



MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

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Welcome to the August edition of our volunteer newsletter.

While the winter chill is in the air, our playgroups are full of warmth, laughter, and connection. It's been such a joy to see our communities coming together - sharing stories, supporting each other, and creating magical moments of play for children and families alike. The energy and heart that you, our volunteers, bring to every session is what makes playgroup so special.

We're working hard behind the scenes to launch a new hub of resources, policies, and support tools specifically for our community playgroups - something we know will make a big difference.

A big thank you to everyone who joined us at the Big Day of Play! It was a fantastic celebration of community, play, and connection. Events like this remind us why playgroups matter so much, and we're grateful for the energy and enthusiasm you bring.



Emily Caska
Chief Executive Officer
Playgroup NSW

We also took time this month to acknowledge and celebrate NAIDOC Week, honouring the history, culture, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was wonderful to see so many playgroups embracing the opportunity to learn, reflect, and connect through stories, songs, and cultural activities.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. Inside, you'll find activity sheets, recent MP visits, key organisational updates, and our latest spotlight stories. As always, we'd love your feedback on what you find most useful.

CELEBRATING BOOK WEEK IN PLAYGROUPS

Growing Little Readers Through Play 16th August - 23rd August

Book Week is a wonderful time to spark a love of stories in young children. In playgroups, it's more than just dressing up—it's about building early literacy in fun, playful ways. Reading books, singing songs, and exploring stories through play helps children develop language, imagination, and a lifelong love of learning.

By celebrating Book Week together, families and children connect over stories, build vocabulary, and discover the joy of books—all in a relaxed, social setting. It's never too early to start reading, and playgroups are the perfect place to begin the journey. How you can get involved.

1. Dress-Up Story Day

Invite children to come dressed as their favourite book character. Keep it simple—homemade costumes or themed accessories work great!

2. Storytime Picnic

Host a picnic where families bring a favourite book to share.

3. Craft a Story

Use art and craft to retell a popular children’s book—like making “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” with paper and glue. (see below activity sheet!)

4. Sing and Rhyme Time

Include songs and rhymes from well-known books (e.g., We're Going on a Bear Hunt) in your group’s music time.

5. Book Swap Table

Encourage families to bring a gently used children’s book to swap with others—great for sharing stories and building home libraries.

6. Guest Reader Visit

Invite a local librarian, author, or grandparent to read a story to the group.

7. Story-Themed Play Stations

Set up play areas inspired by books—like a “Gruffalo” forest or a “Spot the Dog” adventure zone

[Download the activity sheet](#)

INTRODUCING JESS PASCIOLLA

PROGRAM LEAD COMMUNITY PLAYGROUPS

Jess brings over 13 years of experience in early childhood education to her new role as Program Lead, Community Playgroups.

A passionate advocate for play-based learning, Jess has been part of the Playgroup NSW team for the past 2.5 years, previously supporting more than 50 early education playgroups across the state.

As a mum of two, she understands



firsthand the importance of connection, community and the early years – and is excited to help families across NSW thrive through play.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

ST MICHAEL'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, COOLAMON

We're delighted to announce the launch of a new community-run playgroup at St Michael's

Primary School in Coolamon - a picturesque rural town located about 40 km north-west of Wagga Wagga and 506 km south-west of Sydney.

A heartfelt thank you to Principal Brendan Flanagan, whose initiative and outreach to Playgroup NSW helped bring this wonderful opportunity to life for local children and families.

With its welcoming atmosphere and excellent facilities - including a library, art room, and outdoor playground - St Michael's is the perfect home for this playgroup.

The playgroup has already hosted two successful sessions:

- The first session was an informal meet-and-greet, warmly welcoming families and sparking great enthusiasm.
- The second session, held in early July, featured a delightful "Very Cranky Bear" theme. Led by our amazing Coordinator, Mel, children, and adults enjoyed Storytime, singing, dancing, and interactive activities. The fun continued in the art room, where kids painted their own cranky bears and went on a bear hunt!

A special highlight was the involvement of Year 6 students, who joined as special guests. Their kindness and enthusiasm made a big impression - playing alongside

the younger children, participating in activities, and even helping with clean-up. They were truly inspiring role models.

Primary schools as a venue:

A primary school is a fantastic setting for a community-run playgroup because it offers a safe, welcoming, and child-friendly environment that naturally supports early learning and development.

