

2017 Annual Report



Who we are

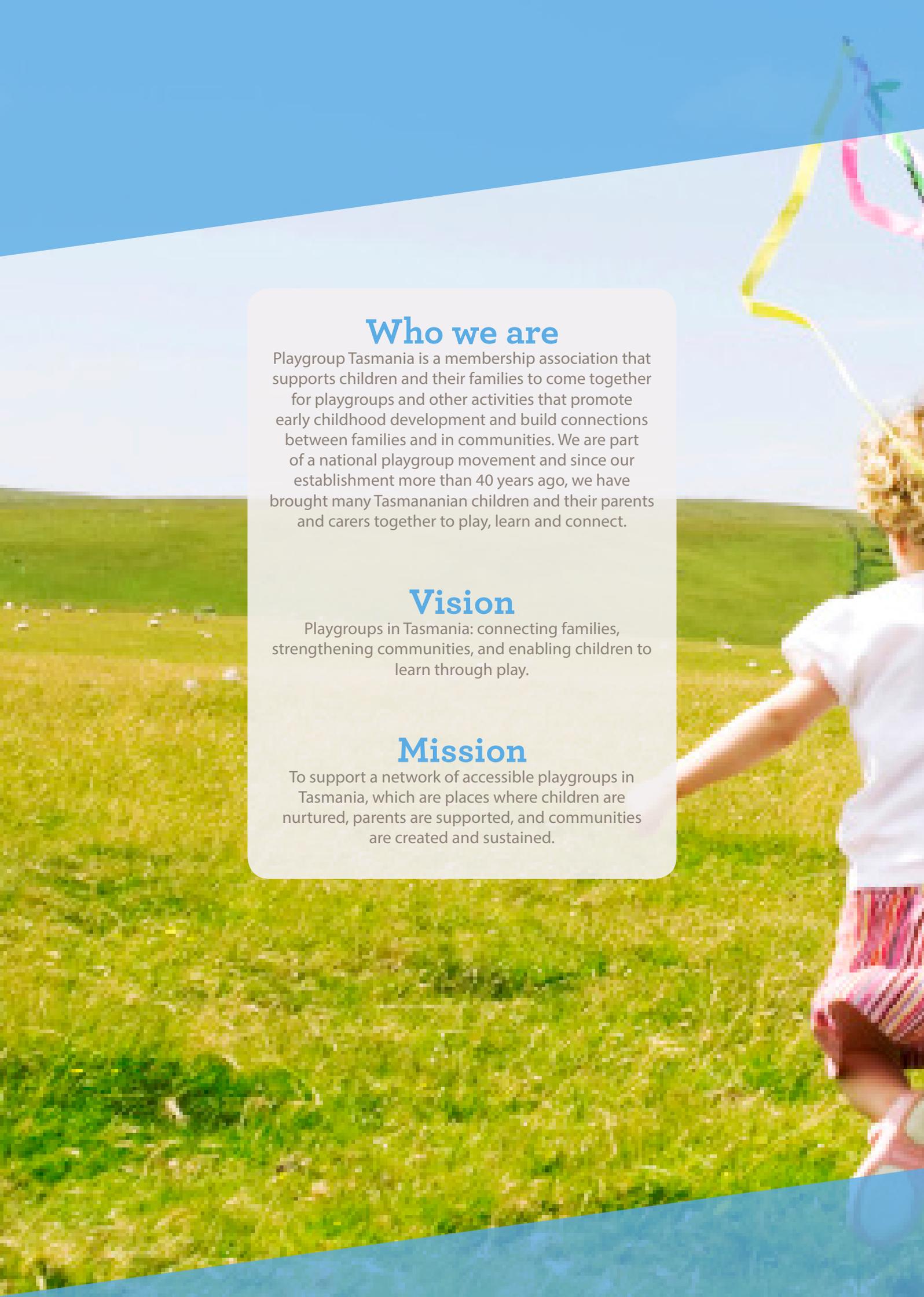
Playgroup Tasmania is a membership association that supports children and their families to come together for playgroups and other activities that promote early childhood development and build connections between families and in communities. We are part of a national playgroup movement and since our establishment more than 40 years ago, we have brought many Tasmanian children and their parents and carers together to play, learn and connect.

