



# Playgroup SA

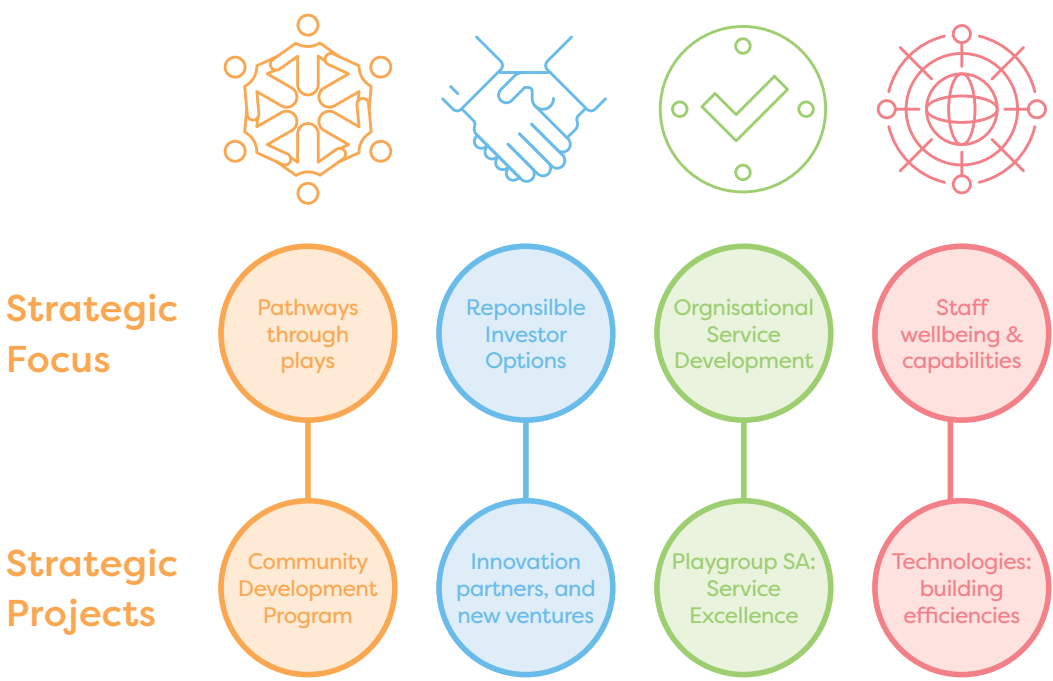
## Annual Report 2019/20

# VISION:

All children in South Australia  
are developmentally on-track

# PURPOSE:

To support families and communities  
to support children’s development





# Contents

6

Chairs  
Message

10

Community  
Impact

18

Marketing and  
Events Team

22

Financials

8

Message from  
the CEO

14

Supported &  
Specialist Programs

20

Strategy and Service  
Improvement Team

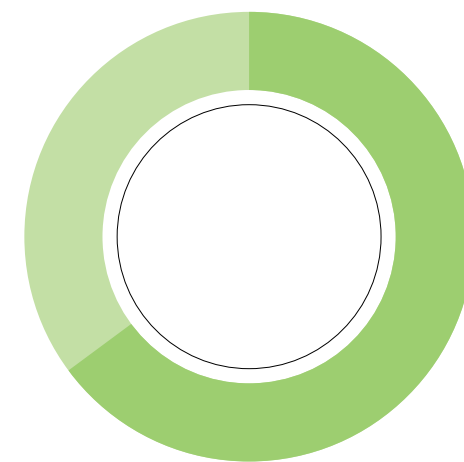
24

Playgroup SA Board,  
Staff, Sponsors & Partner

Playgroup South Australia have established an impact measurement framework. This framework ensures children and families attending supported programs have individual needs identified and staff can respond to specific needs of children and parents.

**Measurement & planning includes:**

- Protective Factors Survey
- Parental Engagement and Empowerment Survey
- Results-based Accountability



**Demographics**

- Playgroups in Metropolitan Adelaide 69%
- Playgroups in Regional & Remote South Australia 31%



# Chairs Message

01

As our organisation moved into the second year of its Strategic Plan, the ramifications of the COVID 19 pandemic were to shape every aspect of our business and the lives of our community. Our vision and priority to ensure that all South Australian children are developmentally on track became a critical and urgent matter once our Playgroup services ceased across the state in early 2020.

