that children who attend playgroups are less likely to be developmentally vulnerable, 47 percent more likely to be developmentally on track when they start primary school and more likely to start school ready to transition and learn.

[Parent-child co-play](#) in community playgroups is an opportunity for enhancing children's learning and development

- Children have strong identities and connections to culture

The TEI evaluation (referenced above) provides strong case studies that support identity and connection to culture.

- Children have opportunity to play and imagine. Play is integral to all playgroups. It is child-led, with co-participation from parents/carers. This offers unique opportunities to bridge play and learning activities to the home learning environment.
- Basic needs are met. Playgroups can connect to community supports and services to receive a range of supports that assist with basic needs e.g. housing, medical, financial
- Families are empowered, connected and supported

A range of studies have demonstrated the impact of playgroups on family connection. Our own impact report from Sutherland Supported groups provides case study evidence.

- Communities are strong and inclusive places for children and their parents or caregivers to live, grow, play and connect

What changes (if any) should be made to FaC children, youth and parenting programs to improve the access and inclusion of parents/children with developmental concern or disability?

Key points from PGNSW:

- Informal and formal peer support elements in programs, especially soft access programs such as playgroups.
- Ensure programs fall on the continuum of support from universal supports through to general and targeted foundational supports that sit outside of the NDIS. Playgroups are uniquely positioned to provide this. For example, PlayConnect + is a working example of an early intervention, inclusive playgroup.
- Warm navigation, in reach and outreach to medical, allied health and family support services.
- Place-based approaches that are timely, always switched on and non-threatening. This includes cultural safety.
- Strategic collaboration with relevant health, education and disability services

What type of services are preferred by parents or carers with disability or by children with developmental concern or disability?

Key points from PGNSW:

- All these ACAFSA vision points seem relevant, which Playgroup NSW is Co-Chair of:
 - Every family, no matter where they live in Australia, should have equal access to the help they need for their child.
 - Getting help should be easy and straightforward, without complicated processes or barriers.
 - Families shouldn't have to wait for months or years to get help - support should be there when they need it.
 - The support families receive should make a positive difference in their lives. Instead of just focusing on the services provided, it's important to consider how these services help children grow, develop, and be happy.
 - Families should be equipped with the knowledge, connections, and confidence to make informed decisions for their child. Empowered parents are better positioned to advocate for and support their child to grow and thrive.
 - Every child should have the opportunity to fully participate in their community and everyday life, with the right supports in place.
 - Support services should be coordinated and seamless, ensuring families don't have to navigate a fragmented system. Every professional interaction should be a step toward connecting families to the right help, making sure no family is left to navigate this journey alone.

How could the number of ACCOs delivering FaC children, youth and parenting programs be increased within existing funding, especially in First Nations focused communities?

Key points from PGNSW:

- Transition funding to support gradual transition to ACCO delivery over the life of the contract. This could be especially relevant where ACCOs are not yet well established, may require back of house support or when community would prefer to remain with the previous provider.
- Co-design partnerships between ACCOs and existing CAPS providers to co-deliver services.
- Looking for best practice design models to inform locally focussed initiatives e.g. the SWAY program in playgroups (Ngurra Hub, Wagga)

What changes (if any) should be made to FaC children, youth and parenting programs to provide supports in a culturally appropriate and trauma-informed way?

Key points from PGNSW:

- Minimum requirements for staff training in cultural competency, trauma informed approaches
- Recognising program designs that provide safe environments, have appropriate timeframes for the gradual development of trusted relationship and have resource allocation for community collaboration
- Both points above require longer funding periods with realistic outcomes timelines.
- In-language and community- led services

Is there a way to improve how FaC children, youth and parenting programs work with and refer families to specialised tertiary supports?

Key points from PGNSW:

- Early screening to be embedded in CYP programs. For example, Health could partner with playgroups to provide developmental screening, health prevention (dental, vision, immunisation), allied health support in non-threatening environments etc.
- Enable/train CYP providers to conduct basic screening to facilitate early referral e.g. <https://ijic.org/articles/10.5334/ijic.4696>
- Rather than co-location of playgroups or other CYP programs with tertiary services (which may not be trusted or associated with stigma), consider more in reach of tertiary services and/or colocation of staff.

What changes (if any) should be made to FaC children, youth and parenting programs to improve inclusiveness for all parents, carers and children, regardless of family structure, gender or sexual identity? To improve delivery against the Working for Women Strategy, what changes might help increase men's engagement with parenting programs? And what changes might increase gender norms around caring?

