

Submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the Thriving Kids Initiative

The Role of Playgroups as Foundational Supports: Ensuring Every Child, Every Family, Every Community Thrives

September 2025



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

Our impact at a glance:

- 550 playgroups a week
- 26,000 playgroups a year
- 78,000 members across 99% of postcodes
- 650 volunteers, 75 staff

For more than 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 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.

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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

Not every child with a disability, developmental delay or concerns needs to go to the NDIS. Those who need it should absolutely receive it, though those who don't shouldn't be left with nothing as is often the case in the current ecosystem.

So to, not every child with a disability, developmental delay or concerns needs to go to a supported playgroup, nor does every child with a disability, developmental delay or concerns may become a teen or adult with the same level of disability, developmental delay or concern.

It is on this premise that Playgroup NSW strongly supports the codesign of a system to bridge the current gap between mainstream services and the NDIS to better support all children, families and communities.

Our core message is clear: Thriving Kids offers a unique and powerful opportunity to strengthen Australia's early childhood system, but this opportunity must be designed inclusively, resourced adequately, and delivered collaboratively. Crucially, playgroups often serve as the first point of connection for families of children with disability or developmental delay. Our playgroups are increasingly integrating allied health supports, diagnostic referrals, and early developmental monitoring.

The Thriving Kids reform presents a welcome opportunity to strengthen Australia's early childhood ecosystem and ensure that every child - regardless of diagnosis, postcode, or background - has access to the supports they need to thrive.

Playgroups are a foundational support already embedded in communities across Australia. They represent a critical yet under-recognised pillar in early childhood development, prevention and early intervention.

With the right investment and recognition, playgroups can be scaled to support the goals of the Thriving Kids reform as a complementary system to the NDIS and specialist disability supports.

Playgroups meet the core criteria for foundational supports, as articulated in the NDIS Review and Thriving Kids design principles.

Playgroups are:

1. Among the earliest supports accessed by families
2. Place-based, community-led, and free, with no access or eligibility barriers
3. Evidence-informed and outcomes-focused, grounded in decades of research
4. Platforms for child development checks and early identification
5. A source of parent capacity-building and peer support
6. An intersect with maternal and child health services, ECECs and schools
7. Capable of embedding allied health, early intervention, and diagnostic outreach
8. Trusted environments for linking families to NDIS, ECI, and mainstream services.

Playgroups are a critical part of the solution to realise the goals of Thriving Kids, already delivering trusted, effective support across the early years which can be enhanced and scaled.

Playgroups must be funded, integrated and valued as a core component of Thriving Kids to build a cohesive, inclusive, and future-focused support system for children and families. 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.

Addressing the Terms of Reference

Evidence-Based Information and Resources for Parents

Families need access trustworthy, curated and evidence-based information in the places and spaces that are a natural part of their everyday lives.

Playgroups are a powerful example of a setting that offers a unique and trusted environment for sharing evidence-based information with parents, particularly when developmental concerns arise. Facilitators and early childhood professionals involved in playgroups can act as accessible sources of guidance, helping parents navigate the complexities of child development. Through informal conversations, structured activities, and resource sharing, playgroups can introduce parents to reliable information about developmental milestones, early intervention pathways and local support services. This kind of engagement not only builds parental confidence but also assists in normalising help-seeking behaviours.

By embedding evidence-based resources into everyday playgroup experiences (for example through handouts, apps, guest speakers, partnerships with health and education services and collaborations with trusted platforms such as the Raising Children Network), playgroups empower parents with knowledge and tools to support their child's development. This proactive, community-based approach strengthens the bridge between families and the broader early childhood support system.

Playgroups can also serve as early detection hubs as they provide a naturalistic setting for observing children's development. Trained facilitators, including early childhood educators, allied health professionals, or community workers can identify early signs of developmental delay through play-based interactions. When concerns are noticed, whether by a parent, facilitator or peer, they can be addressed sensitively and promptly, with referrals to appropriate services if needed.