Playgroup SA continued to meet and, in some instances, exceeded the expectation of families and communities using social media. The organisation demonstrated its capacity to respond to a crisis with agility and in a timely manner. This would not have been possible without management leadership and the commitment and capacity of staff to think innovatively. South Australia's leadership has been acknowledged at the National level. The details of these achievements are highlighted in the report.

The assistance of Government with the JobKeeper supplement allowed Playgroup SA to retain staff, although working arrangements and hours were modified to comply with Government restrictions. Despite these challenges the organisation continued to meet both its service delivery commitments and financial performance expectations.

However, the Board remains concerned regarding the number of children in South Australia who continue to be vulnerable on one or more domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). This has been a worrying trend for SA children since 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018 and one that cannot be ignored. Playgroups provide a potentially powerful experience for children and their families. To achieve improved developmental outcomes there is an imperative to work in collaboration with other services. Playgroup SA will partner with other agencies to develop service responses in targeted local government areas to meet the developmental needs of children.

## **In looking forward and using the lessons from the COVID 19 experience we will continue our efforts to:**

- Develop our leadership and reputation in the sector, by undergoing assessment against the Australian Service Excellence Standards.
- Harness the energy and agility demonstrated during COVID 19 and apply that to our business as usual activities.
- Better position ourselves to manage extreme strategic risks.
- Provide services to better meet the needs Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan.
- Explore the use of social media to support the development of all SA children and deliver specialized services to children and families who are developmentally vulnerable.

My thanks to the Board for their work, especially during the pandemic. They were required to straddle the boundaries between the operational activities such as Business Continuity Planning and their governance responsibilities.

During the year, the Board welcomed Cecilia Pascale with her expertise in Corporate Law and farewellled Chris Nash, Secretary. Chris's strength in corporate governance and his thoughtful and gentle approach to the most difficult challenges were highly valued by the Board.

The capable leadership and expertise of the Chief Executive Officer Craig Bradbrook is acknowledged. Craig's unflappable guidance and sense of humour has gone a long way in managing the challenges this year, in addition to the significant achievements of the organisation, including his influences at the National level.

The Board wishes to acknowledge the contribution of staff, for their resilience and aptitude during the COVID 19 response and the challenges for both their work and family lives. The Board's thanks are extended to the members, service partners, volunteers, parents, and children for their ongoing commitment to Playgroup SA.

Playgroup SA looks forward to the coming year and remains optimistic in the current climate and continuing our work towards improving developmental outcomes for all South Australian children.

**Trish Strachan**  
Chair



## **Playgroup SA will partner with other agencies to develop service responses in targeted local government areas to meet the developmental needs of children.**



# Hello from the CEO

What a year it has been, with many challenges for children, families, and communities to navigate from bushfires, to COVID-19 resulting in the unexpected suspension of Playgroup sessions. Within a week of Playgroup closures, the whole team quickly shifted from business as usual, to planning and performing live on our Playgroup at Home initiative. Ensuring children and parents had an opportunity to maintain routine and participate in singing, dancing, and art/craft was very much appreciated by the 15,000+ members of the closed group.

Our Strategy and Systems Improvement Team worked through the implementation of some key strategic projects including the implementation of a new database to improve customer experience. The team completed the self-assessment for the Australian Service Excellence Standards, working toward the certificate level. Once complete, accreditation will provide greater public confidence and assurance for both families, directors, and other investors that Playgroup SA have quality programs, financial and governance processes in place. The Playgroup SA Board provided exceptional stewardship through the processes, supporting the development, and updating of policies and procedures ensuring they meet the highest standards.

The Community Impact Team developed a suite of online learning courses that have been trialled by more than 15 Community Playgroup leaders. The team has diligently been meeting with cultural and linguistic diverse communities including new migrants to discuss the importance of play in the early years. Partnerships with Australian Refugee Association and Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia have provided opportunities to connect with and work with CALD communities to promote the importance of play and Playgroups.

Playgroup SA partnered with Nunkuwarrin Yunti to develop a specific Playgroup program for Aboriginal families. In the coming year we will be working closer with first nations communities to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan.

The team are committed to taking actions to demonstrate their commitment to change and greater cultural awareness, ultimately embedding practices that will strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and stakeholders.

