

# State of Play

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF PLAYGROUP SA

ISSUE 3 2013

**GRANDPARENTS  
AND PLAYGROUP**

**WE LOVE  
BOOKS!**

**STRUGGLING  
TO PLAY?  
GREAT TIPS  
INSIDE...**

FLIP OVER FOR  
**SA KIDS**



# Letter from PGSA EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**W**elcome to another edition of *State of Play*. It's hard to believe that we're halfway through Term 3 already. Where has this year gone? Everyone here at Playgroup SA has been extremely busy out and about visiting Playgroups across our great state. Some of the Playgroups we've recently visited include Hyde Park, All Nations, Flagstaff Hill Kindy, St Francis, Myponga, Dave's Angels Playgroup and St Raphael's. If your playgroup is looking for some inspiration about what to do when the weather is wet, in need of some resources or would simply like a staff member to attend and answer any questions you may have or see the great work you are doing, then give us a call, we are here to support you.

The Playgroup SA team has also recently returned from attending a weekend conference in NSW regarding Unwrapping Play. The conference was attended by a variety of Early Childhood Services from across the country. The team has brought home some wonderful play ideas that we

are buzzing to start sharing with our members. I would like to take this opportunity to again remind our members that Playgroup SA provides a variety of training and workshop opportunities, so please check out our website, *State of Play*, ePlayNews and Facebook page for available courses and workshops. We have several events coming up in October for Children's Week, so watch out for these also.

I would like to finish off by again thanking all of our coordinators for their commitment and dedication to Playgroup in South Australia. Community Playgroups are unique to Australia and it's wonderful to see it continue to add to the rich social community for all families. My thanks also continue to go to the Volunteer Board of Management for their continued support of Playgroup SA. ●

**Carley Jones**  
**Executive Officer**



*State of Play* is the official magazine of Playgroup SA

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# GRANDPARENTS AND PLAY

AMANDA BALDWIN, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

**G**randparents and great grandparents are the custodians of family knowledge, culture and history. They are a wealth of family wisdom, supporting our families as we grow and develop. But the role of today's grandparent is changing.

With an economic climate that sees more dual income families than ever before, increasing costs of childcare and limited vacancies, grandparents are winding back the clocks to raise children once again. In the Child Care and Workforce Participation Survey conducted by Care For Kids in 2011, it was revealed that 15 percent of children are cared for at least part time by their grandparents (for more about this see the story 'we care a lot' in *SA Kids*, pages 14 to 16).

Grandparents form an integral part of our wider community, and now they also provide enormous savings and financial support for families too.

But let's be honest; caring for babies, toddlers and even pre-schoolers can give the fittest of us a workout, so how can we best support our vital grandparent carers?

## Come to Playgroup, of course!

Playgroup has been around since we ourselves were children and, although times have changed, the benefits of attending a playgroup remain the same. Grandparents will value playgroup as they get to meet other families (and possibly even other grandparents in similar circumstances), have fun, hear from other parents/carers and share experiences, gain access to community support and services, receive up-to-date information and ideas for the role as carer and gain play ideas and activity starters. Playgroup can also lead to other opportunities such as forming a sewing group or book club, or even regular outings to the cinema or a café. And it isn't just the grandparents who value playgroup – grandchildren love playgroup too.

Attending playgroup with a grandparent aids in relationship building; it develops and strengthens the bonds of attachment and trust. It provides a social environment

in which to practise newly developed skills and language. For some grandchildren, it provides a chance to meet and play with other children, and an opportunity to experience playgroup, especially if both parents are working long hours. It also encourages intergenerational sharing between grandparents and all members of the playgroup community. Children who may not have grandparents also get a chance to form a relationship with an older person and engage in this sharing too.

Playgroup is a rewarding and valuable experience that connects families and community. Play has no age limit. Playgroup welcomes all families, including grandparents. To make your playgroup more inviting to grandparents, consider the following:

- Provide chairs and tables rather than just floor play;
- Set up some activities at tables such as play dough, craft, blocks or puzzles;
- Recognise that some grandparents may experience difficulty in chasing a runaway toddler, so ensure adequate safety measures are in place such as fenced or gated play areas;
- Physical play may need to be limited to shorter periods or, develop a system where other playgroup members can assist grandparents if required;
- Share playgroup roles appropriately. For example, grandparents may not feel comfortable leading playgroup yoga time but would be very happy to read stories, clean-up or prepare snacks;
- Have a special 'Grandparents Day' at playgroup;
- Be supportive and understanding; and
- Most importantly, have fun! Grandparents like to have a good time too. ●

*If you're a grandparent and would like to know more about your local playgroup, please contact Playgroup SA on freecall 1800 171 882 and one of our friendly staff will assist you.*



# @ GRANDPARENTS PLAYGROUP

Are you a grandparent with children aged 0-5?

