

OCTOBER 2019

ISSUE 07

#PLAYGROUPSTORIES

# PLAYGROUP NEWS



Playgroup  
Victoria



PICTURED Old People's Homes for 4-year olds. PHOTO BY ABC + Iview

*“In diversity, there is beauty and there is strength.”*  
*– Maya Angelou*

The strength of playgroup lies in its inclusive nature. Young children have the ability to break down barriers and forge connections. They are compelled to interact and learn more. They remind us to take notice of the little things, the mundane things, be curious and generous with our affections. They also give us lots to talk about.

Childhood provides us with a window of opportunity to establish good habits and behaviours- to be kind, thoughtful, open-minded, accepting, loving.

By embracing unique aspects of one another we can create lifelong change. It is rewarding to make strong connections, to share and to make others feel welcome and involved. This issue of Playgroup News celebrates the positive power of community spirit, the outdoor world and diversity.

# CONTENTS

## A Message from the CEO

## Term Three News

Playgroup Victoria News.....	pg 6
NAIDOC Week	
Great Start Grants	
Move It 4 Kids	
Ageless Play on the ABC	
Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project	
Library Week 2019 .....	pg 8

## Focus On

Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project .....	pg 11
---	-------

## Feature Story

In Conversation with Dana Frantz Bentley - Understanding Bias in the Early Years.....	pg 14
---	-------

## Research

Studies show how the early years shape the years to come.....	pg 17
---	-------

## Playgroup Stories

Darebin Creek Bush Playgroup .....	pg 20
Regional Communities at Play .....	pg 21
Cabena Playgroup	
Selandra Playgroup	
St Patrick's Gordon Playgroup .....	pg 23

## What's On

Romp and Stomp 2019 .....	pg 25
Run for a Cause .....	pg 26
All Come Out To Play.....	pg 27
Save the Date! Playgroup Conference 2020 .....	pg 28

## Tools, Resources and Media

Playgroup Victoria Resources.....	pg 30
Nature Play	
The Bush Play Project - <i>Wild Things Bush Play Setup Guide</i>	
Articles of Interest.....	pg 31
External Resources .....	pg 32
Emerging Minds	
Child360 app	
External newsletters	



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

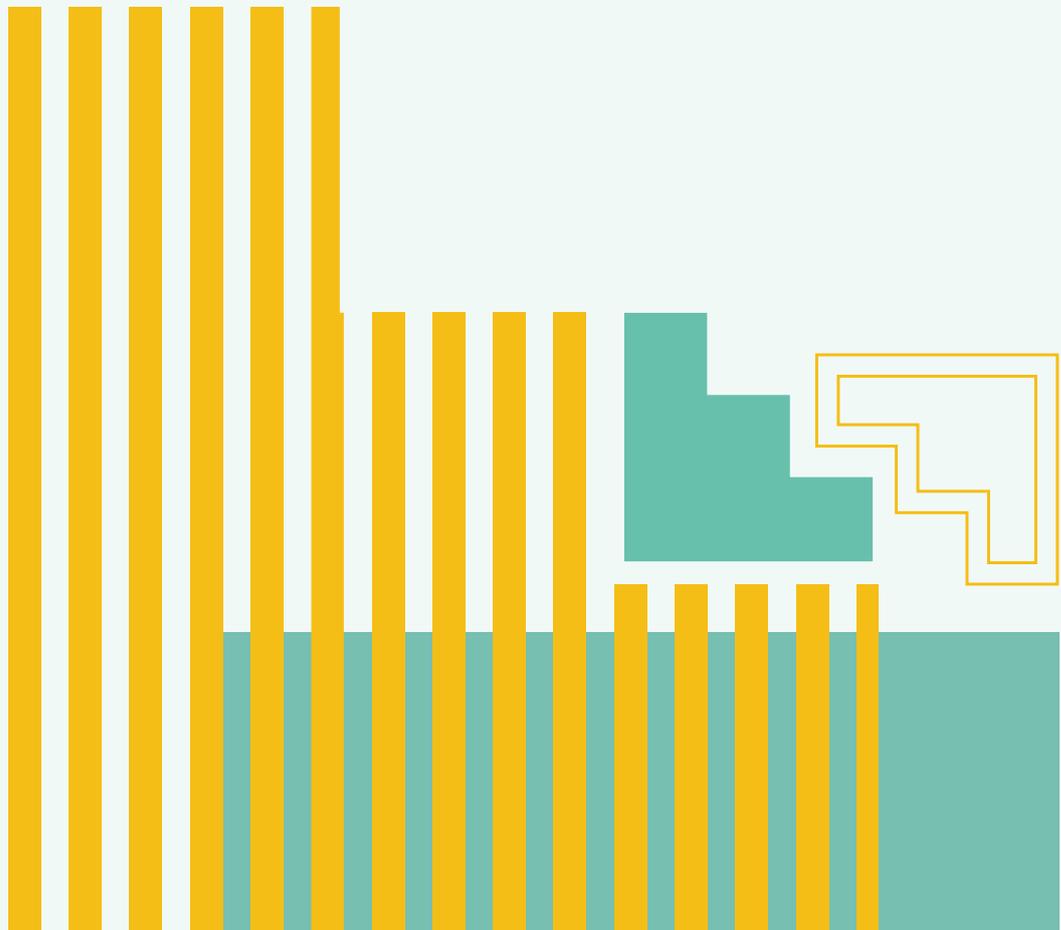
Alongside Playgroup Australia, we have partnered with the ABC to bring their Impact Documentary Old People's Homes for 4 Year Olds. This program has raised awareness about the realities of people moving into retirement and nursing homes. It can be isolating and a hard transition from their previous lifestyle. The benefits of the older generations interacting with the younger generations was abundantly clear. The experience was a hugely positive one. You may ask, how can playgroups be more involved?