Vision

Playgroups in Tasmania: connecting families, strengthening communities, and enabling children to learn through play.

Mission

To support a network of accessible playgroups in Tasmania, which are places where children are nurtured, parents are supported, and communities are created and sustained.





Values

Playgroup Tasmania values:

Families and children

- families with children aged 0 to 5 years learning and developing together through play
- parents as a child's first educator
- parents and carers supporting each other through positive playgroup experiences

Community

- the power of playgroups to strengthen communities

Partners

- our role as the peak body for playgroups in Tasmania
- integrity of purpose, performance and accountability in dealing with stakeholders
- the partnership between our staff and volunteers, and their expertise and commitment

Chair Report

The past twelve months have been both challenging as well as providing us with ongoing hope. It has been challenging in terms of securing funding for all our services and has provided ongoing hope in that we still have dedicated and passionate people flying the Playgroup flag. I particularly thank those Community Playgroup participants and co-ordinators, volunteers and our Playgroup Tasmania staff who often go beyond the call of duty. Unfortunately, I have had to end my tenure as Chairperson and Board member after only twelve months due to personal reasons. I can assure you that I will have a continued interest in what is happening at PGT through my various contacts and associations.

I believe that we are now starting to shore up Playgroup Tasmania and have a platform from which we can build. The PGT Board has reviewed and refined our strategic plan, provided our CEO with clear and concise goals as well as commissioned a research paper specific to Playgroups in Tasmania which has been completed. In addition, we are rebuilding our web site and putting in place a better database for our families and members. These are fundamental planks in continuing to build PGT's presence and profile in our communities. At a national level, there has been much discussion as how we position Playgroup nationally and how Playgroup Australia can best support the States and Territories.

I have enjoyed my working relationship with Jacinda Armstrong, CEO, as we navigated the various testing times that have confronted PGT. Jacinda is very

passionate about PGT and what it can do for children, families and communities. We have shared both the small steps that PGT has achieved as well as the frustrations that sometimes arise. I know that Jacinda will provide the same passion and candor with the new Chairperson as she has done with me. Thank you Jacinda for your continued commitment towards PGT.

I hope that in the coming years that you will see PGT continue to grow and reach out to likeminded organisations, possibly building strategic partnerships. I believe that this will be the future for small community organisations as we strive to receive ongoing funding that Governments continue to shrink. Finally, I thank our current Board members for their support, time, good humour and ongoing commitment. I know that they will provide the new Chairperson with the same counsel and support they have shown me. I wish that PGT continues to provide that magic for children, families and communities that it has done during the past forty years.

Stephen Yates
Chair
Playgroup Tasmania

CEO Report

What a year! This time last year, I had only been in the role a short time and I was still very much trying to find my feet

The last year has been a very positive period of growth, not only for the organization, but myself in this role – of course there have been challenges.

I am fortunate to be supported by a strong and capable board and a dedicated and committed team of staff. I am grateful.

Thankyou Steve Yates, the outgoing Chair, for your passionate leadership, support and guidance during his term. I very much appreciate the time you put in to mentoring me and your very diplomatic approach to providing constructive feedback. I think I say thank you on behalf of all the Board and staff and we hope that you will continue to be a strong advocate for playgroup.

August 2016 saw Playgroup Tasmania's office and toy library in the south move into a co-location space with the YMCA in Glenorchy. As a result of this arrangement, a strong relationship with the YMCA has grown over the last year and we now partner to deliver events such as open days for playgroup members and events that focus on engagement between Dads and kids. However, the toy library has not seen increased participation and we continue to question its future as delivered by Playgroup Tasmania. A review of the Toy Library service will be completed by December 2017 to help inform decisions that need to be made about the future of

this service.

