

State of Play

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF PLAYGROUP SA

ISSUE 4 2014

BIG KIDS

WHY PARENTS NEED PLAY, TOO

FLICK THE SWITCH ON SCREEN TIME

HAPPY FAMILIES JOIN US IN 2015!

FLIP OVER FOR
SA KIDS



Letter from **STATE OF PLAY**

Welcome to another edition of *State of Play*. All of us here at Playgroup SA hope that our members are back at playgroup ready for a fun last term of the year.

We're all looking forward to our annual Playgroup @ the Zoo event on Friday 7 November. All the usual gang will come along, as well as the 'Bubble Man', for a great fun day out. We hope that many of our members can come along and share the day.

We held our annual Twilight Playgroup at the Playgroup SA Playroom as part of Children's Week in October. It was a great Sunday afternoon of fun and activities followed by a sausage sizzle. What a great opportunity for all the family to get together and celebrate our young people.

The best part of the job for the team here at Playgroup SA

is getting out and visiting our many wonderful playgroups across South Australia. We enjoy seeing the great work so many of our members put into their groups each week.

If you would like a member of the Playgroup SA team to come out and share in your playgroup, please give us a call.

The team is also busy getting things ready for 2015, so keep an eye out for an affiliation pack coming your way soon. We've made some changes to our workshops, and hope that the new time slots make it easier for more to attend.

If any playgroups need help closing down for the year, then please do not hesitate to contact Playgroup SA.

Wishing all of our members a very merry holiday season, and safe and happy holidays.

Carley Jones, Executive Officer, Playgroup SA

ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY

WORDS CARLEY JONES, PLAYGROUP EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Playgroup can be the starting point for new Australian families faced with settling their children – and themselves – into a new language and culture. Carley Jones shares tips on how to be inclusive at Playgroup.

We hear a lot about ‘inclusion’ these days, but what does it mean, and how do we really achieve it? Being an inclusive playgroup doesn’t mean that you just welcome families from other cultures with gusto and open arms and have their flag on display. It doesn’t mean welcoming a family where a member has special needs, but forgetting to make activities accessible. And it doesn’t stop once you’ve welcomed families through the front door.

Being inclusive at playgroup is a living, breathing, constant dynamic. Being an inclusive playgroup is being respectful of Jane who sits next to you in the sand pit, even though her parenting beliefs and the ways she interacts with her children are at the opposite end of the scale to your parenting beliefs. It’s being non-judgemental of Jane and enjoying the moments, and vice versa.

Being inclusive at playgroup is incorporating all families with equality. No one is different, you are all families coming together for the same purpose, regardless of country of origin, religion, abilities or parenting styles.

How do we achieve this at Playgroup?

Always be welcoming

It can be a daunting experience for a family to attend playgroup for the first time, so it’s imperative that when they walk through the door they are greeted warmly and made to feel welcome and wanted. Allocate a welcoming person who ensures that family has a friendly face to show them around, inform them of the routine and what is expected. Most importantly, don’t let that warm welcome stop on the first day. Always farewell families with: “It was great to see you and we look forward to seeing you next week.”

Be observant

If you notice a parent who struggles to interact, or is often spotted sitting on their own during playgroup, go over and say hello. A friendly smile and a chat may make an enormous difference to their experience.

Being a welcoming playgroup can also mean incorporating all families in the planning process. Consulting members on planned activities, sharing the workload or even asking for suggestions, feedback and ideas can make a family feel their opinions and ideas are valued and respected. It can lead to families feeling more connected and included in a group setting.

Some playgroups take being inclusive and welcoming to the next step by emailing families who don’t return for several weeks and stating that they are missed at playgroup and it’s hoped they return soon.

Remember that parents are a child’s first and most

influential teachers and even very young children pick up on their acceptance or non-acceptance of people. Playgroups give parents the opportunity to be positive role models and to help their children understand why others look, speak or act differently.

Some simple activities to include in your program may include:

- Share cultural experiences of families in your playgroup through discussion and food. Meal times are a great way to include all families in conversation and share foods that are important.
- Learn the words for hello, goodbye, fruit or other routine times at playgroup in other languages.
- Share traditional games and toys used by other families in your playgroup.
- Share songs and rhymes from other languages.

Welcoming a family with a child or adult with a disability

It’s hard to imagine how difficult it is to walk into a room full of strangers wondering if your child with a disability will be accepted. Children expect others to behave in certain ways and when they don’t, the questions start. It’s important to answer children’s questions simply, honestly and correctly. If you don’t know, ask the family. Don’t simply label the child with a disability as being sick.