Across the regions we have expanded our Supported and Specialist programs with the introduction of a Ready for School program in Mt Gambier, and PlayConnect sessions in Whyalla. These programs have been well supported by both families and other services we work in partnership with. We thank the State Government Department of Human Services and Playgroup Australia for providing resourcing to support these initiatives.

A review of our family enrolment data has shown a gap in the number of infants aged between 0-12 months enrolled in Playgroups. Given the importance of the first 1,000 days in a child's life, Playgroup SA will be actively pursuing partnerships to increase the number of Baby Playgroups available in all communities. Working with families of infants and Child and Family Health Service will be central to connecting with and supporting Parent Groups to transition to Baby Playgroups.

02

## **Maintaining a future focus, and building on the exceptional work Playgroup SA will aim to:**

- Create and implement a strategy for increasing the number of Baby Playgroups and support for parents
- Achieve accreditation in Australian Service Excellence Standards
- Increase opportunities to attend training by providing online sessions for families and coordinators
- Identify key actions for a Playgroup SA Reconciliation Action Plan
- Implement an organisational impact measurement strategy
- Create and develop a suite of resources and programs to support children's development

The team wish to thank all of our sponsors and funders that enable the continuity of specialist programs and services to be provided to the South Australian community.



03

# Community Impact

## Community Playgroups

Across communities in South Australia, volunteers have continued to deliver Community Playgroups every week. A range of special focuses of Community Playgroups means there is something for everyone. From Playgroups for families from culturally diverse backgrounds, to pre-school and Baby Playgroups, there are Playgroups across the state for everyone.

Funding provided by the Australian Government's Department of Social Services, enables Playgroup SA to continue to provide vital infrastructure for supporting new and existing Community Playgroups.

Toward the end of the year an Online Learning System was established to support Community Playgroup Coordinators and Families to complete an introductory course in Inclusive Practices, Playgroup Foundations, Hygiene and introduction to Trauma-informed Practices.

65

playgroups in Regional & Remote South Australia

14+

playgroups in Metropolitan Adelaide

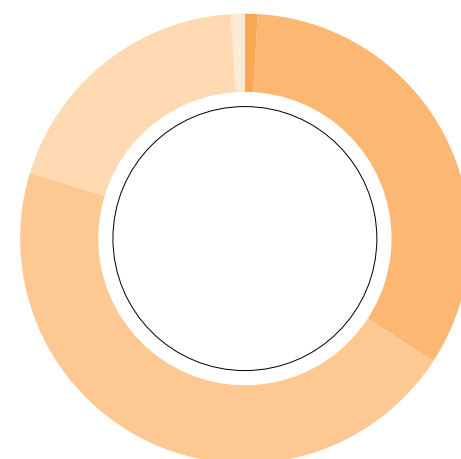
2,297

families

3,140

enrolled children

## Ages of children



Ages enrolled children

- 1% - 0-12 Months
- 33% 1-2 Years
- 45% 3-4
- 20% 5+
- 1% no age



## Coordinate & Play

More than 25 new playgroups were supported with 6 week training and mentoring program for the Playgroup Coordinators to ensure new Playgroups have a solid foundation for future success and sustainability. Funded by the SA Government Department of Human Services.

## Organisational Playgroups

Playgroup Registration is open to Organisations including not-for-profit organisations, faith-based Playgroups, and pre-schools and schools to affiliate their Playgroups with Playgroup SA. Playgroup Coordinators can then access the full range of benefits including Playgroup specific training. Where a family enrolment package is purchased, families can access all the benefits of being enrolled with Playgroup SA. Registrations can be found online. This year we have welcomed over 30 organisational registrations from partnerships with Lutheran Community Care, schools and faith-based communities.

## PlayTogether, inclusive practices in Community Playgroups

PlayTogether was funded through NDIS to support Playgroups to develop an understanding of and adopt inclusive practices, that encourage everyone to feel safe, welcome and included at Playgroup. Playgroup SA have developed a number of resources including the PlayTogether guide, Coordinator checklists and the use of Board Maker to provide visual communication tools, going to Playgroup booklets and an Online Training package. Playgroup SA provided resource packs with a wide range of sensory toys, and inclusive resources for PlayTogether sites which were extremely well received by coordinators.