Importantly, playgroups allow for early identification without requiring a formal diagnosis, which is crucial for children with mild to moderate developmental support needs.

Playgroups act as warm referral pathways and gateways to other specialist services and information, including:

- Health services
- Specialist early intervention and allied health services
- Early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Program Effectiveness

The recently released National Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention provides the principles and practices for ensuring that all children with developmental delays and disabilities, and their families, can thrive.

Playgroups align to the best practice framework. They are a part of community and service ecosystems, delivering relational, family and child-centred, and strengths-based supports through play and learning opportunities. They not only provide significant benefits for children's development but also empower parents in their confidence and capacity to support this development.

There is already evidence for the benefit of embedding playgroups in the early childhood ecosystem as an effective foundational support. For example, a [2024 Rapid Evidence Scan](#) by FACSIAR (NSW Department of Communities and Justice) identified supported playgroups as effective for improving child outcomes (language, cognition, behaviour) and parent outcomes (attachment, responsiveness, social connection). Best practice principles included skilled staff, family-centred facilitation and strong engagement strategies.

Models of effective playgroups may vary across States and Territories but some examples include:

PlayConnect+: A national supported playgroup initiative designed for children aged 0–8 years with disability or developmental concerns, including autism spectrum disorder.

Key features include:

- No diagnosis required for participation
- Inclusive, family-centred environments
- Facilitated by qualified early childhood professionals
- Structured routines and sensory-friendly activities
- School readiness and transition support

Holistic family support and referrals to other services.

PlayConnect+ has delivered thousands of sessions across Australia, supporting children to build confidence and skills for participation in early childhood settings. It demonstrates how supported playgroups can serve as both early intervention and inclusion platforms.

PALS (Play and Learn Supported): A national program of inclusive playgroups that bring together children with and without disability for shared activities and linkages to local cultural, recreational and sporting opportunities, fostering community connection, participation and disability awareness.

TEI Supported Playgroups (NSW): Funded under the Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, these playgroups support families experiencing vulnerability, including those with children with developmental concerns.

Play Strong Playgroups (NSW): Delivered by Playgroup NSW under [Start Strong Pathways](#) funding from the NSW Department of Education, these place-based playgroups offer early learning opportunities for children before they start preschool, while also helping families understand and value the role of early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Peer support initiatives delivered both within playgroup settings or through referral to partners providing families with peer-led support, are an essential component of holistic support for families.

Playgroups are also already uniquely positioned for local and community engagement. As place-based initiatives, playgroups connect strongly with local organisations and community activities.

This provides both low-barrier access for families but also ensures strong connection and referrals out for needed services. Playgroups are also foundational services located within early childhood and community hubs, and have the potential to serve as hubs in their own right, responding to community needs.

For further detailed information on the range of supports that Playgroup NSW offers that can inform Thriving Kids, please see the Detailed Information on Supports section.

Equity and Intersectionality

Playgroups are uniquely positioned to address intersectional inequities. Culturally safe and community-led playgroups, including Aboriginal-led or CALD-focused groups, can improve engagement and outcomes for children who might otherwise be missed by mainstream services. Key equity strategies include:

- Funding for community-led, locally responsive playgroups
- Targeted training for facilitators
- Outreach to rural and remote communities
- Inclusion of culturally safe and accessible resources.

Playgroups can also be tailored to support teenage parents, refugee families and families experiencing trauma or disadvantage, making them a flexible and responsive tool in the foundational support system.

Expanding developmental screening into playgroups would also improve equity for harder to reach families. There is increasing evidence about the effectiveness of this through trials of local or State models. Examples include [models of developmental surveillance for CALD families](#) accessing playgroups in NSW and the [Ready, Set, Progress](#) model in South Australia.

Gaps in Workforce Support and Training

Delivering on the vision of *Thriving Kids* requires a strategic investment in a capable and well-supported workforce, with playgroups playing a vital role.