Explore how everyone in your playgroup has differences – who is big, little, old, young, blonde or black haired, who likes the swings or who dislikes the swings. Help children see that everyone has differences and elements of uniqueness and that we all, also, have things in common. For example, “Kate can’t talk yet but does like to hold your hand and do the actions to Twinkle Twinkle Little Star with you.”

To help a child or parent with a physical disability feel welcome, choose activities that they do too, like singing and story time. Keep song or story time relaxed to avoid unrealistic expectations or demands.

Helpful hints:

- Use books and stories to help adults and children understand disability.
- Use simple sign language in greetings, songs and rhymes.
- Allow role play with dolls and wheel chairs, for example.
- If you have never played, worked or lived with a person with a disability, you may be unaware of what language is best used not to cause offence. Take your lead from the parent or person. Focus on the person, not the communication difficulties. You will overcome any uneasiness quickly if you talk to the person naturally and get to know them. ●

LET'S PLAY

Sometimes parents are the missing ingredient when it comes to play, says Martina Button.

WORDS MARTINA BUTTON,
PLAYGROUP SA PROJECT OFFICER

We expect our children to know how to play, but how important is it for parents to get involved? And what if creative fun doesn't come naturally?

According to the Australian Childhood Foundation's *Every Child is Important* program, "the most important play for young children is play with parents."

There are many different parenting styles, some with advantages over others, and some that come easily, others that need practice.

The role of adults in a child's world is one of the biggest and most important they will ever have. We may feel guilty we're not doing enough for our children, or put pressure on ourselves to give them the best childhood money can buy.

But the secret to the best childhood is quality time and attention. That doesn't mean planning ahead to book in a date. It's the simple things, such as the language we use when talking with our children, the tone and volume we use, our body language and the connections we make.

Cooking, walking, cuddles on the lounge, hanging out the washing and checking the letterbox together can all

strengthen relationships with children. Other ideas include giving the car or family pet a wash, looking for treasure or fairies in your front yard, playing shops and super heroes, having a picnic in the park, looking in a mirror together and, of course, going to playgroup together.

These are the things that contribute to making a magical childhood, regardless of age and abilities. Delight in your children, keep it simple, and be creative.

How do you play? A **director** organises play, directs and leads the child, shows the child how and what to do, and stays close by to monitor progress.

A **facilitator** centres their attention more on the child than on the play, encourages the child to choose an activity and play without getting involved; is encouraging, supportive and resourceful and helps out when needed.

An **observer** gives the child freedom to play alone with little or no interaction, allows time and space for the child to play independently and lets children create their own play and socialize with children and adults.



A **partner** plays with the child as an equal, takes turns initiating and choosing play, negotiates leadership and ideas and becomes a playmate by joining in.

Ultimately, it's a good idea to avoid the extremes of each style and to find a mixed balance when playing with children.

From my years of experience in caring for my three children, I've learnt to go with what works at the time. There have been plenty of moments, too, when I've looked back and thought 'What was I thinking?'

I've also observed how adults play, or don't play, during my years working with Playgroup SA. Here's my rundown on the many parenting styles you'll come across at playgroup:

The Crafter: The adult that busily works with the hand-over-hand approach with their child at the craft table. The Crafter is renowned for finishing off their child's craft activity long after their child has moved on to the next playgroup adventure.

The Onlooker: Sits back and smiles politely with a nod of the head when their child looks to them for reassurance.

The Busy Bee: Is always busy washing dishes, paint brushes, cutting up fruit and tidying up the home corner.

The Chatter Box: Sociable, outgoing and friendly, this playgroup lover loves to catch up on the latest local news and helps welcome new families.

The Player: You'll find them on the mat having a picnic with the teddies, digging a tunnel to China in the sandpit or tracing their handprint at the painting easel. They might sing off key or laugh out loud, clap like a fairy and dance like a giraffe. May settle under the parachute for the goodbye song and even shed a tear when it's time to go home.

These adults are all wonderful and positive contributors in making Playgroup a special place to be every week. Each brings his or her strengths to the success of the play environment, simply by their connections and engagement with others and their children.

The role an adult plays in their child's play is how relationships are encouraged and strengthened and is always an opportunity for children to learn new skills and how to interact with their playmates and peers. ●

FLICK THE SWITCH

Screens are everywhere and within easy reach. What does this mean for playgroupers, and how much is too much?