Increased operational costs and declining engagement with the local community saw us review and change the way we operate on the North West and West Coast. Our board made the hard decision to close the Burnie based office in September 2016, including the toy library.

Janine Morris was appointed to the Support and Development role in the region based from home office. There have been amazing outcomes. We see the number of accessible community playgroups across the region is growing, increasing family engagement with community playgroups and valuable community partnerships have been nurtured with organisations like St Giles, Anglicare, Save the Children, Mens Sheds and more. The work that is happening on the North West and West Coast really is a true example of how a community development approach can work on the ground.

Re-engagement with Tasmanian families has been the core focus at an operational level this year. I have been re-establishing connections with stakeholder organisations. I believe we are back on the Tasmanian radar in conversations about early childhood and communities. We have also been testing new playgroup models including nature playgroup and intergenerational playgroup, the next steps for these models is to grow the sessions into more areas and ensure they can be transitioned into community driven, self-managed playgroups .

As well, we have started to roll out Play Baby initiative in April 2016. Play Baby is targeting families and carers with babies aged 0-12 months to attend playgroup in their community.

The revitalization of the PlayConnect program is a work in progress. In addition to the existing Launceston session, we have now established sessions in the south and the North West – we know we need to re-think how we can engage more families to this program. We are funded to deliver 2 sessions.

However, we know through conversations with system stakeholders there is need in the community for this program to be available in all three regions.

To be able to maintain this level of program delivery, we need to increase family engagement with the program to ensure we can advocate for the additional funding that is required to maintain the three sessions. We will continue to work with St Giles and other stakeholders to build awareness of the program.

With a future focused approach, the past year has seen a number of changes for Playgroup Tasmania at both the strategic and operational level. A comprehensive research review was commissioned that has provided us with an in-depth analysis of the current playgroup environment and future opportunities for us to consider. I look forward to working with the Playgroup Tasmania board, staff, playgroups and the community to design solutions that address the unmet needs and add value to existing programs and services across our state.

Playgroup Tasmania is proud of its 40 year history, however we must continue to grow in order to be an organization that is responsive to the changing needs of Tasmanian children and families. We cannot deny our community looks different today. Playgroup Tasmania needs to do things differently and we need to be able to do this in an environment of decreasing funding and increasing resource costs.

So, the challenge continues, but it's an exciting time - its about how we meet that challenge and I believe it is through designing innovative and adaptive models of playgroup that are relevant and accessible to Tasmanian families and establishing positive partnership approaches to implementing the models across the broader Tasmanian community.

On a final note –media coverage relating to the lowering of the school age was all about ensuring all Tasmanian children have access to quality early learning. Playgroup Tasmania will continue to advocate for parents and carers to be recognized as their child's first and most enduring teacher.

Strong early learning happens at playgroup in an unstructured, safe and nurturing environment.

Quality early learning starts at home.

Jacinda Armstrong
CEO
Playgroup Tasmania

What is playgroup

Community Playgroups, led by parents and carers, are one of the most common forms of playgroup. These gatherings for parents and young children under school age generally meet once a week for one or two hour sessions. They provide an opportunity for children to learn through unstructured play and enable parents to develop social networks and improve parenting skills¹

Playgroup helps children:

- participate in new experiences
- develop and increase their social skills
- learn about sharing, cooperation and simple routines
- interact with other adults and children in a safe environment
- learn more about their world
- have fun

Playgroup helps adults:

- meet other local families and develop new friendships
- relax and talk in a friendly environment
- share experiences and ideas
- play with children and nurture their development
- make connections in their local community
- have fun

Playgroup Tasmania supports parents and families to be recognised as the child's first and most enduring teachers. It is through a parent's relationship with their child that they learn and grow. Playgroup remains the only forum where parents and families meet with other families in their local community to support each other, strengthen connections and children learn through play.