It is critical that any workforce strategy encompasses the continuum of workforce that can support the delivery of *Thriving Kids*, acknowledging that this will require a mix of early childhood educators, community workers, specialist health professionals, lived-experience peer staff and volunteers.

Several workforce challenges must be addressed. These include staff shortage in rural and remote communities, instability caused by casual employment and uncertain funding and lack of parity in pay and conditions. To overcome these barriers, *Thriving Kids* should prioritise workforce development through measures to attract and retain skilled staff and to provide consistent frameworks for professional development, aligned to roles and the best practice framework.

Importantly, workforce strategies and funding models must also recognise and support peer-led, volunteer-based and family-centred approaches, especially in communities where formal services are limited. Localised workforce development is key to ensuring all families can access inclusive, high-quality support for *Thriving Kids* and playgroups can play an important role in this.

Alternative, flexible and accelerated pathways for workforce development are essential. For example, the [Centre for Excellence in South Australia](#) is funded to explore innovative initiatives for the early childhood workforce.

Microcredentialling should also be prioritised and would be extremely relevant in the playgroup sector. This is a key priority being progressed by Playgroup NSW as part of our capacity building projects for both paid facilitators and volunteer facilitators in the playgroup sector, coupled with robust volunteer to work pathways with a focus on workforce participation for women.

Best Practice

Best practice should be considered in its broadest sense to ensure that Thriving Kids aligns with the:

- direction of Federal and State government policies and strategies for children and families
- Best Practice Framework for Early Childhood Intervention
- Best practice principles for specific service delivery, for example [Principles for high quality playgroups](#) (AIFS)

Seamless Transitions

Playgroups are uniquely positioned as cross-sectoral infrastructure, delivering outcomes across:

- Health: Early development, child wellbeing, and early intervention
- Education: School readiness, parent engagement, and transitions
- Communities: Social inclusion, cohesion, and parenting support
- Disability: Inclusion, early identification, and capacity-building
- Aboriginal and CALD programs: Culturally responsive, community-led delivery
- Family safety: Trusted relationships that enable early support for families experiencing domestic and family violence

This broad footprint allows playgroups to act as a conduit between families and systems, filling the gaps that often exist between services. To achieve this, mechanisms must include:

- Navigator and linker roles to guide families through mainstream service offerings and from playgroup to health, education and other community services.
- Referral pathways embedded within playgroup settings.
- Support and fund collaborative approaches to service delivery and transitions
- Shared data systems across health, education and disability sectors.
- Playgroup hubs within mainstream settings such as community health and schools to support transition and continuity.

Enabling Thriving Kids to Succeed: What's Needed

Our Recommendations

To realise the full potential of the Thriving Kids reform, the following system enablers are essential:

1. **A genuine voice for families:** Embed lived experience and family voice through trusted, community-based services like playgroups.
 2. **Clear definition of Thriving Kids:** Clarify the scope, service types, access points and interfaces with NDIS, ECI and mainstream services.
 3. **Role clarity across governments and portfolios:** Define federal and state responsibilities, streamline funding pathways, and reduce fragmentation.
 4. **Nationally consistent, locally responsive delivery:** Avoid postcode-driven service disparity by investing in flexible, place-based models.
 5. **Outcomes reporting and public data:** Ensure services and supports in Thriving Kids are accountable, data-driven, and continuously improving.
 6. **Workforce development for community-based supports:** Include peer-led, volunteer-based, and family-centred models, alongside the traditional specialist workforce, in workforce strategy and funding.
 7. **Investment in community playgroups and peer models:** Recognise and fund under-utilised, under-resourced models that are ready for scaling.
 8. **Navigation supports for families:** Invest in linkers and navigators—online and in person—to guide families to the right support, early.
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The Role of Playgroups In Helping Kids Thrive

A Unique Service Model: Co-Participation, Early Access and Inclusion

Playgroups offer a model of early childhood support that is distinct, proven, and uniquely aligned with the objectives of Thriving Kids.

