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PLAYGROUP SA
Playing, learning, supporting families

Playgroups Are Important

Australia has a unique style of playgroup.

Every week, hundreds of playgroup sessions meet across South Australia. Playgroups are:

- groups of parents, carers and their young children who meet regularly
- lots of fun for children from birth to school age as they learn through play and interact with other children and adults
- for parents and carers to share ideas and information in a supportive environment
- based in the community, creating a sense of cooperation among local families as members share the planning, organisation and running of their playgroup
- usually on the same day and time each week and run for about two hours
- mainly held on weekdays and sometimes on the weekend
- held in community centres, church halls, scout halls, homes, kindergartens, schools or wherever it is convenient for their members
- low cost and not for profit
- for all local families who wish to join
- sometimes organised around a particular interest group such as baby, non-English speaking, additional needs, Montessori, fathers', grandparents' or weekend playgroups.

Why are playgroups so important?

Playgroups are an ideal place for children to learn and develop through play. They:

- give routine to a child's week, providing regular time away from home
- help children develop social skills in a group situation with a parent or carer by their side for support
- are unlike other children's services; child and parent enjoy activities together
- allow families with a baby, toddler and preschooler to all attend the same session.

Each parent or carer is responsible for their child's behaviour at playgroup and this helps to ensure close supervision of all children.

Playgroups provide a large range of toys and activities often not available at home.

Playgroups are affordable because each family contributes to the running of the playgroup, keeping costs to a minimum.

Playgroup SA asked families about the main reasons they attend playgroup. Top responses in order of priority were:

For children

- social interaction
- gives the children an opportunity to play and learn
- to enjoy activities they wouldn't do at home, particularly messy activities
- to gain new skills
- to be stimulated and have fun
- to use different toys and equipment
- to improve language and communication
- a safe and happy place for children
- for children to learn and interact before kindergarten
- for excursions

For adults

- social interaction
- time for parents to share experiences, interests and ideas
- to give and receive support, to talk over problems
- to value and learn parenting skills
- to foster community spirit
- time to get out of the house and share adult conversations
- for new families in the area to form social networks
- to get an understanding of children and what to expect of them
- affordable compared to other alternatives.

Best Practice Playgroups

The Department of Social Services (DSS) - formally the Department of FaHCSIA funded a one-off project in 2001 to investigate best practice in playgroups nationally.

From the project data, Playgroup SA identified five features of playgroups that demonstrate best practice. The project observed that best practice playgroups:

1. Build friendships and social supports

Playgroups create the opportunity for parents, caregivers and young children to form friendly, supportive relationships.

Many of the friendships developed at playgroup last through kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and into adult life.

2. Children learn and develop through play

Playgroup experiences offer child-centred play that is:

- fun for all, including babies
- physically active and provides opportunities for gross and fine motor skill development
- a balanced range of experiences from which children can choose freely
- appropriate to children's stages of development
- focused on building skills and self esteem
- non competitive
- self expressive through art, crafts and construction
- supportive of each child's language development
- extended by excursions
- child directed, with enough time to explore and discover, in isolation and in groups.

3. Everyone takes responsibility and works together

Each adult must understand that they are responsible for the children they bring to the group. Playgroups rely on volunteerism to keep them affordable. Everyone needs to share the workload. Make newcomers aware of the voluntary nature of your playgroup.

To keep a playgroup running smoothly it takes cooperation. Ensure everyone is able to contribute to decision-making, play program planning and development of routines and guidelines.

4. Provide a safe and supportive environment

A quality playgroup is a safe place that nurtures the well-being of adults and children. Provide adequate safety equipment, conduct regular safety checks and offer healthy nutritious food to contribute to a safe and healthy environment.

To create an encouraging, stress-free environment, interactions need to be nurturing, caring, friendly, relaxed, non-threatening, non-judgemental and fun.

A supportive learning environment is stimulating, visually appealing and provides challenges and opportunities to learn and grow through skill development and practice.

Each person's unique participation and contribution is respected, acknowledged and appreciated. Hurting another person with words or actions is unacceptable.