Key points from PGNSW:

- Service provision needs to occur at times that have the potential to engage the whole family, and especially fathers. This includes weekends, evenings and school holidays
- Father-specific groups that adapt style and routines to accommodate play, communication and other differences
- Peer approaches incorporating fathers
- LGBTIQ+ specific groups
- Resources and curriculum that visibly embrace non-traditional family structures and gender roles

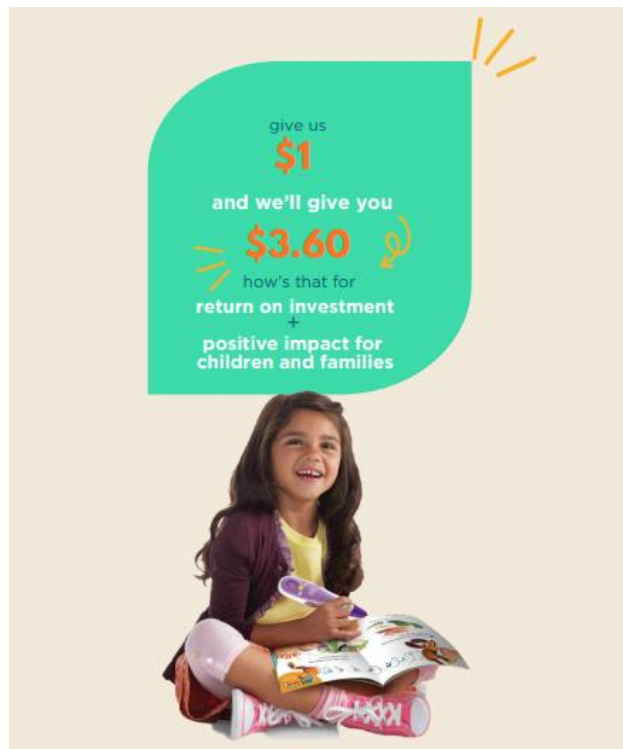
Should changes be made to FMHSS, so services are able to focus solely on early intervention? (If yes, please specify)

- Once again, hard to comment when we have not worked in FMHSS, though worth commenting that defining groups where the need for early intervention mental health services is in evidence could assist in providing scope for the program. For example:
- Children in contact with the child protection system
- Children with carers who have mental health concerns, disabilities, in prison, severely socially isolated
- Siblings of children with disabilities

Should changes be made to the CaPS program so services are better placed to focus on prevention, early intervention, and providing children with the best possible start to life? (If yes, please specify)

Key points from PGNSW:

- The Child Maltreatment Study provides overwhelming evidence about the effect of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) over a life trajectory. CaPS is a unique opportunity to get in early to provide Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs), the most critical being experiences that:
 - Promote children's long-term health and wellbeing
 - Enable children to form strong relationships and meaningful connections
 - Cultivate positive self-image and self-worth
 - Provide a sense of belonging
 - Build skills to cope with stress in healthy ways



[Independent cost benefit analysis](#) demonstrates the ROI of playgroups as a lever for early prevention and intervention as they impact both children and parents/carers:

“In cost-benefit terms, there is a \$3.60 return on investment for every \$1.00 spent on community playgroups in Australia, taking into account impacts over the life course in education, employment, health and family wellbeing”

Our Impact: Playgroup NSW

ABOUT PLAYGROUP NSW

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

- 550 playgroups a week
- 26,000 playgroups a year
- 63,868 members
- 546 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in culturally appropriate Playgroups
- 5235 parents attending peer to peer support sessions
- Members in 99% of NSW postcodes, reflecting the incredible reach and diversity of our community
- \$7.2 million annual funding, 30% growth in income over the past year, enhancing our impact
- 50+ years proudly in operation as the peak body with state and national footprint in services and advocacy

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Vision
The most successful early childhood education and care system for children, their families and society.

Our Purpose
Playgroup NSW leads and supports playgroups and parents and carers to ensure developmental outcomes for children and their families.

Our Values
Act with integrity, respect and empathy for the needs of all. Foster a culture of inclusion and diversity. Encourage and enable all people to contribute to the success of our community. Uphold and promote the highest standards of practice. Support and promote the wellbeing and development of all people.

Our Programs
The services and programs through our flagship program areas:

- Parent Capacity Building
- Playgroups (for-based + 0-22 months and mental health)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Universal & Community Led
- Healthcare (for-based + 0-22 months and mental health)
- Healthcare & Inclusion
- Transition Plan: Intergenerational
- Culture & Linguistically Diverse
- Food & Nutrition

Our Priorities

Our strategy is underpinned by a continued focus on our foundational capabilities:

1. Leadership, Governance & Accountability
2. Quality Standards & Research Evidence
3. Financial & Program Sustainability
4. Digital Engagement & Innovation

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Kellie Murray, Chief First Nations Officer
Steve Moore, Chief Operating Officer
Emily Caska, Chief Executive Officer
Jennifer Kemp, Chief Social Impact Officer

OUR GROWING IMPACT



"Getting a reason to leave the house rather than being stuck indoors with no social interaction has helped my mental health and my children love somewhere new to play and socialise."