Inclusion and acceptance are integral parts of our organisation. Inclusion is for everybody. This documentary has provided an opportunity to change societal structures. It illustrates the positive impact that inclusion has, right through the ages.

A sense of belonging is at the core of inclusion. People feel valued when they participate and interact with others. Playgroup provides an excellent framework to build upon- to create positive experiences for families and communities. Creating a welcoming, accepting, friendly, warm and purposeful environment is key. In this environment we are motivated to be active. This creates dopamine which reduces the impact that aging has on our physical and mental well-being. Let's all make the most of this opportunity and build the inclusive nature of playgroup into everything we do. I certainly will be.

Warm regards,

*Danny Schwarz*



# Playgroup Victoria News

## National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee

7-14 July 2019

Playgroups throughout Victoria celebrated the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was a wonderful to see so many playgroups discussing the significance of NAIDOC and what it means. Playgroup families made artwork inspired by the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and sung an Acknowledgement to Country song. Many playgroups hope to include this song regularly and Playgroup Victoria wants to incorporate it at events.

*"If we are not making a point of discussing culture and inviting people to share those things, we lose the opportunity to learn about each other."*

- Dr Joanne Tarasuik, Playgroup Victoria Research Manager



## Great Start Grants

The Great Start Grant is an initiative by the Victorian government to assist 50 new community groups. This year the focus was 'inclusion' - there was an overwhelming number of applicants from across the state. In term four, our playgroup development team will provide mentoring to each of the 50 playgroups to ensure they are supported in being best practice playgroups.

Keep an eye on our website for the full list of successful Great Start Playgroups in 2019.



## Move it 4 Kids

Comedy meets music, meets movement for this wonderful *Move It 4 Kids* program. Playgroup Victoria, Hullabaloo Music for All and drummond street services welcome parents/carers and children aged 0-5 to enjoy this active musical comedy experience via community playgroups. Studies continue to show how vital exercise is, for all facets of life. Here we are encouraging good habits, in the most fun way possible. Expect to be inspired, all while developing fine and gross motor skills, language skills and social skills. This program will be rolling out in Campbellfield, Geelong, Point Cook, Pakenham and Craigieburn. If you run playgroups in these areas [click here to find our how to book a FREE session](#)

Keep up to date with the program on Instagram @moveit4kids



## Ageless Play on the ABC 774

The series *Old People's Home For 4 Year Olds* [on ABC + iview](#) has garnered much positive attention, putting the spotlight on our youngest and oldest community members. On Wednesday September 2, Playgroup Victoria CEO Danny Schwarz spoke on Afternoons with Richelle Hunt on ABC Melbourne about intergenerational playgroups and the importance of play through the ages. Listen in at the 31.00 minute mark to hear the full interview. [LISTEN HERE](#)



## Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project

The *Information linkages and capacity building innovation project* has been funded by the NDIS to provide information, linkages, referrals and transition support to families. It also aim to build the capacity of community playgroups and other stakeholders to support families with children with ASD or ASD-like characteristics.

[Read further information here](#)



PICTURED Old People's Home for 4 year old's IMAGES COURTESY OF Playgroup Australia and ABC TV + IView

*“I’m beginning to slide from being a grown-up to a real child again”*

- Ben, 95, retired business owner

*Share your playgroup news with us! [events@playgroup.org.au](mailto:events@playgroup.org.au)*



## Library Week 2019

Our bilingual Library Week was an enriching exercise, with people coming from various suburbs and rural areas to take part in storytime sessions. There were many contributors and local participants. Each storytime was unique. Some people made their own storybooks, others shared songs and stories in another language.