5. Adults exchange ideas and share parenting experiences

As trust builds in a playgroup parents and caregivers have more confidence to share parenting experiences and concerns. By chatting to other parents and observing their child, adults realise that while each child develops in his or her own individual way, there are common frustrations and concerns. Their parenting is normalised and validated.

All parents watch other children to assess their own child's development. Children reach key milestones in their own time and at such different rates that it is unwise to make comparisons.

Parenting is a sensitive topic. Be tolerant and accepting of diverse parenting styles. If people have concerns and ask your opinion, give it. Share positively, be encouraging. Don't give unsolicited parenting advice or make judgements on any child's lack of progress.

If a parent expresses concern about their child, refer them to the Child and Family Health nurse or the appropriate organisation or agency.

Playgroup Models

There are many types of playgroups. By far, the most common is the community playgroup model, many of which evolved from new parent groups at local Child and Youth Health Centres.

Some playgroups form to meet a specific need or philosophy. Anyone can attend these playgroups but they usually attract families with similar interests.

Some multi-session playgroups offer more than one model. If you have a specific need or interest and can't find a suitable playgroup, consider starting a playgroup with like-minded families. For assistance call Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882.

Anti-discrimination laws prevent any playgroup from excluding people on the basis of age, race, religion, political opinion, disability or gender. For full details visit www.humanrights.gov.au.

Types of playgroups

Church playgroups

All major Christian denominations run playgroups within their local churches. These playgroups fall into two categories:

1. Community playgroups held in church buildings
2. Playgroups that are part of a church program

Benefits

- Families become part of a caring community.
- There is possible access to volunteers to assist the playgroup.
- There are possible designated leaders.
- Playgroups are often well-established.

Community playgroups

These playgroups develop locally and are usually held in community buildings. They may be a single session playgroup meeting once a week or have up to four sessions running each day.

Benefits

- See 'For children' and 'For adults'.
- Everyone is welcome.
- Strong community links are made.
- Friendships can continue into kindergarten, primary school and beyond.

Culturally specific playgroups

Cultural playgroups are formed by families keen to immerse children in a specific culture. There have been Nunga, Italian, Dutch, French, Japanese and German playgroups, to name a few. Some playgroups form to support families and overcome language barriers, particularly families newly arrived in Australia.

Benefits

- Parents and children use their first language while learning to communicate in English.
- There is mutual support through the process of immigration.
- Isolation is reduced.
- People from the same background socialise and support each other.
- Parents learn the value of play in their child's development.
- Traditional games, songs, stories and dances are shared.
- The playgroup can be an extension of family life.

Family Day Care playgroups

Family Day Care playgroups bring together care providers registered with a specific Family Day Care service and are not open to families from the community. Care providers may provide care to a limited number of children which may include their own children. For information about Family Day Care visit www.familydaycare.com.au.

Benefits

- Care providers have peer support.
- Children have broader social interactions.
- Children have a wider range of play experiences.

Father's playgroups

Many fathers attend community playgroups. Some prefer to join a father's only playgroup.

Benefits

- There is support for fathers who are their children's primary caregiver.
- Fathers support each other with parenting.

Playgroup Models

Grandparent's playgroups

Grandparents often attend community playgroups. Some form their own playgroup. Grandparents may:

- informally care for their grandchildren while parents work
- take their grandchild to playgroup to give parents a break
- want to spend special time each week with their grandchild
- be the guardian or primary caregiver of their grandchild.

Benefits

- Grandparents have social contact with peers.
- There are opportunities to share grandparenting experiences and ideas.
- Grandchildren who may not be able to attend with a parent can still enjoy playgroup.
- Full-time caregivers/grandparents have a regular outing each week with their grandchild.

Intensive support playgroups

These playgroups are for families with complex high needs. They are staffed by a play leader, family support worker and a paid or voluntary assistant. Families are identified and referred by maternal and child health nurses, local government family services or other support agencies.