"My Playgroup experience has been overwhelmingly positive. The environment is nurturing and inclusive, fostering a sense of community among the children and parents. The activities are well-organised and engaging, promoting both fun and learning. Overall, it's been a wonderful opportunity for my child to acquire and develop new skills in a safe and friendly setting."

"Playgroup has made me a better parent."

"I experienced the Playgroups as very healthy for me to enjoy every minute of playing with my daughter that's like me out of my depression. Also it's very healthy for her to discover new places, new friends, and new things."

"I am honestly so grateful for Playgroup as it has supported my daughter's social development, encouraged her to build and nurture new friendships, given me so many new ideas for playtime as well as the foundations for relationships with other parents, and it is an experience my daughter absolutely loves. I absolutely love watching her happy little face as she cracks out of the new activities and interacts with her new friends. It's the highlight of my day."



"Playgroup has only just started back up locally after 2 years, and it's been a great experience. My daughter really enjoys going, and hoping to be able to take both my girls regularly."

"Moving to a new state with my partner then having our daughter with special needs and being seen more isolated was very hard but having the one day a week to get out of the house and get on the grass and share a cookie and a laugh with the girls in both states left my spirit as they are always keen to visit or share thoughts or experiences without judgement and we usually always find us smiling when we get back to work."

"Playgroup is a great place for adults and children to come together socially to learn and have fun. I have made friends with other parents and my son has friends he will have for school and beyond."

"Playgroup has been an essential experience for myself and my child, resulting in other local facilities as a fantastic part of our week."

"Playgroups have helped me to not feel isolated, it has allowed me to celebrate my daughter with her development and made me feel supported by the community when shared the difficulties of parenting. It has stimulated my daughter with activities I would not have thought of. It also gives her the opportunity to socialise, share and see how others (adults) treat each other."

"Without the interactions of the local (friends of friends) and parents themselves already connected (new parents) and local services from the area (through doctors and Playgroups) during the Playgroup, the entire life and parenting experience would be immensely different as I was in a very lonely relationship and with the knowledge and support gained through Playgroup I was able to break the monotony and begin recovering."





OUR EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAMS

Playgroup NSW Supported Programs & Playgroups

Playgroup NSW has been supporting and connecting families for over five decades through a range of Playgroups and Parent and Carer Support Groups facilitated by either volunteers or trained employees.

COMMUNITY PLAYGROUPS

Volunteer-run Community Playgroups and centres meet Playgroups affiliated with Playgroup NSW. These groups cater to various children and families, from babies to school age and are run by local volunteers who best understand what their community requires from a Playgroup. There are also Community Playgroups that cater to a range of services looking for something specific, such as Baby Groups or language-specific groups.

BABY AND FIRST-TIME PARENT'S GROUPS

Baby Playgroups cater to families with a child up to 12 months of age. They provide a wide variety of early learning experiences and give parents and carers a safe space to discuss ideas, challenges, and the joys and frustrations of parenting.

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORTS

Baby Playgroups cater to families with a child up to 24 months of age, offering babies a wide variety of early learning experiences and giving parents and carers a safe space to discuss ideas, challenges, and the joys and frustrations of parenting.

TIMELESS PLAY INTERGENERATIONAL PLAYGROUPS

Timeless Play Intergenerational Playgroups bring together three generations - seniors, children and their parents. Interacting with seniors adds a new dimension to the Playgroup experience for children and can be incredibly enriching for those who don't have access to spending time with their own grandparents.

MYTIME

MyTime offers early childhood support groups for parents and carers of children with a disability, developmental delay or chronic medical conditions. It provides peer support and advice, peer support for parents and carers, and a facilitator for parents and a play leader for preschool aged children. The group caters to Parents or carers with a child up to age 58 who require a higher level of care than other children.

PLAYCONNECT +

PlayConnect+ Playgroups are for families of children with disability and/or developmental concerns from birth through to eight years of age. Children do not require a formal diagnosis or referral to attend. Inclusion is a Playgroup for this unique family, and carers and parents are also welcome and included at PlayConnect+.

PALS

Play and Learn Supported (PALS) Playgroups provide developmentally appropriate play and learning experiences for 0-6 years of age of all abilities. Activities are designed for families where children with a disability get exposure to mainstream cultural, arts, sporting or recreational activities. It's a great place to connect with others to increase children's skills and enhance families' understanding of disability and inclusion within the community.