WORDS LAURA MCCARD, PLAYGROUP SA SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM LEADER

When I tried to engage my six-year-old nephew in a conversation, he showed far more interest in a game he was playing on his tablet.

"Are you a giraffe?" I asked him. "Yes," he said, showing he wasn't listening to me at all.

How much does time spent on screens limit access to other areas of important play?

Technology has integrated into our lives in the last two decades and is clearly here to stay. Twenty-four hour television, iphones, tablets and kindles; the gadgets are everywhere and are becoming more affordable and accessible than ever before.

But how do we incorporate this technology into our children's lives without having to lock up our gadgets in a big box and hide it in the cupboard out of reach?

Our brains don't fully develop until we're about 25 years of age and the most critical period of brain development is during early childhood.

Recent studies show that technology can have some benefits, but that it can also affect the way the brain functions and changes the way we think, process, respond and solve problems.

The risk of access to too much technology or watching too much television is that other parts of a child's development, including play, are lost.

Play builds confidence, makes children feel loved, happy and safe, develops social skills, language and communication, develops physical and motor skills and connects and refines pathways to the brain.

The best solution is to minimize the use and time that children spend with screen media technology and encourage a balance between physical and other creative play. ●

WAYS TO REDUCE SCREEN TIME:

- Create a time limit on the use of screen technology.
- Create a routine time for play and exploring.
- Fill the void with other activities.
- Ensure there is family time when everyone has an opportunity to be together and interact together.
- Ensure there are blocks of time when the television is off.
- Play music in the house and dance to it.

WAYS TO ENCOURAGE PLAY:

- At the playground try joining in on the swings and slide.
- Teach your child hopping and skipping games.
- Have tea party in the backyard. Bring out a picnic rug, stuffed bears and dolls.
- Next time you're in the car, sing some songs together, count coloured cars or play 'I spy'.
- Play 'My favourite animal': pretend to be an animal and show off your role-playing skills.
- Build a fort out of old bed sheets and cushions, pushing the furniture together, bring out the torches and have some fun.
- Make your own scavenger hunt and go for a walk around your neighbourhood to see what interesting items you can find.
- Camp in your own back yard. Set up the tent, get the torches out and sleep under the stars.
- Dance it out and have your own disco or dance party.
- Play musical statues or 'Simon Says'.

Source: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-power-prime/201212/how-technology-is-changing-the-way-children-think-and-focus>



DID YOU KNOW?

Australian federal guidelines recommend no more than two hours per day of electronic media for kids aged five to 17, no more than one hour a day for the two-to-five year age group, and none at all for children under two.



COME JOIN US!

Playgroup is all about fun, friends and family. If you haven't tried it yet, why not give it a go in 2015 or, better yet, start your own group?

WHY GO TO PLAYGROUP?

Playgroups offer babies, toddlers and young children a wide variety of early learning experiences. It's a great way for children to develop social skills, learn about the world and make friends. Simply by having fun and attending playgroup, children will improve their problem solving abilities, build relationships, listen to music and stories and explore arts, crafts, and various types of play. Plus, playgroups are just as beneficial to parents and caregivers!

Playgroup gives mums, dads, grandparents and carers a chance to meet and share ideas and experiences. Many long-term friendships begin at playgroup and it gives carers a break from the routine of being at home.

WELL, OKAY. BUT WHAT IS PLAYGROUP?

A playgroup is a gathering of mums, dads, grandparents and caregivers who come together each week with their babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers for interaction and fun. Parents and caregivers work together to provide their babies and young children with opportunities to learn through

play. Playgroup generally includes an endless variety of play experiences, social interaction, song and story time, craft activities, shared snack time and more.

WANT TO KNOW WHERE YOUR LOCAL PLAYGROUP IS?

Call Playgroup SA on free call 1800 171 882 or email info@playgroupsa.com.au and we'll send you a detailed list of playgroups in your local area (including days, cost, times and coordinators' contact details). Playgroup SA has over 300 playgroups operating across rural and metro South Australia.

Why not start your own Playgroup in 2015?

Playgroup is inexpensive and affordable and costs as little as a few dollars per week.

Starting a playgroup is as easy as having a couple of families with children aged 0-5 years who want to get together. Once you've decided to form a playgroup you will need to fill out a Playgroup SA affiliation form. Once affiliated, a Playgroup Support and Development Officer can help you every step of the way.