Want to have more quality play time with your grandchildren in a new and fun environment?

**Why not try Playgroup...!?!**



Playgroups are low cost, not-for-profit and run by the people who attend.

To join an existing Playgroup, contact  
**Playgroup SA on Free Call 1800 171 882** for a  
list of Playgroups in and around your area.

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# NOT JUST CHILD'S PLAY

AMANDA BALDWIN, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

**T**he power and importance of play is well documented; play has a crucial role in children's development.

It covers all areas of early childhood growth and is fundamental to children's wellbeing. It is through play that children naturally 'wire-up' their brains and progress in competencies. Play promotes cognition, social/emotional skills, expressive language and literacy behaviours, as well as gross and fine motor control. Play is paramount to childhood and current research is revealing that play is not just for kids!

Play between parents or carers and their children is proving to be most valuable of all, confirming that 'child's play is a parent's business' (Australian Childhood Foundation). Parents and families are their children's first educators, and form a vital role in children's play and development. In fact,

playing with and alongside your child can have lifelong benefits. According to Coulson, research shows that:

- Children whose dads played with them were found to have greater levels of imagination and cognitive ability compared to kids whose dads were non-players;
- Children whose mums played with them experienced more secure attachment to their mums, and enjoyed more positive development when compared to children whose mums were unavailable for play; and
- Older children who played with their parents were also more engaged in other activities, experienced positive school engagement, had positive mental health, stronger friendship networks, and enjoyed greater family closeness compared with older children without playful parents.





Furthermore, when parents engage in play with their children, they strengthen positive relationships and bonds. Playing with your children builds their confidence and self-esteem. Play encourages healthy risk-taking and experimentation of new skills in a relaxed and 'fun' environment.

Most importantly, playing with your children feels great! There's nothing more wonderful than scooping up your children and laughing along with them. Parents who engage in play are more satisfied in their relationships. "From infancy to old age, play is consistently related to positive wellbeing. Put simply, play makes better, happier kids – and better, more fulfilled parents," says Coulson.

### Making play happen

With our extremely busy lifestyles, engaging in playtime can prove challenging. If you're not in the habit of 'making time to play', start including play into your daily routine or schedule. Plan an afternoon of play dough or dinosaurs in the sandpit (it may only happen for 10 minutes but remind yourself you created a playtime). Initially, parents need to prioritise play in order to get the ball rolling.

Try allocating one day a week where you play outdoors too. A visit to the local park, playground or beach will naturally lead to physical play, exploration and discovery. Nature walks, chasey games in large open spaces and tricycle riding are easy starters for parents who are self-conscious or struggling with the idea of imaginary play.

Remember, we were all children once! Allow your children to lead the play, follow their cues and you will be surprised how easily the ability to play returns to you.

### What about play ideas?

Free range, unstructured play is relaxed, requires little equipment or planning, is inexpensive, and respects children's abilities to create, construct, develop and imagine. Open-ended materials such as cardboard boxes promote this play, and will keep children entertained for hours.

Unstructured play requires children to use higher brain functions as they create, develop and negotiate how, when and what play will occur. This play also takes the pressure off parents to play commercial toy games such as licensed TV show characters (no fancy voices or having to watch the DVD to play along).

Why not try building a cubby together from items gathered around the house, or collect objects from nature (pinecones, leaves, flowers) and see what play results?

Playing everyday activities is also great fun and easy for parents to participate in. For example bathing the dolls in the bath, washing the toy dishes/cooking utensils, or having a conversation on a toy phone requires little parental play skills but provides children a chance to mimic adult behaviours, enhance imagination and learn lifelong skills.

Attending a playgroup is another great way to gain new play ideas (as well as have fun and meet new friends). Playgroup provides parents and their children an opportunity to play with different toys in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. Parents and/or carers who may feel awkward 'playing' can watch other families at play and gain confidence to try new games at home. To find your nearest playgroup, contact Playgroup SA on freecall 1800 171 882. ●

Want more inspirational ideas? Playgroup SA also offers Play Workshops which encourage you to reconnect with your inner child and play. For more information on available courses and workshops run by Playgroup SA, see page 12. Happy Playing!