Benefits

- Skilled professional assistance is available.
- The playgroup may be part of a client-based therapy program.
- Parents have peer support.
- Families are case-managed by a family support worker.

Locational support playgroups

Locational Supported Playgroups (LSPs) are initiated and facilitated by a paid coordinator and early childhood worker. They recognise the need to provide Indigenous families, particularly those living in regional areas, with additional assistance and support.

LSPs provide a safe and supportive environment for Indigenous families to gather in their communities. Children benefit from play-based early childhood development opportunities while their parents and

caregivers have access to parenting support. As of September 2013, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet became the responsible agency for the majority of Indigenous policies and LSPs are now provided by Communities for Children under the Department of Social Services. For more info visit www.dss.gov.au

Multicultural playgroups

Families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds choose to meet together to share their parenting experiences and give their children a rich, culturally diverse experience.

Benefits

- Children are exposed to different cultures and languages.
- Families build understanding and appreciation of other cultures.
- Traditional ways and cultural experiences enrich the playgroup experience.

PlayConnect playgroups

PlayConnect playgroups are a component of the Australian Government's Helping Children with Autism package. For more information call the Helping Children with Autism Information Line on 1800 289 177. Another useful site for families is www.raisingchildren.net.au/autism.

School based playgroups

These playgroups fall into three categories:

1. Community playgroups that meet in school buildings
2. Schools that run playgroups to prepare or attract children to their school
3. Schools with a particular philosophy of education, such as Montessori and Steiner, that run playgroups to introduce children into their stream of education

Benefits

- Playgroup sessions coincide with drop-off or pick-up times for siblings attending the school.
- Parents and children new to the school become familiar with the school environment, staff and routines.
- Children can make a seamless transition into the school.

Playgroup Models

Special needs playgroups

Health or early childhood professionals usually run these playgroups specifically for children with disabilities or developmental delays. Playgroup SA's Members' FREE CALL number helps families with special needs to find a welcoming community playgroup or special needs playgroup appropriate to their circumstances.

Benefits

- The playgroup is often leader-led, taking the pressure off parents.
- Parents are supported by peers in similar circumstances.
- Professional help is available.
- Families are connected to support services and information.

Supported playgroups

Supported playgroups are facilitated by a paid worker or volunteer and target families with high needs. Support organisations start these playgroups to engage with specific families in the community. Supported playgroups play an important role in building social support networks as well as giving children opportunities to participate in quality play at a critical time in their development. Supported playgroups link families into services like maternal and child health and kindergarten.

There are two main types of supported playgroups.

1. Transition model - the facilitator gradually withdraws support as the playgroup is established and families are able to run the playgroup independently or join another local community playgroup.
2. Continuing model - families are referred to the playgroup and remain until they are ready to move on, making room for new families to join.

Benefits

- Families are given personalised support by a trained facilitator.
- Families are referred to other support services.
- Playgroups are often funded and are low or no cost to families.
- Parents and caregivers build relationships with families who share similar circumstances.

Teenage mother's playgroups

Some Child and Youth Health Centres, councils or family support agencies encourage and support young mothers to form their own playgroups.

Benefits

- New friendships are formed.
- Young parents feel more comfortable with their peers.
- Isolation is reduced.
- There is time to chat with someone who has common problems and interests.
- Parents feel reassured about their child's behaviour and development.
- Parents learn about services in their community, shopping centres, kindergartens or schools.

Weekend playgroups

These playgroups usually meet on Saturday or Sunday mornings.

Benefits

- Working parents can attend.
- Parents who only have weekend access to their child can attend.

Aboriginal Playgroups

Aboriginal playgroups are for children aged between birth and four years and their parents or caregivers, including aunties, uncles, nanas and pops. Playgroup gives children positive early-childhood experiences that can help them in kindergarten and primary school, and shape health and wellbeing in adulthood. For adults, it is an opportunity to relax and meet other Aboriginal families, a chance for them to play and learn about their child's development.

Benefits

- Playgroup experiences reinforce traditional values and ways.
- Indigenous families make culturally relevant connections in an informal setting.
- Children are nurtured within their culture.
- Play reflects Aboriginal language, stories, games and traditional crafts.