Unlike many formal early childhood services, playgroups operate through a co-participation model where both parent and child are present and engaged. This enables:

- Direct modelling of parenting strategies
- Building of peer support networks among parents
- Real-time observation and coaching by facilitators
- Earlier identification of developmental or behavioural concerns
- Natural scaffolding of inclusion in everyday settings

Importantly, playgroups are accessible from birth, without the need for assessments, diagnoses, or referrals. This universal access makes them one of the earliest and most inclusive contact points for families, and a vital soft-entry pathway into broader supports.

Playgroups + Peer Support + Parent Capacity

Playgroup NSW delivers a multifaceted wraparound model comprising:

- **Supported playgroups** are targeted at families with specific vulnerabilities or needs, including disability, trauma, isolation, or cultural barriers. These are facilitated by trained staff and often include wraparound supports, allied health integration, or therapeutic components.
- **Community playgroups** are volunteer-led and typically universal, offering free or low-cost access in local venues. However, many are organically inclusive and serve children with developmental concerns alongside their peers. Playgroup NSW increasingly supports these groups through sector training, inclusive practice tools, and allied health partnerships.

- **Peer to peer support:** bringing parents of children with a disability together in a safe, evidence based model to provide support, information and connection to services, community and peers.
- **Parent capacity building:** through resources, parent hub, webinars, events we build parent confidence, knowledge and capacity. We bring allied health into playgroups to upskill, we refer out and we provide evidence based resources and navigation support to families.

Together, these models reflect the full continuum of foundational support—from general to targeted—and demonstrate how inclusion can be embedded within communities, not isolated into siloed services

Bridging Systems: Health, Education, Disability and Community

Playgroups naturally traverse portfolio boundaries. We receive and manage funding across:

- Health (child development, early intervention) •
- Education (school readiness, parent engagement) •
- Communities (social cohesion, parenting support)
- Disability (inclusion, early identification)
- Aboriginal and CALD initiatives
- Domestic and family violence responses

This cross-cutting role positions us as an effective conduit between families and systems, able to:

- Detect early signs of concern before diagnosis
- Refer families to formal pathways, including NDIS and ECI
- Embed allied health and diagnostic outreach in community settings
- Support transitions into ECE, preschool, and school
- Build trust with families who are disengaged or fearful of formal systems

Recognising Volunteers as a Workforce

A key element often overlooked in Thriving Kids is the volunteer workforce.

Playgroup NSW supports over 500 volunteers, many of whom lead local groups and create the relational glue that keeps families engaged.

Volunteers are:

- A community asset that enables scale and sustainability
- Often parents with lived experience
- Embedded in their communities, speaking local languages and understanding cultural norms
- Ideal conduits for peer support, early detection, and inclusion

Thriving Kids must include investment in training, recognition, and sustainability of this critical workforce.

Place Based, Trusted and Embedded

One of the greatest strengths of the playgroup model is the trust we have earned. Families regularly disclose:

- Concerns about child development
- Experiences of domestic or family violence
- Difficulties navigating the NDIS or school systems
- Their sense of isolation or confusion in the early parenting journey

Because playgroups are local, relational, and embedded, they often hear these things before any other service. This makes them not only a foundation of support—but a platform for upstream prevention.

Opportunities for Thriving Kids

Prevention, Early Intervention and Timely Support

Thriving Kids is uniquely positioned to act before crises occur, before diagnoses are delayed, and before families disengage from systems they find confusing or exclusionary.

Playgroup NSW witnesses firsthand the power of early intervention that starts with inclusion—where families feel safe enough to express concern, observe others, and ask questions.