40+

organisational Registered Playgroups

700+

children & families attending





**Community Development –  
Supporting Children and Families  
to Support Children’s Development**

Playgroup SA remained very connected to community through Collective Impact Initiatives such as Impact Inner North currently operating across five inner northern suburbs. In the regions we’ve delivered pop-up Playgroups with local early childhood networks in Whyalla and Pt Augusta and Thriving Neighbourhoods in Peterborough. Collaborating with partner organisations, Playgroup has led the delivery of pop-up Playgroups to support local children and families 0-5 years, connect parents to local Playgroups, promote the importance of play and referral pathways to other organisations programs and services.

Other connections have included the continuation of delivery of Playgroup information sessions to the North Eastern Community Hospital Postnatal group, Multicultural Communities Council of SA, delivering information sessions in conjunction with their Kickstart Program and the Australian Refugee Association. One session was delivered via Zoom, which was a new practice to the Team.

| Collective Impact            | Training & Info Sessions         |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2<br>pop-ups                 | 14<br>training and Info Sessions |
| 22<br>organisations involved | 180<br>participants              |

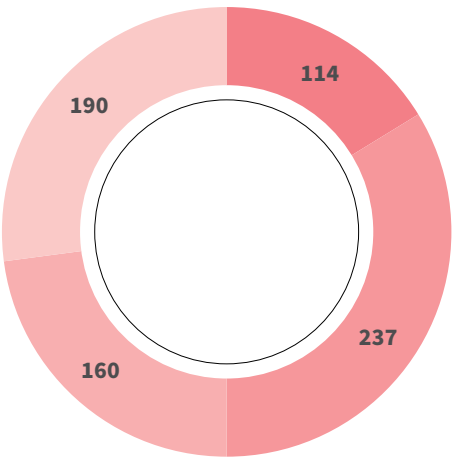
**Over 200+**  
children and families

**Playgroup at Home**

Restrictions related to COVID-19, resulted in 200+ Community Playgroups, suspended mid-March. Over 3,000 families in South Australia could no longer attend weekly Playgroups. Within one week of suspending Playgroup sessions, the team at Playgroup SA developed the concept of Playgroup at Home.

Children and families voted with their ‘clicks’. Membership grew to 15,000 in only 4 weeks. The community component of families sharing their ideas and creative ideas at home also grew with over 200 posts per day. Playgroup SA team worked diligently, planning and delivering daily live streams with activities, songs, dancing and wellbeing activities that children and parents/caregivers could tune into each day to maintain a sense of routine.

**Benefits  
of joining  
Playgroup  
at Home**



- Learning about child development
- Learning about activity ideas for home
- Spending special time with my child/ren
- Having fun

**200**  
posts per day

**Over 50%**  
of Parents/Caregivers reported engaging in  
Playgroup at Home sessions each week

**2,000**  
children and parents/caregivers  
joining daily sessions

**35**  
hours live on camera

# Supported & Specialist Programs

## PlayConnect

PlayConnect is a Facilitated Playgroup for families with children aged birth-to-six who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or who present with ASD-like characteristics. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, PlayConnect provides a Playgroup setting to facilitate children's development and learning of skills through play. The program also supports parents by modelling strategies, providing social and networking opportunities and linking families to relevant services.

Weekly sessions in Mt Gambier and Renown Park have continued to enjoy great participation with local children and families. Sessions opened in Whyalla at the beginning of 2020 and welcomed 10 families from the local community. Working in partnership with the HOPE Collective, PlayConnect has enjoyed much success with children and families, working as part of the broader ecosystem of early childhood programs.

## Remote Pop-up Supported Playgroup sessions

Playgroup SA developed and delivered in partnership with RICE (Remote and Isolated Children's Exercise), a series of PlayConnect "pop-up" style Playgroups across rural and remote communities across South Australia covering a vast expanse of 650,000 sqm.

These sessions were delivered in each community during the school term. Prior to the Playgroup sessions there was communication with stakeholders within the community, including community health service, child and maternal health staff, local education providers, early childcare providers, School of the Air; and other relevant community groups. This built on community engagement and allowed for the further identification of relevant target families.

## Project Stats

**10**  
sessions

**115**  
children and parents

**650,000**  
square kilometres covered

## Ready for School

Weekly Playgroup sessions were delivered in Melaleuca Hub and North Gambier Primary School Hub to provide opportunity to play and make friends for children, and resources for parents to prepare for school. Funded by Grants SA, children aged 4-5years, and their families were supported to prepare for school. Referral pathways were established with local educational settings who referred children and families based on those who required additional support. The partnership with educational settings has helped to facilitate successful transition experiences and to assist families to establish routines which supported self-help skills and ensure children were developmentally prepared for commencement of school in 2020, and has continued for children attending the program this year.