1. Gregory, T., Harman-Smith, Y., Sincovich, A., Wilson, A., & Brinkman, S. (2016). It takes a village to raise a child: The influence and impact of playgroups across Australia.

Telethon Kids Institute, South Australia. ISBN 978-0-9876002-4-0.

Around the regions

North West and West Coast Region

The story of this region for me begins in October last year. I was fortunate to join the Playgroup Tasmania family, working from home, and out of the Playgroup van. The Playgroup van and I, from October to June, have travelled over 8,000 kms, visiting our local Community playgroups.

I have always believed that, if you don't look after volunteers, they tend to find other things to do with their time. I have worked closely with the Committee members at the five Playgroups that existed when I started. I have worked to re-establish relationships and re-build trust in Playgroup Tasmania as an organisation. I have spent a lot of time listening to families and getting to know them. I have made myself available to the committee's through face to face meetings at their Playgroups, regular email and phone contact, and by sharing information with the Playgroups on our Playgroup Tasmania Facebook page, and on their own facebook pages.

I have encouraged the Playgroups to feel that they are part of a region of connected Playgroups, which is part of a large statewide family of Playgroups. The Playgroups have been encouraged to participate in statewide events at their local Playgroups.

Families have requested support to start up Community Playgroups, and at June 2017, we have 8 local Playgroups operating sessions across the week. Local organisations have also requested assistance to start up Playgroups, and we have one Playgroup who is in the transition process towards a Community Playgroup. We also have a PlayConnect Playgroup which has recently started. We have in total 10 Playgroups we are supporting and working with in this region.

I have been working to ensure that Playgroup Tasmania is considered professional and committed to supporting families to have access to Playgroup sessions in their community. I have re-established connections and relationships with groups, organisations and local councils.

Community Playgroups continue to grow in this region, and the response I am met with now, from when I started, is very positive, both from families and those outside Playgroup. The media and communities focus on children and families taking time to play together in a relaxed and playful environment right now, puts Playgroup Tasmania well placed to continue to grow in people's minds and in the Community.

I will continue to work to support the families who volunteer to run Playgroup sessions, and seek to support families who wish to start up new Playgroups. This is an exciting time to be part of an organisation that values and support play for all.

'You are never too old to Play'

Janine Morris,

Support and Development -North & North West.

Northern Region

Playgroup Tasmania has been exceptionally busy over this past year. We have seen the Playgroup model gain back some of its standing as the lead agency for Playgroups in Tasmania. Our reputation has been continuously improving through implementing a variety of changes but most predominantly the community sees the Support and Development workers out in the community supporting local playgroups through close working relationships, understanding each community and coming up with often unique and innovative solutions to best support the families and children of Tasmania.

I have helped to run many events throughout the year, which have been great opportunities to promote all the good work that Playgroup Tasmania does to support young children and families. I am passionate about the @Play with Nature and the Pop up Play sessions I have run, as they have engaged a wider range of families than we had previously connected with. Through these playful sessions, I have shared information about the Community Playgroups that are available to families, and helped to connect them with other local families and organisations. Promoting play and nature is a great way to reach a broad range of families, and I am looking forward to expanding these sessions in the future.

These events have occurred while supporting all local and regional playgroups to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and resources needed to facilitate these playgroups. Playgroups across the state will benefit hugely from having the concrete resources contained within a revitalized Playgroup Manual and Toolkit (which have had a lot of work occur behind the scenes) to inform best practice and to unify our approach across the state.

It has been a fun year but it has also been lots of hard work and all staff put in much more effort and time than their hours allow. It is through this dedication and hard work that Playgroup Tasmania is on its way to taking back its place as the place to be for 0-5yrs for their foundation of learning with their families- but more importantly Playgroup is where families and children spend quality and nurturing times together. It is through this high quality learning and playing that we set children up with the lifelong skills to become resilient, well rounded members of the community.