In our groups, we regularly identify:

- Children with undiagnosed developmental delay or disability
- Emerging concerns around behaviour or attachment
- Parents needing support with mental health, family safety, or parenting skills

These early observations often result in timely referrals—not to label or gatekeep, but to provide access to what the family needs, when they need it. Thriving Kids services and supports must be flexible, responsive, and holistic, offering both targeted intervention and soft support, depending on the family's context and readiness.

Supporting Parents, Carers and Siblings

Children do not exist in isolation.

For young children with disability or delay, outcomes are strongly influenced by the capacity, wellbeing, and confidence of their parents and carers. Thriving Kids must therefore explicitly support the entire family unit, not just the child.

Playgroup NSW delivers:

- Peer support groups for parents (e.g. MyTime)
- Parenting skill-building sessions embedded in playgroups
- Targeted groups for fathers, grandparents, CALD parents, and carers
- A safe, affirming space for siblings, including those like the CEO of Playgroup NSW who bring lived family experience of disability

Investing in parental confidence, connection, and wellbeing is one of the most cost-effective strategies for lifelong outcomes, yet too often this is under-resourced. We urge the Inquiry to ensure caregivers are recognised as both beneficiaries and facilitators of Thriving Kids.

Equity of Access for Vulnerable Cohorts

We note with concern the underrepresentation of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
 - Families from CALD backgrounds
 - Children with disability or behavioural concerns
 - Families in regional, rural, and remote areas
 - Children in out of home care
- in formal early childhood education and NDIS pathways

For many of these families, playgroups are their only regular contact with early childhood services. Without ongoing, place-based, inclusive options like these, such families risk remaining invisible. Thriving Kids must be designed to meet families where they are—in terms of geography, culture, and developmental journey.

Playgroup NSW already does this, but our reach could be immediately expanded with the right investment, which we will address further.

Challenges to Overcome for Thriving Kids

While Playgroup NSW is strongly supportive of a more integrated and seamless system of mainstream, foundational and NDIS supports, we believe that successful implementation will depend on addressing a number of practical, structural, and systemic risks. These must be considered upfront if we are to avoid repeating the fragmentation and unintended exclusions experienced during the rollout of the NDIS.

Risk of Becoming NDIS 2.0

A key concern is the possibility that Thriving Kids could unintentionally become a second-tier disability system, accessible only to those who narrowly miss out on the NDIS. This risks:

- Reinforcing the same barriers around eligibility, assessment, and diagnosis
- Focusing too narrowly on disability instead of supporting all children and families with emerging needs
- Neglecting the broader purpose of Thriving Kids: inclusion, prevention, and early assistance

We strongly caution against using Thriving Kids only as a buffer or off-ramp for the NDIS. Instead, Thriving Kids must be inclusive of all children who need assistance—whether due to disability, developmental concerns, trauma, social risk, or systemic exclusion. We see Thriving Kids as a reframe, recalibration and extension of mainstream supports, which is

Lack of Clarity Around System Boundaries

Currently, there is insufficient clarity around:

- Who is “in” or “out” of Thriving Kids
- How Thriving Kids intersect with both the NDIS and mainstream systems
- What assessments, eligibility, or intake processes will apply
- How families move fluidly across services and life stages

We need to avoid creating binary pathways where families must choose between NDIS, Thriving Kids, or mainstream—without clarity, overlap, or shared responsibility. For

example, a child and family might:

- Access NDIS-funded therapies
- Attend a targeted playgroup funded through Thriving Kids
- Join a community playgroup on the weekend
- Participate in a parent support group or receive school transition support
- Get advocacy support for systemic issues
- Get individual advocacy support for discreet matters

A seamless, flexible system is required—not one that puts up more administrative walls or requires multiple assessments just to access the right mix of supports.