While providing a Play Based program it has been designed with developmental goals in mind to ensure positive engagement in school settings.

## Every Body Play

Every Body Play is a new program, which aims to provide safe, accepting and inclusive play opportunities for children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. This is a small Playgroup with low stimuli so it is not too overwhelming. There are a range of activities and children are free to follow their interests. There is a quiet area provided as well as visual supports.

We had the wonderful opportunity of seeing a child with a significant disability dancing for us. This child's whole body changed when they heard their favourite songs being played. It was a privilege to witness the unique bond between the parent and child and the way they found connection and meaning. It has been exciting to notice the significant skill development in our regular attendees, one child has shown significant growth and development in their speech, confidence and has mastered the skill of twirling a hula hoop.







## Families have built peer-to-peer support networks and meet regularly outside of Playgroup.

### Supported Playgroup Program

#### Findon, Hendon and Angle Vale

Supported Playgroups provide a valuable program for children and families who attend, providing opportunities for improving child development and wellbeing. These Playgroups have supported culturally and linguistic diverse families to enrol in English classes. These children and their families have been assisted to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme, financial counselling and emergency assistance services to address specific needs.

We have seen several families go onto further studies in Early Childhood and Community Services as a result of the support provided by the Playgroup Facilitator. Families have built peer-to-peer support networks and meet regularly outside of Playgroup. This highlights the importance of the Playgroup model in bringing community together to make meaningful, lasting friendships. Playgroup SA recognises the important contribution of the Australian Government Funded program Communities for Children and thanks Anglicare SA and UningSA for their continued support for these programs.

### Supported & Specialist Program Stats

9

supported & Specialist Programs

144

sessions in regional SA

180

sessions in Metro Adelaide

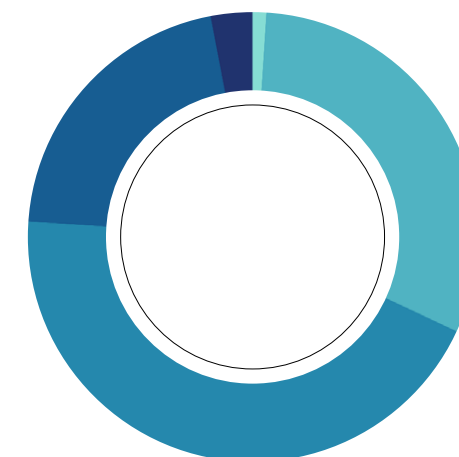
130

families

166

children

## Ages of children attending



|             |     |
|-------------|-----|
| 0-12 months | 1%  |
| 1 - 2 years | 31% |
| 3-4 years   | 44% |
| 5+ years    | 21% |
| No DOB      | 3%  |

### Covid and Online Engagement for Supported Playgroup Programs

During COVID all Supported Playgroup sessions were suspended. The Programs Team stayed in touch families through weekly phone calls, posting activity packs for children, and providing care packs funded by the State Government Department of Human Services funded.

Closed Facebook groups were established for each individual Supported Playgroup program. These closed groups enabled the children and families to maintain connections with each other and the Playgroup Leader, to read stories and suggest craft activities.



05

# Marketing and Events

## Marketing and Events Team

Playgroup at the Zoo continued its success as the flagship event. The sounds of happiness echoed across the zoo as many children joined in with the entertainment on the grass and under the rotunda.

The weather turned on a hot day for the Playgroup on the Green held in Civic Park at Modbury. Despite the heat, many children and families still came out to enjoy the morning of activities.

Smaller Playgroup sessions celebrated Book Week, Twilight Playgroup and Christmas and were all well attended. Our specialist sensory Playgroup sessions were also well attended and enjoyed by all.

In January of 2020, the Tour Down Under street party visited Prospect. Playgroup SA facilities were opened and welcomed over 100 families who found the playroom a quiet space to escape the crowd with children enjoying some sensory activities.

8

events

1,826

children enjoying the activities

1,714

families out and about

## Online Engagement

Playgroup SAs presence on social media has continued to grow over the year. The Playgroup at Home strategy reached 15,000 members in a matter of weeks, demonstrating the ability of the team to be innovative in a short amount of time, while bringing much joy to children and their families and creating an online platform for community connections.