SUTHERLAND SUPPORTED PLAYGROUPS (SSPG)

SSPG offers indoor and outdoor play activities and experiences that enhance the strengths, interests and emerging skills of children aged 0-5 years. Our qualified early childhood educators provide a nurturing and stimulating environment that supports children's growth and learning during their early years through intentional teaching and role modelling. Families also receive information to build confidence in parenting by connecting them with services and resources that support their children's development and overall well-being.

ABORIGINAL SUPPORTED

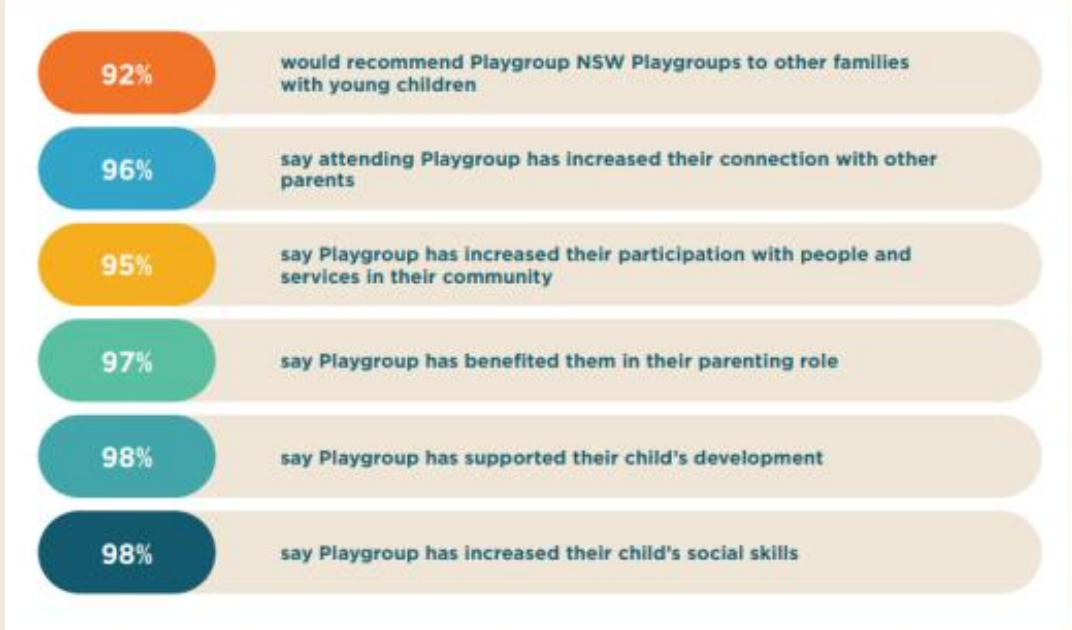
Aboriginal Supported Playgroups play an important role in connecting Aboriginal families to their culture while offering family and parenting support. These Playgroups are an opportunity to connect with others in their community and offer family linkage to other services and resources, while acting as a stepping stone to early learning and preschool. The program is delivered by dedicated Aboriginal educators who strive to bridge the gap and increase equity in education, wellbeing and health outcomes for young Aboriginal children and their families.

LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE GROUPS

Language-specific and Culturally Diverse (LSD) Playgroups NSW has a long tradition of supporting culturally and linguistically diverse families and, at present, supports local communities by offering Playgroups, which cater to over 20 different languages and cultures in Playgroups across NSW.

PLAYTOGETHER

Play Together lets access all programs within Playgroup NSW at support centres and families with a disability and/or developmental delay to participate in community Playgroup settings. This is achieved through training, workshops and webinars to build the capacity of educators, service providers and industry experts, as well as the provision of a network of resources to support the learning. One-on-one family support is also provided to families to welcome barriers to participation and inclusion.





OUR KEY MESSAGES



Play is critical to the first 2000 days of a child's life

Playgroups are a unique soft entry point that are local, place based, early intervention and prevention model

Playgroups are unique - both children and parents benefit

Playgroup NSW is leading the future of playgroups, innovative in our approaches across community and supported groups to reach dads, multicultural families, vulnerable cohorts, remote communities, Aboriginal families and children in non-traditional settings such as out of home care and adoptive families

Playgroups are a key foundational support, navigation, connector and referral point in the critical early years

Peer to peer support is a key component of playgroups in building capacity, nurturing connection and resilience



SEE WHAT ALL THE FUN IS ABOUT



“ We work with passion and pride to ensure that every child and family has the very best start in life.

Working together across government, philanthropy, early childhood, health, community, research and corporate sectors enables us to grow our reach and impact to those who need it most across our community, disability, First Nations, multicultural and intergenerational offerings.

We are so much more than just playgroups - from play to peer to peer support to community development, health, early intervention, prevention, evidence based research and evaluation, we are proud to firmly place children and families at the centre of all we do ”



Emily Caska
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