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# READ ACROSS THE UNIVERSE

AMANDA BALDWIN, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

'Read Across the Universe' was this year's exciting theme for Book Week. It brought to mind images of children sitting on crescent moons reading books, aliens, stars, astronauts, planets and all things outer space! At Playgroup SA we want to encourage you to continue the spirit of Book Week! Here are some fun outer space book related ideas for you or your playgroup to try:

- Have an outer space themed day at playgroup and bring your favourite book to share at group time;
- Use star and moon shape cookie cutters with play dough;
- Create an alien sculpture or spaceship from the craft materials box;
- Construct an astronaut helmet from recycled ice cream containers, and silver foil;
- Borrow some outer space picture books from the local library;
- Sing space songs such as 'I'm a Little Rocket', 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' and 'Moon, Moon' to name a few;
- Have your child look at a random selection of children's picture books. Can they find illustrations of the stars, or the moon? This is a great visual game for children who may

tire of 'reading' but still builds on their pre-reading skills;

- Create an outer space play corner or build a spaceship cubby house;
- Bake star and moon biscuits; and
- Before bed, show your child the night time sky and the stars. Ask your child to find the moon.

## The importance of reading

It is in the laps of a trusted parent/carer that children develop a love of storytelling and the written word. Reading and talking about pictures in books is a lovely way to connect with your children and foster an early love of literacy.

Babies and small children love the sound of their parents/ carers voices as they share with them, strengthening their bonds of attachment. Toddlers enjoy books that allow them to make sense of their world, and identify with familiar pictures, images and sounds. Pre-school aged children love books that have a predictive pattern or rhyme (such as Mem Fox's *The Green Sheep* or Pamela Allen's *Mr McGee* series). These books build on children's interests and are beautifully illustrated to attract children's attentions and engage with them.

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Many children make associations with certain books, 'favourites' if you like, and will read (or ask you to read them) over and over. While you may feel frustrated at reading the same story repeatedly, your child is unconsciously communicating their connection with the tale and developing his or her love for literacy. This repeat reading is also the beginning stages of reading by rote and later for letter and word recognition. It is an important part of the reading process, and your child will move on to another book when they are ready.

Research reveals that it is the closeness that parents/carers share with their child while reading to them that leads to a love of reading. It is the attention, care and quality time in which you connect with your child that ignites a child's interest in books – so even talking about the images in a newspaper or catalogue is valuable!

### Encouragement to read

Perhaps you feel a little self-conscious reading to your child? Maybe you have limited English language skills? Or you just want a change from the bedtime book ritual? Here are some suggestions that break away from the standard 'read a book' approach to encourage your child's interest in literacy:

- Sing nursery rhymes and songs to your child regularly – the rhythmic patterns aid in text predication and will later help your child to 'crack the code' of reading;
- Allow infants to mouth and suck the pages of board books (under parental supervision) as this is their first taste of reading and it encourages them to choose and select books;
- Borrow books with no words such as Jan Ormerod's *Sunshine* and *Moonlight*;
- Talk to your child about what they think might happen in the story. Discuss the illustrations and make up your own tales together;
- Use puppets and toys as props to tell stories;
- Visit the library regularly. Libraries have all sorts of excellent resources and often free activities for children to participate in;
- Re-enact favourite books/tales using play dough or other open-ended materials such as leaves, twigs, pebbles, shell, etc;
- Encourage your child to draw regularly. A child's first marks and scribbles are leading to writing, which is the precursor to reading;
- Play fine motor games such as puzzles with knobs as they build on the physical skills needed for pencil control;
- Chalk draw on the pavement and talk about your pictures;
- Borrow CD stories to listen to while travelling in the car or during quiet rest time;
- Make and post your own post cards and letters;
- Collect catalogues and talk about the pictures such as 'how many green items can we find?' or 'find the bananas';
- Play games that encourage listening and speaking skills such as 'find something in your bedroom beginning with the 'b' sound or 'Animal Sound Bingo';
- Use lots of descriptive language with your child, such as 'this shell is white and smooth';
- Finger painting; and
- Play with bubbles, slime or other gooey, messy materials. This is great for developing fine motor control and expressive speech. ●

Looking for more suggestions? Contact one of the Playgroup SA Playgroup Support and Development Officers on freecall 1800 171 882.