Yes, there are hundreds of existing playgroups operating in SA, but you may wish to start your own. It may be that there is not a playgroup in your area, or the day it runs does not suit you, or you may wish to start a specialised playgroup for a specific culture or language group, or you might have a group of friends with young children who wish to gather on a regular basis. Whatever the reason, don't be afraid to start a playgroup – enquire with Playgroup SA today on 1800 171 882.

Playgroups are an important place for children to learn and develop through play. They give children routines and help develop their social skills, as well as providing parents with an opportunity to play and connect with their child in a fun and exciting setting.

Step 1: Forming and Planning the New Playgroup

* Contact Playgroup SA for a New Playgroup Information Pack.

- Join Playgroup SA by completing the Affiliation Form.
- Search for and book a suitable venue. Playgroup SA can assist with the process.
- Receive your New Playgroup Starter Kit from Playgroup SA (includes comprehensive Playgroup Guidelines).
- Start promoting your group to local families and Playgroup SA will also refer enquiring families to your playgroup.

Stage 2: Norming - Establishing the culture of your playgroup

- Set a start date and a session time.
- Start collecting toys, equipment and resources. Playgroup SA can assist with this process.
- Establish rules and policies for your playgroup (e.g. safety policy).
- Plan age-appropriate play activities.
- Choose coordinator/s and other roles (e.g. treasurer).
- Warmly welcome new families.
- Families to complete a Family Membership Form and pay the appropriate fee on or before their third visit to Playgroup.

If you're having difficulties finding a location, we have spots in our playroom at Prospect. We currently have three vacancies available to run a playgroup on Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday afternoons. For more information please phone Playgroup SA on free call 1800 171 882. For affiliated playgroups with members, we also have resources at our office in Prospect that can be loaned out free of charge on a term basis to help resource your playgroup.

So what are you waiting for? Enquire about Playgroup in 2015 today! ●

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Sophia Future Astronaut!

PLAYGROUP Workshops

2015

Cost per Playgroup Workshop (inc GST)

Playgroup SA Members	\$15
Playgroup SA Coordinators	\$15
Playgroup Group Booking (minimum of 4 people)	\$10 per person
Non-Members of Playgroup SA	\$40



Enrolments / Enquiries

Playgroup SA 1800 171 882 or through submitting a 'Workshop Enrolment Form'.

Bookings are essential to secure your place and payment is due strictly FIVE business days prior to the Playgroup Workshop.

No REFUNDS or CREDITS will be given without a minimum of five business days notice.

Crèche

A crèche service is available on-site when stated. This service is included in the Workshop Cost.

Location

Playgroup SA Head Office
91 Prospect Road, Prospect SA



Coordinators Workshop

Are you thinking about starting a Playgroup?
Are you a new Playgroup Coordinator?
Are you interested in assisting with the running of your Playgroup?

The Coordinators Workshop will provide you with all the information that you need to assist in these roles!

This workshop includes invaluable tips on how to effectively run a Playgroup, as well as creative play ideas and useful information on the value and benefits of play. This is also a great opportunity to connect and brainstorm with other Playgroup Coordinators and Playgroup SA staff in developing your own Playgroup support network.

Thursday 19 February
10am - 12:30pm
Crèche available

Saturday 2 May
10am - 12:30pm
NO Crèche available

Thursday 20 August
10am - 12:30pm
Crèche available

Thursday 12 November
6pm - 8pm
NO Crèche available

This workshop is centred around age appropriate play ideas and activities for pre-school age children.

A change in the process of school intake has prompted a demand for stimulating ideas and activities for 4-5 year old Playgroupers, prior to school entry.

Pre-schoolers need and respond well to structure. They are more capable of managing intense emotions and they require routine to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Pre-school age children start to display more curious and questioning behaviours... they are more prone to pushing the boundaries and they often love to experiment with exploration and risk taking.

Pre-Schoolers at Play



Thursday 5 March
10am - 12pm
Crèche available

Wednesday 4 November
6pm - 8pm
NO Crèche available

Make & Play

Tuesday 12 May
6pm - 8pm
NO Crèche available

An opportunity for fun to MAKE and PLAY, create and share ideas and activities using homemade, recycled and inexpensive materials - for the Playgroup and the home. This workshop will explore the developmental process of creating your own play resources and will feature discussions about the types and categories of play, tips on how to create interactive play environments and hands on fun making toys!