Administrative Burden and Service Fragmentation

As a provider that currently holds contracts from nine different departments across state and federal governments, we experience the direct impacts of system fragmentation. Each contract brings:

- Different reporting requirements
- Misaligned funding cycles
- Conflicting outcome measures
- Unnecessary duplication of effort

This administrative burden is inefficient and costly, and it diverts time and funding away from children and families. If Thriving Kids are to succeed, they must be:

- Commissioned holistically
- Supported by streamlined funding and compliance mechanisms
- Designed for relational contracting, not transactional micromanagement
- Built on trust in quality providers

Solutions for Success

Playgroup NSW is Ready To Scale

Playgroup NSW stands ready to scale our work to meet demand, alongside our valued partners. We currently operate:

- Over **600 playgroups per week**, reaching **78,000 families annually**
- More than **50 peer support groups** (e.g. MyTime)
- Programs in **domestic and family violence shelters**, schools, community hubs, and health settings
- Services across **99% of postcodes in NSW**, including rural, regional, and remote communities

With increased and streamlined investment, we could double these numbers almost immediately. The infrastructure, workforce, systems, and demand are already in place. We could:

- Expand supported and inclusive community playgroups to more vulnerable cohorts and underserved areas
- Increase the reach of peer support groups for parents and carers
- Deploy more connectors, navigators, and linkers to support families across systems
- Embed more allied health professionals into community settings to deliver outreach and capacity building
- Rapidly upskill the volunteer workforce and strengthen local inclusive leadership

We could do this within months—not years—if we had:

- Longer-term, secure, relational contracting
- A streamlined funding mechanism with fewer departments and clearer lines of accountability
- Indexation and funding models that reflect true service delivery costs and workforce needs

Streamlining Systems and Relational Commissioning

Right now, Playgroup NSW must navigate:

- State and Commonwealth funding contracts with misaligned timelines
- Nine separate departmental relationships, each with their own reporting and contracting expectations
- Conflicting expectations across education, health, disability, and community portfolios

Effective and successful Thriving Kids should:

- Be governed by a clear lead department and Minister (with state and federal coordination)
- Align funding into a single commissioning platform for Thriving Kids
- Enable multi-year contracts with flexibility for integrated delivery
- Provide funding portability across systems for providers delivering inclusive and general supports

Child and Family Voice Is Paramount

To support an effective, scalable Thriving Kids system, we recommend the following:

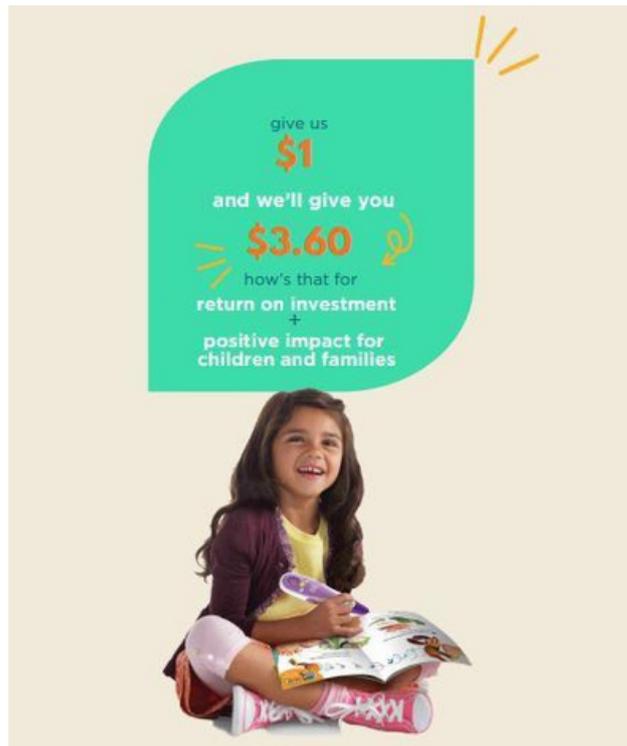
1. Create a clear, shared vision for Thriving Kids that goes beyond disability to embrace inclusion, prevention, and equity for all children and families.
2. Define what Thriving Kids initiatives are (and are not)—including types of services, target populations, and how general and targeted supports interact.
3. Ensure flexibility and fluidity between Thriving Kids, the NDIS, and mainstream systems—particularly for children and families who may move between them over time.
4. Establish a clear governance and commissioning model—with defined state and federal roles, single-agency contracting where possible, and streamlined processes.