Belinda Mathieson

Support and Development- North region

Southern Region

I have been busy visiting the many Community Playgroups in this region this year. I have worked with the Playgroup Committees who have required support, whether on-going, or help to establish a new Committee. I have spent time working closely with the families at the Community Playgroup sessions, to ensure that they feel confident in their skills and ability to run a successful Playgroup.

I successfully established an Intergenerational Playgroup in partnership with Prescare in Warrane. This weekly Playgroup session has allowed lovely connections and relationships to develop between the young children, the families, aged care residents, their families and staff. I have worked closely with management and with the broader community to ensure this Playgroup continues to grow and thrive as a community playgroup.

I have enjoyed working with local community organisations, including community houses and the Child Health Association of Tasmania (CHAT) to build and strengthen relationships for Playgroup Tasmania. Making these connections with other professionals, helps to generate interest in new Playgroups in our Community. I am looking to facilitate new Intergenerational and Nature Play Playgroups across the southern region, with a focus on the Kingborough and Huon areas as well as looking to supporting the Dunally and Primrose Sans communities.

I have promoted Playgroup Tasmania and its benefits to families and the community at many events this year. These have included events organised by our partners including local councils and the YMCA, as well as events at our local Playgroups.

I believe the work I have undertaken this year will continue to have lasting benefits for this region. Playgroup Tasmania Playgroups, are great for families with young children to connect and engage with their local community. I have enjoyed working with families and the community this year, and I look forward to seeing Playgroup Tasmania grow in the future.

Reagan Tart

Support and Development- South



"Playgroups offer a unique experience for the children and adults who attend"

PlayBaby

The Play Baby initiative rolled out across a number of Southern Tasmanian playgroups in April this year. Initially three playgroups expressed interest in implementing the program; one playgroup recently had an influx of small babies and keen to have new, baby friendly resources to offer families, another was going through a change of leader and looking to re energise their playgroup and boost attendance numbers and thirdly, the last playgroup has a do-it-all, energetic leader always looking to try out new ideas in their playgroup setting. Since April, I have approached a further two playgroups who are now running Play Baby and I have assisted one other playgroup improve their Play Baby and general attendance numbers by regularly attending the session and getting to know the new Play Baby families.

As each playgroup is run differently, with different needs and demographics, an individualised approach has been required to oversee the implementation of Play Baby. Some playgroups have required a 'hands on' approach from myself, while others have required very little assistance in starting Play Baby. There have been varying degrees of success in rolling out the initiative and the reasons for this vary. The physical location of the playgroup seems to deter or attract families. Play Baby has been most successful and had families return when the location is central and either a short drive or walk in the pram from home. A Mother's Group has started meeting weekly at a Play Baby playgroup and I foresee in the future this will be a primary way of attracting families.

All Play Baby playgroups have received the same Play Baby resource kit. This has been very well received by each playgroup from feedback received. Each kit contains a large, durable indoor/outdoor mat, two large, bright indoor/outdoor cushions, a pack of hard books specifically for babies, 4 wooden toys that can be easily wiped and cleaned and a baby musical box of wooden instruments.

I attended the monthly meetings of Child Health Centre Nurses in June. This was undoubtedly a wonderful opportunity to speak face to face with the nurses about Play Baby and pass on information to them about the new program. Each Child Health Centre was given a folder of flyers and posters to hand out and display in their waiting rooms. I have been told by the nurses in follow up visits that they have been passing out the flyers to families with a new baby. Developing an ongoing and solid relationship with Child Health Centres is an area Playgroup Tasmania could improve playgroup numbers. Often, the local Child Health Centre is a family's first stop for receiving information, advice and the community services available to them- if we can continue to develop a relationship with the nurses, increasing Play Baby numbers will occur.

Play Baby flyers will also be appearing in 'Bounty Bags'- these bags are given to all new mothers to be when they attend their obstetrician appointments during pregnancy. The bag contains an array of sample products to try and also information flyers about all things baby related in Tasmania. Play Baby flyers are also promoted at other locations- libraries, cafes and community noticeboards.