Baby Playgroups

Brain research tells us that babies are active learners and benefit from social interaction and play. Parents and caregivers benefit from breaking down isolation that often occurs when at home with a young baby.

Is my baby too young for playgroup?

When people think about playgroup they imagine children painting, playing with playdough or having fun outdoors with balls, bikes or in the sandpit. They feel this excludes babies. Quite the contrary.

If you have a few friends with babies and would like to start a baby playgroup, call the Playgroup Hotline on 1800 171 882 for help to get off to a good start.

Taking the next step from a new parent group to a playgroup

When you attend the final new parent group meeting at your Child and Youth Health Centre you and your group have several choices. You can:

- continue as a group and form a baby playgroup meeting in homes each week or fortnight
- finish as a group and continue to meet informally
- join a local playgroup.

To find a local playgroup:

- visit www.playgroupaustralia.com.au/sa
- call Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882

Baby playgroups meeting as home playgroups usually work well until children are mobile or the size of the group outgrows the available space. At this point, you may want to stay as a group and look for another venue.

Contact Playgroup SA to find out about venues available in your area.

Joining an existing playgroup as an additional session is the simplest way of becoming a playgroup; equipment is available and a structure is already established. You may have to accommodate and adjust to fit in with routines and rules based on sharing resources and equipment.

Benefits of baby playgroups

- Parents and babies have a regular weekly outing.
- Adult friendships develop.
- Parenting experiences are shared.
- Information is exchanged.
- Babies are stimulated, socialise and have fun.

Suggestions for starting a baby playgroup

- Meet in various homes or hire a playgroup venue for 1½-2 hours.
- Limit numbers to six to eight families.
- Ask each parent to bring a play-mat and toys for their child.
- Be extremely safety conscious.
- Enjoy adult time and chat over a coffee.
- Arrange adult nights out – invite some of the families from your new parent group who may have lost contact after returning to work.
- Create a flexible atmosphere where parents can leave early if a baby is tired, teething or out of sorts.

Ideas for baby activities

- Interacting with adults
- Rattles to touch, taste, see, hear and feel
- Mobiles to watch
- Baby gym to kick and touch
- Soft balls, soft blocks
- Play-mats with different textures and activities
- Safety mirrors, soft toys
- Songs with actions eg Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
- Rhymes eg This Little Piggy
- Being with other babies and small children
- Play games eg Peek-a-Boo
- Board or fabric books

See section on 'Baby play' for more suggestions.

Home Playgroups

Playgroups held in members' homes are informal, supportive, friendly gatherings of parents, caregivers and young children.

Successful home playgroups

Successful home playgroups need planning. Decide whether your playgroup would be best held in one home or rotated between each member's homes on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis.

Keep the playgroup small with a maximum of five or six families. Be flexible. Make use of parks, local libraries, play centres or shopping centres as alternative meeting places.

Show respect for each other's homes:

- Discuss your expectations of the group when using your home.
- Talk about children's behaviour, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in your home.
- House rules will differ from one house to another. Regularly remind children to respect the rules.
- Close off forbidden rooms.
- Avoid outdoing each other with refreshments and household tidiness. Keep playgroup time simple and enjoyable.
- Develop guidelines around starting and finishing times. It can be frustrating to the host if a few families linger well past the playgroup's finishing time.
- Ask everyone to help tidy up so the host is not left with a mess.

Benefits of home playgroups

- Groups are often small and intimate.
- Fees are low because there is no rent to pay.
- Homes are likely to already be child-friendly.
- Variety in moving from house to house.
- The group's mobility allows for regular excursions or pram strolls.

Toys and equipment

Remove or 'treasured' toys from the play area. Young children can feel very threatened when other children play with their special toys.

Ask each family to contribute toys that can be used by the group for that week. Consider sets of toys. Wheeled and ride-on toys are very popular, especially if you have an outdoor path or riding area.