5. Invest in the volunteer and peer-led workforce—recognising this as a core component of inclusion and sustainability.
6. Provide infrastructure funding for safe, inclusive community venues—particularly in rural, remote, and disadvantaged communities.
7. Ensure the voice of families and children is embedded throughout design, delivery, and evaluation—through trusted, community-based services like playgroups.
8. Support data collection, evaluation, and outcomes measurement—shared transparently across providers and jurisdictions to track long-term impact.
9. Ensure no child is left behind—with equity-focused commissioning that prioritises outreach to Aboriginal communities, CALD families, and those with intersecting vulnerabilities.

Playgroup NSW has announced our inaugural NSW Committee for Children and Families, as well as our NSW Committee for Parents of Children with a Disability to ensure their voices are heard. We welcome government engagement with these critical groups, and across our 78,000 families.

Our impact on the first 2000 days is multifaceted, extending beyond just playgroups to take a holistic approach to early childhood development:





[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 Vision
To be a leading national playgroup organisation in Australia, with a strong focus on providing quality playgroup services to all children and their families.

Our Purpose
To provide quality playgroup services to all children and their families, and to support parents and carers to provide the best possible care for their children.

Our Values
We are committed to providing quality playgroup services to all children and their families, and to supporting parents and carers to provide the best possible care for their children. We are also committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all children and their families.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

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 have 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 socialise and develop new skills in a safe and friendly setting."

"Playgroup has made me a better parent."

"I experienced the Playgroups is very healthy for me to enjoy every single moment 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 holistic development, encouraged her to build and nurture new friendships, given me so many new ideas for playtime as well as new foundations for relationships with other parents, and it is an experience my daughter absolutely loved. I absolutely love watching her happy little face as she cracks out of the new activities and interests 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 looking to be able to take both my girls regularly."

"Having to a drop station with my partner that having our daughter with special needs and being seen. Being included was very hard but having her one day a week to get out of the house and just sit on the grass and share a cookie and a laugh with the girls in town does lift the spirits as they are always keen to talk or share thoughts or experiences without judgement and we usually always find an amazing friend together. One of the joys of life so it really makes a day out of going to town."

"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 sharing the frustrations of parenting. It has stimulated my daughter with activities I would not have thought of. It also give her the opportunity to socialise, alone and see how others (adults) treat each other."

"Playgroup is a great place for adults and children to come together to work 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 excellent experience for myself and my child. Interacting with other local families is a definite part of our week."

"Without the interventions of the local (family) friends and parents (participated already) (connected new parents) and local services from the area (Mission Australia and Playgroup) using the Playgroup, my entire life and parenting experience would be entirely different as I was in a very lonely relationship and with the knowledge and support gained through Playgroup I was able to leave the relationship and begin recovering."



550+ Playgroups a week

26,000 Playgroups a year

Playgroups across 44% of NSW Postcodes

546

Total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Community Support Programs