53%

Facebook 12,257 likes increase

55%

Insta 1,110 followers increase





# Strategy and Service Improvement

## Technology: building efficiencies

Playgroup SA made a significant investment in establishing a CRM this financial year. The CRM streamlines the process for family enrolments and Playgroup Registration, making an improved customer interface for payments and promotions. The 'Find-a-Playgroup' function is built into the CRM and includes additional fields such as age of children and focus of the Playgroup. These features provide improved information for families to better assess the suitability of their local Playgroup for their circumstances

## Service Excellence

The Australian Service Excellence Standards is a step-by-step program specifically designed to develop the capacity of community organisations to strive towards continuous improvement in quality service delivery. Playgroup SA has completed the self-assessment process and are working toward an external assessment to achieve this internationally recognised accreditation. The process provides quality assurance for families accessing services, directors of the Playgroup SA Board and greater public confidence in the organisation.

8

standards assessed

7

new and improved Policies

## Online Training

Training modules were established in the last part of the 2019/2020 financial year. Current courses that can be accessed include Playgroup Foundations, PlayTogether (Inclusive Practices in Playgroups), intro to Trauma-Informed Practices, and Intro to Child Development. More than 15 coordinators trailed the courses with much success.

## Collaboration and Communication

In addition to maintaining engagement across Collective Impact initiatives, a sponsorship promotion book has been developed for potential sponsors. From free giveaways including v-tech equipment, Crayola packs for new Playgroups, and free holiday bookings at West Beach Holiday Park, Adelaide Zoo, SoccaJoeys, Santas Wonderland.

23

sponsors &amp; partners

\$13,550

return to Playgroup Community

## Playgroup outdoor deck

After many years of use, and the pitter patter of hundreds, if not thousands, of feet, the outdoor play deck in the Prospect Playroom needed a revamp. Grants from Harcourts Foundation and Grants SA provided the much need financial resourcing for an upgraded play deck, including a new sandpit, imaginative play area and comfortable bench seat. At the end of 2019, the deck upgrade was completed. After 8 long months of children not being able to access the deck, they certainly were keen to get outdoors and ride bikes, make mud pies and play in the sandpit! We thank the Harcourts Foundation and Grants SA for seeing the value in the play deck and for graciously believing our applications were worthy of supporting. The children were the biggest winners in this project!

5

playgroups per week access the outdoor deck

over 150

children have fun on the outdoor deck weekly



# Financials

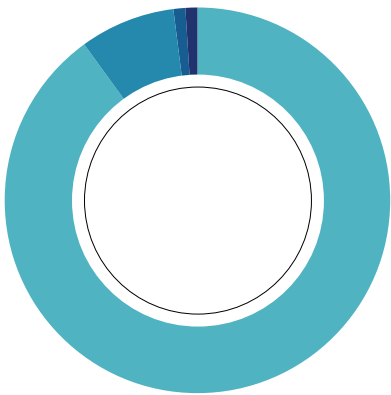
The coronavirus has had a devastating economic impact on businesses in Australia and globally. Playgroup SA are fortunate to not expect any significant effects resulting from the pandemic in future financial years.

Playgroup SA remains in a strong financial position, with cash flow boosts and JobKeeper supplements providing stability for employment. Cash reserves remain in a strong liquidity position.

| Income                          |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Grant Income                    | 77% |
| Membership and affiliation fees | 4%  |
| Other Income                    | 2%  |
| Cashflow boost / JobKeeper      | 17% |

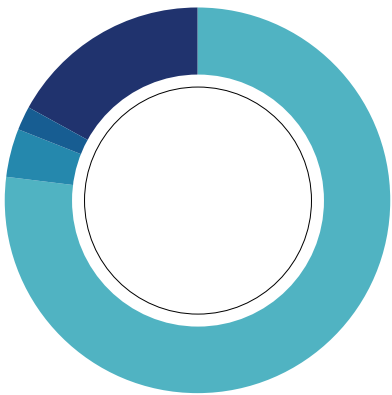
| Expenditure                    |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Administrative expenses        | 20% |
| Occupancy expenses             | 10% |
| Employment expenses            | 64% |
| Memberships & program expenses | 5%  |