Alternatively, ask families to make a contribution towards a pool of toys that can be taken to playgroup each week. Plan to include sets of building blocks, small cars, stacking containers, threading equipment, paper and crayons, playdough, finger paint and water play equipment.

To extend the toys and equipment you offer, become a member of your local toy library.

Communication

It is essential to keep everyone well informed when moving from home to home. Draw up a roster for a school term. Distribute with everyone's names, addresses and phone numbers. Be clear about procedures should an emergency arise and a family is unable to host their scheduled day.

Insurance

Don't assume that because your playgroup is meeting in homes that you are automatically covered by the householder's insurance. Some families have no household insurance. Be sure your home playgroup is fully covered wherever you choose to meet. A comprehensive playgroup insurance cover is part of Playgroup SA's Family Membership. Call the association for more details as conditions do apply.

Moving on

Home playgroups often outgrow homes and agree to meet in a hall. New families may want to join or the children may need more space.

Starting a Playgroup

Thousands of people just like you have started playgroups all over Australia.

Why families start playgroups

- There are no playgroups nearby.
- They are part of a new parent group at the Child and Youth Health Centre and want to continue to meet and develop into a playgroup.
- Local playgroups are full and have waiting lists.
- They are part of a neighbourhood house, church or other family service wanting to offer playgroups as part of their program.
- They are a group of people with a particular interest in meeting together regularly eg fathers, nannies, home educators, Arabic speaking, Saturdays, Montessori.
- They are parents wanting to start a roster playgroup to have some regular time-out.

How to start a playgroup

Don't feel daunted by the overall project; just take these 10 steps, one at a time.

Step 1

Contact Playgroup SA to receive advice from one of our playgroup consultants and to receive a New Playgroup Information Pack.

Step 2

Affiliate with Playgroup SA to receive specialised and continual support in getting your playgroup started.

Step 3

Promote the playgroup and encourage families to become your members.

Step 4

Meet with families to define the purpose of the playgroup and decide upon a meeting time and place.

Step 5

Allocate adult roles or duties to spread the workload fairly.

Step 6

Work out a budget.

Step 7

Agree upon activities to be offered and begin to gather toys and equipment.

Step 8

Begin to formulate some ideas on how the group will address any problems or issues that may occur during playgroup. Write a playgroup policy with the group's values and expectations clearly represented.

Step 9

Set the starting date.

Step 10

Run your first playgroup session!

Playgroup SA is here to help you at every step of the way. We can provide you with support via phone, email and more importantly via face to face meetings to assist you with commencing your playgroup.

If you already have your families, venue and time settled, Playgroup SA can assist in advertising your group, establishing a routine and program and sourcing resources.

For a free copy of the How to Start a Playgroup booklet and DVD call Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882.

Start a playgroup from a new parent group

New parent groups meeting at Child and Youth Health Centres end all too soon. Friendships have developed and families have enjoyed learning and watching their babies grow and develop.

Forming a baby playgroup can keep the group together and continue the friendships and supports.

To get started, share contact details and arrange to meet weekly or fortnightly at the centre or in your homes. This is the beginning of a baby playgroup. See 'Baby Playgroups' and 'Home Playgroups' sections.

Meeting in homes usually works well for several months until babies become mobile. The next step is to move into a playgroup venue. To do this follow steps 2-10.

Starting a New Session

When a playgroup is full

When your playgroup commenced, a decision on the maximum number of families that could safely attend would have been decided.

If you have now reached that number contact Playgroup SA so we can mark your playgroup 'full' and remove your details from the referral database. Our phone referral service will cease to give out your number.

IMPORTANT:

Contact Playgroup SA when your playgroup is no longer full so we can refer new families.

Waiting lists

Start a waiting list if, even after your playgroup is full, families still want to join. Record the date of each enquiry. Appoint a person to keep a record of the family name, phone number and date of each enquiry and to keep in regular contact with those families.

Families moving into the area or feeling isolated may need a playgroup immediately. If your waiting list is growing:

- start a new playgroup session at your venue
- refer families to a playgroup nearby (call Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882 to find out about your nearest playgroups)
- help families start a new playgroup at another venue.