642

Volunteers

711

Communities Supported and Organisational Playgroups

38

Drop-In Playgroups

49

Innovative In-Centre Playgroups in Partnership with Westfield

48

New Community Playgroups Started

542

Play-Yat Sessions

7

New Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Playgroups

1446

MyTime Parent Peer Support Sessions

5235

Parents Attending MyTime Peer Support Sessions

TOTAL INCOME \$7,209,391

UP 30% Year on Year

1

Extra International Playgroup in Wagga

24 Community Events connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families in Wagga

11

Essential Packages

63,868

Members

52,000

Newsletter Subscribers

67,288

Unique Website Visitors

15

Capacity Building Workshops Held

67,000

Facebook Reach

71

Team Members

31,000

Facebook Followers

11,300

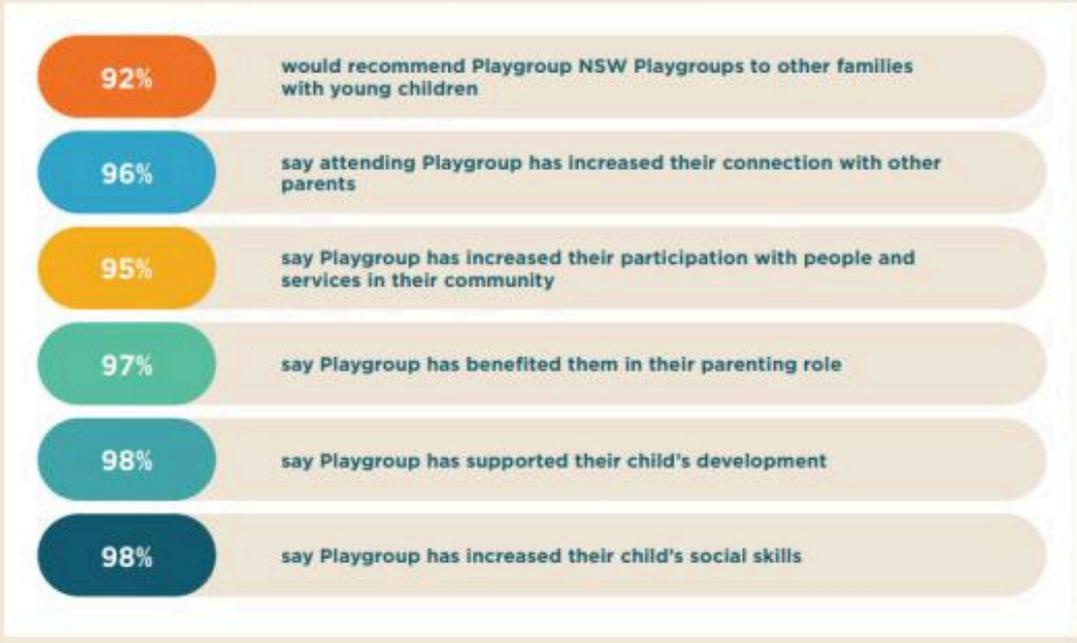
Instagram Followers

40

Resources, Publications or Activity Sheets Shared



OUR EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAMS





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

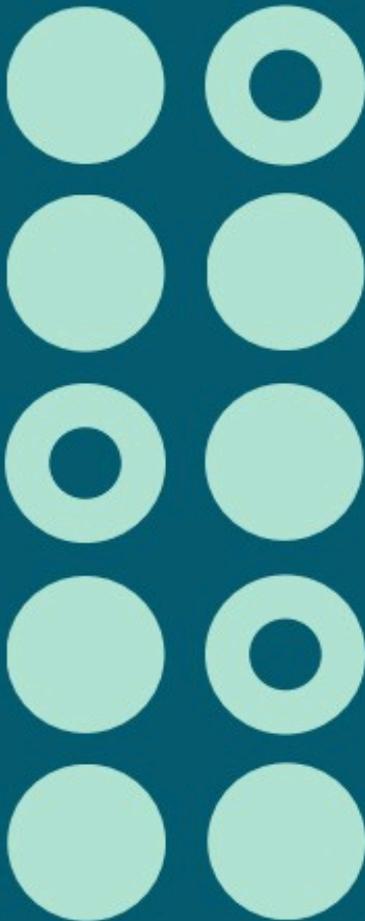
“ Playgroups have helped me to not feel isolated, it has allowed me to celebrate my daughter with her development and made me feel supported by the community when sharing the difficulties of parenting.

It has stimulated my daughter with activities I would not have thought of. It also give her the opportunity to socialise, share and see how others (adults) treat each other ”





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 ”



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