Messy Play

Explore the value and benefits of messy play and gain age appropriate play ideas - but most of all, be engaged and have fun!

Messy Play makes an enormous contribution to your child's early language and literacy development. It is a vital component to children's cognitive processes and developing creativity, and benefits all children's learning!

Thursday 19 March
10am - 12pm
Crèche available

Music & Movement

Learn about the importance of music in early childhood. Discover how to run your own interactive Music & Movement session at Playgroup and gain fabulous ideas to get your playgroup families moving and singing. Includes actions and dances, props, musical instruments, parachute songs, songs that encourage movement and music for babies

Thursday 14 May
10am - 12pm
NO Crèche available

Christmas Craft

Come along and celebrate the festive season with this fabulous hands-on art and craft workshop that will provide you with inspiring ideas to share with your children! A fun and interactive Christmas themed session that will explore a variety of art materials, techniques and ideas to use with young children in the lead up to Christmas.

Thursday 22 October
10am - 12pm
Crèche available

Enrol now
for 2014!
6 NOVEMBER
10am - 12:30pm

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

Most playgroups shut down or close for the school holiday period. Here are some ideas on how to leave your playgroup at the end of the year, so that the fun can begin the first week back!

Does your playgroup have a committee? If so, here are a few simple steps you can take to ensure that a committee handover takes place and any new committee is ready to hit the ground running in the New Year.

Immediately after your annual general meeting, or just as the end of the year is approaching, arrange for the outgoing playgroup committee to meet with the incoming committee to hand over information.

HANDOVER CHECKLIST

- Allow time for outgoing people to hand over written information to their replacement.
- Give a clear job description to the incoming president, secretary, treasurer, public officer, Playgroup SA contact person, and session coordinators.
- The treasurer needs to be sure all finances are in order. She may consider getting the books audited. This meeting is a good time to arrange the change of signatories with your bank.
- Incoming people should have the chance to talk about their job and ask questions.
- List names, addresses and phone numbers of everyone on the old and new committee.
- Share an overview of the coming year. This may include Playgroup SA events such as National Playgroup Week and other celebrations relevant to your playgroup and community.
- Celebrate the successes of the year and acknowledge hard work all volunteers put into your playgroup.
- Set dates for committee meetings for the coming year.

Information to hand over includes: general information file, Playgroup manual, Playgroup constitution, equipment inventory, accident, incident or injury record book, Playgroup membership information, all paperwork, if incorporated, hall or venue details: key arrangements, contact names and numbers, events and outings information, list of resource people and phone numbers – Playgroup SA, local council, maternal and child health coordinator, list of equipment suppliers.

If your playgroup is incorporated, be sure all the tasks of a public officer have been completed. For more help with your changeover call the Members' Hotline on 1800 171 882.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

A group shouldn't feel they have to shut down when a much-loved coordinator decides to step aside. There are plenty of

steps you can take to ensure your playgroup runs smoothly in the New Year. It's always best if outgoing coordinators give plenty of notice.

- Ask each family if there is someone who would like to take on the role of coordinator for the following year.
- One option is to up a roster to share the role, taking turns on a weekly, monthly or term-by-term basis.
- Set up a roster for pack up, set up, cleaning, craft time and song time.
- Advertise that your playgroup is looking for a volunteer coordinator.
- Call Playgroup SA. We can come and visit and explain the role and responsibilities of coordination to the group as a whole. We can also help with the handover. We can provide coordinator training and support to new coordinators.

MAKE A LIST, CHECK IT TWICE

Here's a checklist on how to close down for the holiday period.

- Have you made venue arrangements for 2015? If you lease your building, don't forget to call Playgroup SA as we can help negotiate terms and also forward your lease to insurance to check all is well, and you are not signing a lease that could put your playgroup at risk.
- Make sure you have sent in all your attendance records to Playgroup SA.
- Return your affiliation form for 2015 and share 2015 forms with new committee members or coordinators.
- If you have a new coordinator, let Playgroup SA know.
- Inform your venue when your playgroup will be returning in the New Year.
- Go through your resources and removed any broken or unsafe items.
- Update your inventory of resources and equipment.
- Pack up your playgroup up in accordance with venue requirements.
- Have all volunteers been thanked for their contributions throughout the year?
- Organise a little end of year celebration.

CLOSING DOWN?

If your Playgroup faces the prospect of closing down altogether, please call Playgroup SA so that we can talk you through the process. ●