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# Member Benefits 2013

Ask Playgroup SA  
about Professional  
Memberships on  
180 171 882



## Playgroup SA Family Membership:

### Why should I become a Playgroup SA Member?

Along with 4,500 other South Australian family members, enjoy the following Playgroup SA Membership benefits:

- A membership card that is also the Australian Baby Card (valued at \$30) offering you hundreds of discounts online and from numerous South Australian based businesses.
- An electronic version of *Totline*, the national member Magazine, four times a year. An excellent communication tool for activity ideas, upcoming events, competitions and general information for families and people working in the early childhood / children's services sector. As well as as a state based magazine.
- A copy of our state based publication, the 2-in-1 *State of Play / SA Kids Magazine*. This magazine includes practical, local information about raising children, as well as original articles by experienced journalists, childhood professionals and parents. The magazine covers all stages from pregnancy to the teenage years and *State of Play* is specifically targeted to families with 0-5 year olds.
- Subscription to *ePlayNEWS*, Playgroup SA's state based membership newsletter (if an email address is provided) which is distributed six times per year.
- Discounted entry to Playgroup SA events including Playgroup @ the Zoo.
- Discounted prices to courses including Senior Accredited First Aid and Child Safe Environments.
- Discounted Playgroup SA workshops including, Messy Play, Physical Play, Christmas craft and more. Comprehensive public liability & personal accident insurance whilst you and your children are attending an affiliated playgroup or playgroup activity anywhere in SA.
- FREE tickets to the Pregnancy, Baby & Children's Expo (distributed via playgroups).
- FREE upgrade to Full Association Membership; This level of membership entitles you to voting rights at Playgroup SA's Annual General Meeting and Special General Meetings and to stand for election on the Board of Management.
- The right to attend as many affiliated playgroups as you wish!

**We hope to see you at Playgroup in 2013!**



**PLAYGROUP SA**  
Playing, learning, supporting families

**For more information  
please contact  
Playgroup SA on  
Free Call 1800 171 882**



# PLAYGROUP SA

## WORKSHOPS & ACCREDITED COURSES

### WORKSHOPS

**Cost:** Playgroup SA Coordinators & Members:  
\$10 (Inc. GST)  
Non-members: \$35 (Inc. GST)

#### PLAY AND PLAYGROUP WORKSHOP

Find out the value and benefits of play and Playgroup, gain age appropriate play ideas that will assist in children's development and overall have fun.

#### COORDINATORS WORKSHOP

Are you a new coordinator, or thinking about starting a Playgroup? This course will provide you with all the information that you need. This course includes tips on how to effectively run a Playgroup, will provide you with play ideas and will show you the value and benefits of play. This is a perfect opportunity to start building a network of Playgroup support with both the Playgroup SA staff and other coordinators attending the workshop.

#### PHYSICAL PLAY WORKSHOP

Find out the value and benefits of physical play, gain age appropriate play ideas that will assist with children's development and overall have fun.

#### MESSY PLAY WORKSHOP

Find out the value and benefits of messy (sensory) play, gain age appropriate play ideas that will assist with children's development and overall have fun.

#### CHRISTMAS CRAFT WORKSHOP

Come along to this hands-on craft workshop to gain ideas for the home and Playgroup while creating fantastic pieces of Christmas Art & Craft.

### ACCREDITED COURSES

#### CHILD-SAFE ENVIRONMENTS COURSE

Learn about the issues of child protection and gain your certificate in Child-Safe Environments (CSE).

**Please Note:** Playgroup SA Child-Safe Environments Course is suitable for teacher registration in South Australia

**Cost:** Playgroup SA Coordinators: FREE  
Playgroup SA Members: \$25 (including GST)  
General Public: \$75 (including GST)

#### ACCREDITED SENIOR FIRST AID COURSE

This nationally recognised one day practical course will provide you with everything you need to know to provide first aid response, life support and the management of casualty(s) and the incident until the arrival of medical or other assistance.

In preparation for the one day course, you will be required to complete an online workbook\*. Once you have completed this, you will need to provide your certificate of completion at the practical day.

**Cost:** Playgroup SA Members: \$100 (including GST)  
Non Members: \$131 (including GST)

\*Options available for those with no internet access

#### CPR COURSE

A three hour practical course that will teach you everything you need to know to perform CPR.

**Cost:** Playgroup SA members: \$40 (including GST)  
Non-members: \$61 (including GST)