Adding a new session

If your playgroup is full, the centre you use may have vacancies for families to start a new session. That new session could use your playgroup name or run as a separate playgroup with its own name.

Check with the person you deal with at your venue to see if it is possible to accommodate another playgroup session.

Encourage some existing members to attend the new playgroup session for the first few weeks to make families familiar with where toys and equipment are stored, learn playgroup routines and offer encouragement and guidance in selecting appropriate activities.

Allow each session the freedom to function according to its own values, needs and wishes while keeping to the basic playgroup philosophy of welcoming all

families and offering fun play activities for children in a safe and respectful manner.

Representatives from each session need to meet regularly to discuss issues such as the purchase of new equipment, opening and closing procedures, a combined outing or providing a Playgroup SA training session.

Large multi-session playgroups need to consider becoming an incorporated body.

Benefits of multi-session playgroups

- Central administration
- Extend choices for families
- Excursions arranged together and costs shared eg bus hire
- Entertainers, end of year parties organised together
- Convenience of different times and days for families to attend
- More negotiating power with local government and the owner of the building that you rent
- Playgroup remains viable even if numbers dwindle
- Another session can be started if numbers increase
- Greater income potential for large purchases
- More families available for working bees
- Better use of community/playgroup resources

Furniture and play equipment

When starting a new session be clear that playgroup equipment belongs to the playgroup community. Start an inventory of toys and equipment, with photographs if appropriate. Clearly indicate which items are:

- part of the venue you rent
- purchased with playgroup fees or fundraising – attach receipts
- lent to the playgroup and may need to be returned
- donated and require acknowledgement
- contributed by a particular session.

If a session or the whole playgroup moves to another building this inventory will provide proof of what can and cannot be taken.

Starting a New Session

Shared equipment agreement

Develop an equipment agreement together. Include guidelines for:

- who maintains the toys and equipment inventory
- where the agreement is kept and how families are informed
- how toys and equipment are purchased, stored and maintained
- who has authority to purchase consumable items such as glue, paint, milk, coffee or sunscreen
- how the equipment budget is developed and monitored
- who decides if fundraising for new toys is necessary
- how to report any broken or unsafe equipment
- what to do with unwanted or inappropriate equipment
- how equipment will be distributed if a playgroup closes. See 'Distribution of Equipment'.

Merging playgroup sessions

One of the hardest things to do is to merge two existing sessions when numbers have dwindled to the point where continuing two small groups is no longer viable. Each group will have its own way of running things. To merge sensitively, communicate regularly and openly and listen to each other's ideas and opinions. If you need help call Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882.

Closing Down a Playgroup

What happens when a playgroup becomes too small to keep going?

Discuss the possibility of staying open

The most common reason playgroups close is lack of members. Playgroups grow and flourish while children are young and wind down as children get older and go to kindergarten or school. As local demographics change they may boom again.

Sadly, some playgroups fold prematurely. They sell off and give away all of their assets and when the boom time hits parents face all of the familiar expenses of starting again.

If your playgroup has only three or four families explore the possibilities that small playgroups offer. Discuss options with the owner of the building in which you meet. They may be willing to negotiate your rent to a more affordable amount until playgroup numbers pick up again.

Or become a home playgroup until the numbers increase. Inform Playgroup SA if this is your decision.

Revitalise your playgroup

Take a serious, honest look at the playgroup to determine if there is an internal problem causing members to go elsewhere. Lack of hygiene, safety or behavioural issues may cause families to leave. Talk together about changes that need to be made. Ask existing members what they want from the playgroup.

For ideas to help you attract new members see the 'Promoting your Playgroup' section or call the Members' Hotline on 1800 171 882 for fresh motivation to revive your playgroup.

Some tips

- Make your meeting place friendly, comfortable and inviting.
- Clean the indoor and outdoor play spaces.
- Freshen up the toys, sandpit and other play equipment.
- Try some new play experiences.
- Advertise for new members in the free column of your local newspaper.
- Arrange an open day.
- Invite families to join. Most families join this way:
 - Take some invitations with you when you go shopping and pass them around to

anyone with a baby or small child.