Income 2019



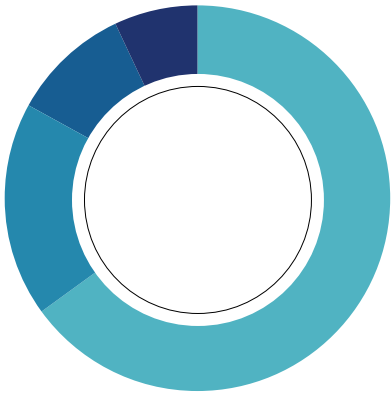
- 90% Grant Income
- 8% Membership and Affiliation Fees
- 1% Interest received
- 1% Other Income

Income 2020



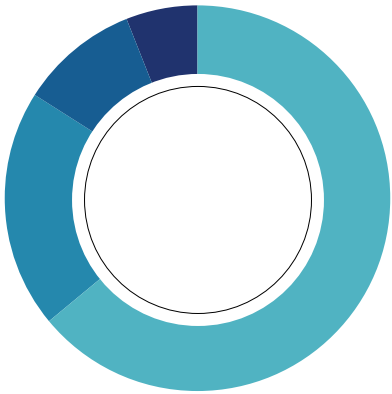
- 77% Grant Income
- 4% Membership and Affiliation Fees
- 2% Interest received
- 17% Cash Boost / Job Keeper

Expenditure 2019



- 65% Employment Expenses
- 17% Administrative Expenses
- 11% Occupancy Expenses
- 7% Membership & Program Expenses

Expenditure 2020



- 64% Employment Expenses
- 20% Administrative Expenses
- 10% Occupancy Expenses
- 6% Membership & Program Expenses



# Playgroup SA Board, Staff, Sponsors & Partners

## 06

Playgroup SA would not have been able to serve the community without the amazing support from our funders, and the thousands of children, parents, grandparents and caregivers attending Playgroup every week. Perhaps our greatest debt of gratitude goes to the Volunteer Playgroup Coordinators across South Australia, whom without their generous time and investment of running Playgroups, the first 1,000 days in a child's life wouldn't be the same! **We cannot thank you all enough.**



#### To our valued Donors

Sponsors & Partners  
West Beach Parks  
Adelaide Zoo  
Bunnings  
Codesnap  
Crayola  
Department of Human Services  
Department for Social Services  
Educational Experience  
Foodland (Prospect)  
Libraries SA  
Mad Hatterz Parties  
Modern Teaching Aids  
Multiple Birth Association of SA  
Raising Literacy Australia  
Scholastic  
SoccaJoeys  
Colourbox Print  
Warrawong Conservation Park  
El Ritmo  
HeartKids SA  
The Amazing Magic Mike  
Rover Communications  
Mono Design  
Santas Wonderland  
Disney on Ice  
Amelia Ryan – Comedian  
Kids Promotions  
William Buck

#### To our valued Life Members

Di Connew  
Deane Palmer  
Elizabeth Giola  
Gloria Palmer  
Helen Holland  
Helen Miller  
Jennie Fenton  
John Harley  
Leslie Ratcliffe  
Lorry Jordan  
Maralyn Blake  
Pam Witto

#### Playgroup SA Board

Trish Strachan, *Chair*  
Dr Sally Brinkman, *Deputy Chair*  
Ann Perriam, *Treasurer*  
Chris Nash, *Secretary*  
Rose Deane, *Board Member*  
Gaynor Ramsey, *Board Member*  
Ben Birch, *Board Member*  
Tania Potts, *Board Member*  
Cecilia Pascale, *Board Member*

#### Playgroup SA Staff

**Strategy and Service Improvement Team**  
Craig Bradbrook, *CEO*  
Teresa DiBartolo, *Senior Business Administrator*  
Amy Elliott, *Enrolment Officer*

#### Community Impact Team

Alicia Beames,  
*Program Manager,*  
Rebecca Blunn,  
*Community Impact Officer*

#### Marketing and Events Team

Emma Sordillo,  
*Marketing Manager*  
Sarah Zullian, *Digital Officer*

#### Programs Team

Rachael Stroud,  
*Program Manager*  
Jemima Althrope,  
*Program Development*  
Catherine Mangelsdorf,  
*Program Development*

#### Program Facilitators & Support

Alison Blake  
Nicki Hume  
Tracy Vine  
Sherrie Abdilla