Being located within the school grounds helps young children become familiar with the surroundings, easing their transition into formal education.

It also strengthens community connections by bringing families together in a space that values inclusion and learning.

With access to excellent facilities and the potential for collaboration with educators, a school-based playgroup creates a nurturing space where children can play, explore, and grow—while parents and caregivers build relationships and support networks.

NAIDOC WEEK 2025

Playgroup NSW and the Connected Beginnings team proudly hosted a vibrant NAIDOC. The day began with a heartfelt Welcome to Country by Aunty Leonie, a moment of silence for sorry business, and a traditional dance by Marrambidya Yurali Waga Dhaanys.

Highlights included an inspiring Youth Panel featuring young leaders, an intergenerational yarning circle guided by Elders, and hands-on cultural activities like damper making and weaving for children.



The event was a powerful reflection of community, culture, and the legacy we're building for future generations.

GROWING MINDS CHECK IN

Do you wonder about what you can do to support your child's wellbeing?

The Check-In is a new, free wellbeing Check-In for Australian parents and caregivers of children aged from birth to 17 years, organised by The University of Sydney. The Check-in allows you to track your child's wellbeing and get access to personalised feedback and research-backed programs and information.

The University of Sydney are currently recruiting parents and caregivers of children and young people aged from birth to 17 years 6 months for this research study.



Growing Minds
CHECK-IN

For more information about the study or to participate, contact us on (02) 9114 4326 or visit: <https://growingmindscheckin.au/>



[Find Out More](#)

NAIDOC WEEK AT THE NGURRA HUB



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- **1st August - 7th August**
 - World Breastfeeding Week
- **1st August**
 - World Day Of Joy
- **1st August - 31st August**
 - Happiness Happens Month
 - Platypus Month
- **4th August**
 - National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Day
- **5th August - 11th August**
 - Keep Australia Beautiful Week

- **7th August - 13th August**
 - Dental Health Week
- **8th August:**
 - International Cat Day
 - International Rescue Cat Day
 - International Mountaineering Day
 - Happiness Happens Day
- **9th August**
 - International Day of the World's Indigenous People
 - Red Nose Day
- **9th - 17th August**
 - National Science Week
- **10th August**
 - World Lion Day
- **12th August**
 - International Youth Day
 - World Elephant Day
- **13th August**
 - International Left Hander Day
- **14th August**
 - World Lizard Day
- **16th August - 23rd August**
 - Book Week
- **19th August**
 - International Orangutan Day
 - World Humanitarian Day
 - National Potato Day

- **26th August**
 - National Dog Day
 - **30th August**
 - International Whale Shark Day
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'VOLUNTEERS AT PLAY' NOW ON YOUTUBE

Over the past few years, the Community Coordinators have held a number of webinars to inform volunteers of best practice and up to date information from Playgroup NSW.

The main ones are now available to watch on our YouTube channel in our 'Volunteers at Play' section.

These webinars cover topics such as:

- Community Coordinator/ Playgroup NSW role
- Finances/Treasurer information
- Insurance/ Hire Agreement
- Annual General Meetings
- Volunteer role/ recruiting volunteers /handover information
- Multi-sessions
- Events and excursions

Please be aware these are live recordings of our webinars. There are some repetitions in the webinars – be aware you can use the progress bar to skip ahead to only watch the sections you want to learn about.

Please contact your Community Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns.

[Watch the webinars here](#)

GOT A HEARTWARMING MOMENT TO SHARE?

We're on the hunt for feel-good stories from community playgroups — the giggles, the triumphs, the magic of play. Whether it's a pint-sized Picasso or a friendship that bloomed over finger paint, we'd love to hear it! Drop us your stories and let's spread some joy!

ARE YOU ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

We'd love to share your wonderful playgroup experiences with our community! If you're active on social media, please tag **Playgroup NSW** or use **#PlaygroupNSW** in your posts so we can feature your playgroup on our channels and spread the word about the amazing work you're doing!

About Playgroup NSW:

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. For over 50 years, Playgroup NSW has delivered and linked over 65,000 families to vital services such as parent support groups and playgroups to foster early childhood development, navigate the challenges of parenting and build strong, resilient communities. With 550 playgroups operating each week and more than 26,000 sessions held annually, and support from over 500 dedicated volunteers, Playgroup NSW continues to make a significant difference in the lives of young children and their families across the state.

www.playgroupnsw.org.au



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