In summary, the Play Baby initiative is still a new program in development and its success will be determined by how we can keep the community talking about the program, continue to attract families with a baby to regularly attend their local playgroup and most importantly keep them coming back to their playgroup as 'regulars'.

Ellie Brothers

Play Baby Project Officer



PlayConnect

PlayConnect Playgroups are designed for families of children aged 0-6 years who have unique needs associated with having an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or developmental delays in communication, behaviour or social skills. PlayConnect is a welcoming place and a great way for families to connect with others, share knowledge and experiences, make friends in an environment of fun and mutual understanding.

PlayConnect is funded by the Australian Government.

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Playgroup Supporting Children and parents experiencing Autism

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PlayConnect North
Wednesdays 12:30-2:30
Playgroup Tasmania Office
35 Holbrook St Invermay
Facilitator: Belinda Mathieson/
Rebecca Sullivan

PlayConnect South
Wednesdays 10-12
Chigwell Child and Family
Centre
Facilitator: Rachel Cowling

PlayConnect North West
Fridays 10.00-11.30
Penguin Playgroup Building
Facilitator: Janine Morris

Member Support and Services



Membership to Playgroup Tasmania means that families and their children are protected by broad insurance coverage, can borrow from our Toy Libraries, have access to a range of resources including videos, booklets and newsletters and can take advantage of retail discounts

Insurance Coverage

Playgroup Tasmania provides cost effective and comprehensive insurance cover to affiliated playgroups and its members. Also covered in the insurance is Playgroup contents for fire and theft.

Toy Library

Toy Libraries offer a large range of toys, books and parent resource books that can be hired for short periods of time for a very affordable cost to families.

Playspots

Playspots are a Playgroup member benefit where a Playgroup staff member comes to your Playgroup with a van full of fun. Playspots are primarily theme based, allowing babies, toddlers and preschoolers to freely explore and develop their understanding and enjoyment of topics of general interest such as music, craft and messy play.

Playspots also assist playgroup leaders and family members to offer play experiences aimed at enhancing specific developmental skills to promote social and emotional learning and imagination through play which enhances fine and gross motor skills.

Venue Hire

Members are able to access our Launceston premises for parties and events at discounted rates. The venue comes with toys and facilities to host an event and self cater.

Referral and Phone Support

Playgroup Tasmania staff support members Playgroups by providing the following:

- Directing family referrals to the most appropriate Playgroup
- 1800 hotline for general advice including play activity ideas, child development and challenging behavior, playgroup management, starting a new session, financial matters, fees and insurance and safety.
- Promoting member Playgroups via our Facebook page and at events.
- Design and printing of promotional materials

Newsletter

Playgroup Tasmania produces an eNews each month which is distributed electronically. The newsletters are a great way of keeping members informed about planned events and upcoming fundraisers and activities as well as providing parenting and playgroup support information.

Partner Discount

Playgroup Tasmania is proud to have a number of generous supporters throughout the State who kindly provide discounts to members. Members are able to receive a range of discounts on a variety of goods and services. Discounts on offer are a part of our membership card which is provided to all members.

Events

Participation in events offers Playgroup Tasmania a wonderful opportunity to meet lots of amazing children, families and caregivers, and other stakeholders, across our community.

As well as being a great avenue to share the story of Playgroup and help grow the profile of our organisation and raise awareness of the member playgroups that are available in the community. Events are an avenue for building new partnership networks across the not for profit and government sectors.

Playgroup Tasmania Events

- National Playgroup Week Loose Parts Play events (Statewide)
- National Children's Week - Teddy Bears Picnics in Burnie, East Devonport, Launceston and Hobart
- Community Pop-Up PlaySpots (Statewide)
- Festivale Launceston
- Launceston Carols by Candle Light
- Bloomin' Tulips Festival, Wynyard
- Burnie 3,2,1 GO
- St Giles Walk with Me Launceston
- Dads Day Out YMCA Glenorchy



