

Playgroup SA PALS Program



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What is PALS?

PALS is an Inclusive Supported Playgroup Program. Each PALS program reserves 5 places for children with a disability and 5 are open to other families. Together with the PALS Program Facilitator, the families get to know each other in the first 2-3 weeks. Together, the families decide what cultural, sport and recreation activities they would like to participate in.

The PALS program facilitator then organises and invites the cultural, sport or rec (CSAR) organisations in to co-facilitate the session. This approach provides opportunities for children with disability to access and try different activities in a familiar, supportive environment.



What are the outcomes?

For children & parents

Increased community connection.

Increased confidence to participate in community activities.

Improved social skills.

Improved play skills.

For CSAR organisations

CASR organisations improved inclusive practices.

For Community

Reduced stigma in community relating to disability.



Children and families decide what cultural, sport and recreation activities they would like to participate in.



Why is PALS needed?

Families living disability often feel reluctant to join mainstream culture arts, sport and recreation (CASR) activities in the community. Where a pattern of not engaging in community is established while children are young. This is more likely to continue as children grow – leading to ongoing social isolation. Children and parents with disability do not have access to the same community activities as other children and families.

Through the PALS Inclusive Supported Playgroup program, we are seeking to make a difference to community inclusion in a number of ways:

- Increasing the inclusivity of Playgroups by providing a stepping stone between fully supported disability focussed Playgroups and mainstream Playgroups.
- Engaging families with disability in Playgroup and connect these families with mainstream community – both through transition to community Playgroups and continued engagement in mainstream activities around the theme.
- Increasing the understanding of inclusive practice in the early years in CASR organisations.
- Providing exposure for mainstream families to an inclusive Playgroup setting, to inform their understanding and practice of inclusivity.

Working together

We know families with disabilities often speak of barriers to participating in mainstream Playgroups, including not feeling like they share a common parenting journey.

PALS explores ways of overcoming these barriers. It brings together several families with disability, and shared experience, with their mainstream peers. It also brings families together to further support connection between families, with and without disability.

The PALS model is deliberately a time limited Playgroup so that families join a group knowing that it is for one semester and that they will then be supported to transition to another Playgroup and community settings at the end of this period.

Co-design

The selection of CASR activities will be decided by children and families with support from the PALS Program Facilitator. Playgroup SA will connect with existing CASR Organisations, inviting them in to deliver session for the children and families participating the PALS program.

Where is PALS happening?

The PALS program is being piloted in the first half of 2021 in Mount Gambier and Prospect.

With places limited, for more information please contact:

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