Melissa Thompson from Signee Tots playgroup signed Auslan at two of the events and shared a wonderful song about diversity. Local playgroup parent Adeela shared this year's featured storybook, *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*, in braille. Writer, comedian and ABC Melbourne radio presenter Sami Shah joined us as a special guest at Preston storytime. He had the audience enraptured by his entertaining rendition of *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*.

It was a glorious show of community spirit and inclusion. The calibre of the libraries were outstanding. Thank you to one and all!



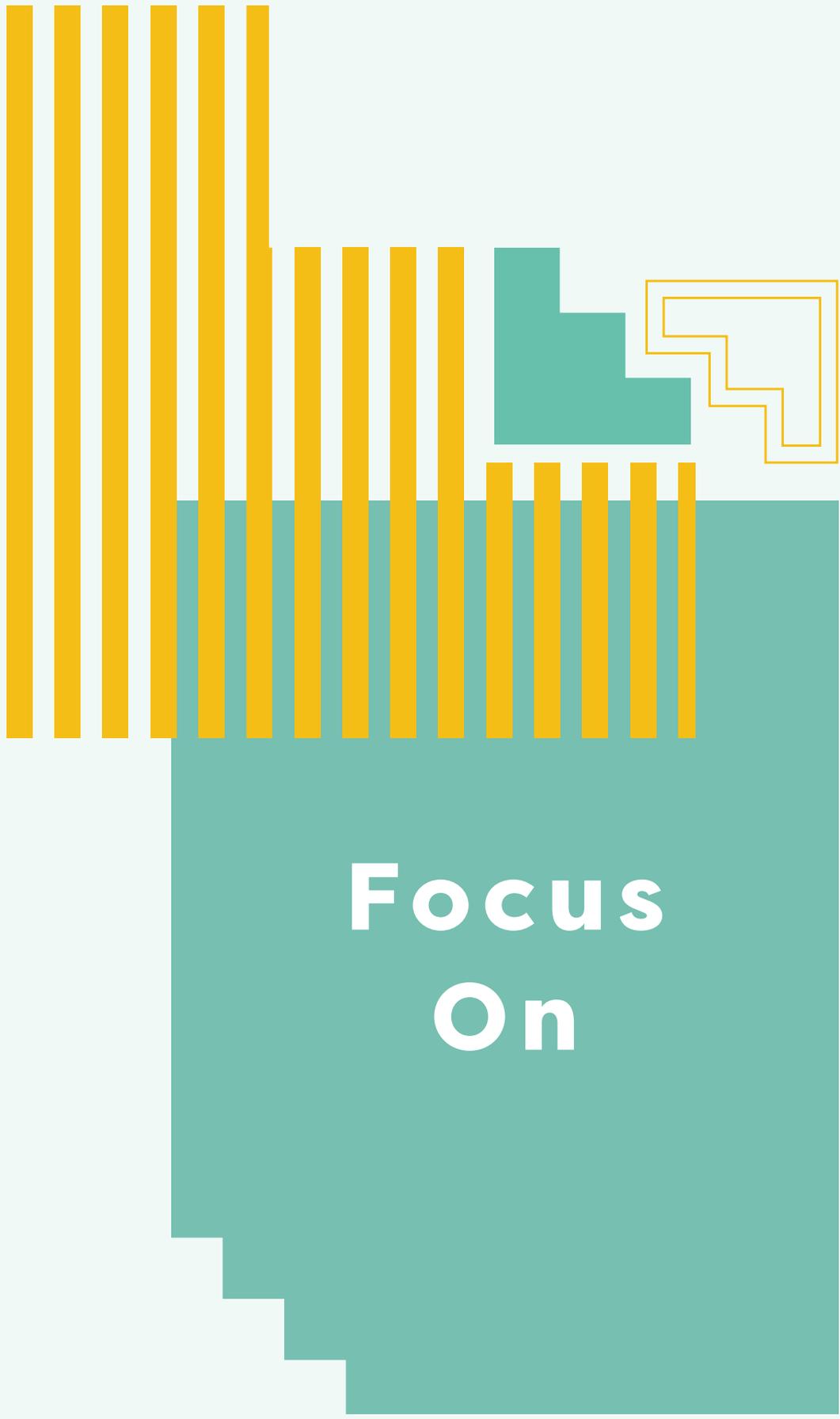


“Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are.”

- Mason Cooley

Library Week 2019





# Focus On



## Creating Meaning and Connection in Our Lives

### *Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project*

The NDIS is funding a National Project, with the aim to provide information, linkages and referrals to families that have young children with Autism, or Autism-like behaviours. Victoria is trailing a model to support families and playgroups. **[Discover more about the project here](#)**



*“By helping children with additional needs to remain engaged in mainstream environments, they will have greater capacity and opportunities to be included in all aspects of community life.”*

- Isabella Rosinsky, PlayConnect and MyTime Manager

# Meet the Facilitators

Four experienced Playgroup Facilitators are leading the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Project.