- Ask your local maternal and child health nurse if you can advertise at the centre.
- Explain playgroup to new parent groups at the Child and Youth Health Centre.
- Expect your playgroup to grow.
- Warmly welcome new families and let them know they are important.
- Farewell them with, "I'll see you next week".
- Call them if they don't return the following week.

If these strategies do not work and there is no other option but to close down the playgroup, consider the following:

To close down the playgroup

An incorporated playgroup will have a constitution with a dissolution clause outlining requirements for closing down the playgroup. Carefully follow these requirements and inform Consumer & Business Affairs of your intention to cease being incorporated. See 'Incorporation Publications' section.

If your playgroup is not incorporated, check if it has constitution or closing guidelines.

Steps to closing down a playgroup

1. Call a meeting of all existing members to discuss the closing down process and allocate responsibilities.
2. Carefully document all decisions made at this meeting and whose responsibility it is to carry out these decisions.
3. Inform the building owner of your intention to stop operating.
4. Pay outstanding rent and follow up all negotiations in writing, keeping a copy for the files.
5. Finalise all paperwork.
6. Keep accident, injury and attendance records for seven years for insurance purposes.
7. Pay outstanding debts.
8. Close the bank account.
9. Consider how the remaining money will be distributed.

Closing Down a Playgroup

Note: If your playgroup has no constitution or rules that say how assets will be distributed, consider donating money and equipment to other playgroups in the area. Playgroup SA can, however, hold funds in case a group intends to re-open.

As a service to playgroups, Playgroup SA will hold any excess money in trust. An agreement will be negotiated with the playgroup as to how, when and where the money will be used.

Distribution of equipment

Make a detailed inventory of all equipment. Beside each item clearly indicate where the item was distributed.

All playgroup money, assets and equipment belong to the playgroup community, not the committee arranging the closure. In the past, incorrect or inappropriate distribution of equipment and assets has resulted in charges being laid by police.

If a former member wants to reclaim donated equipment, the committee needs to be able to advise of its location.

Leaving your building

Any fixtures you have added to the building including light fittings, built-in heaters, built-in fans, fences and fixed play equipment, become part of the building and legally cannot be taken.

Check with the building owner if equipment can be stored to benefit families who may want to restart a playgroup in the future.

Selling off equipment

It is illegal to fundraise for personal gain. Any equipment purchased by fundraising is common property. You cannot simply divide the play equipment among the remaining families.

In the spirit of playgroups being community based, donate equipment to playgroups in the area or Playgroup SA can arrange for your equipment to be given to new or disadvantaged playgroups.

Put a notice in the local newspaper or on Playgroup SA's online community noticeboard (ie social media) eg 'Playtime playgroup is about to close, all assets and money are to be shared between local playgroups'.

Playgroup SA

Inform Playgroup SA of your intention to close and advise them if your venue is available for another playgroup.

If members would like to join another playgroup they can do so without paying another membership fee to Playgroup SA, as long as the new playgroup one that is affiliated with Playgroup SA.

Checklist

Consider the following list to improve playgroup experiences for children and adults. Photocopy this checklist and tick what is working well. Talk together about what actions are required to complete the list. Encourage families to voice any concerns and plan for immediate action.

- Members understand why playgroups are important.
- Adults and older children are able to say why they like coming to playgroup.
- Babies are welcome and catered for at playgroup.
- Adults are clear about the benefits of your playgroup model.
- Individual interests and talents are taken into account when planning the program.
- Adults understand the five areas of a best practice playgroup.
- There is a set limit to the number of families in each session.
- Playgroup SA is contacted when your playgroup is full.
- A waiting list is kept if your playgroup is full.
- Your playgroup will consider starting a new session when it is full.

Want to know where your LOCAL PLAYGROUP is...?

OVER 300
Playgroups
in SA

Call us 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, coordinators contact details, etc).

* For privacy reasons we cannot provide these details in the form of an online search.