## Anne Shute

Anne facilitates the PlayConnect playgroups in Laverton and Werribee. She trained as a kindergarten teacher and has decades of experience working with pre-school aged children. For many of those years she worked with children with additional needs.

*If you are in the Laverton or Werribee areas and would like assistance, please contact Anne.  
ph: 0434 769 341 e: ashute@playgroup.org.au*



## Belinda Carter

Belinda facilitates the PlayConnect playgroup in Ferntree Gully. Belinda is a childcare worker and a volunteer community Playgroup Facilitator. Belinda also has many years of experience working with children with additional needs.

*If you are in the Ferntree Gully area and would like assistance, please contact Belinda.  
ph: 0435 428 697 e: bcarter@playgroup.org.au*



## Fiona Holder

Fiona facilitates the PlayConnect playgroups in Sunbury and Romsey. Fiona comes with many years of experience supporting her own children who are on the spectrum and has seamlessly adapted her experience to the playgroup environment.

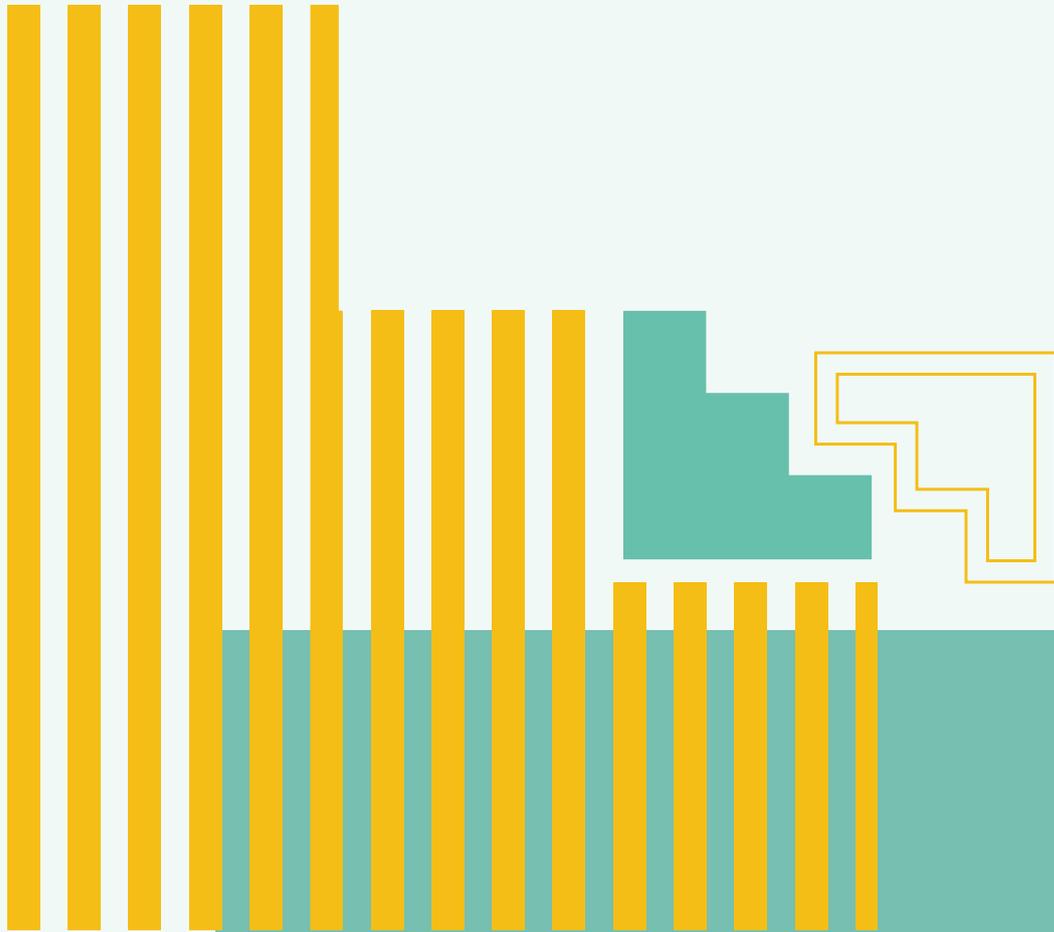
*If you are in the Sunbury or Romsey areas and would like assistance, please contact Fiona.  
ph: 0491 616 118 e: fholder@playgroup.org.au*



## Rose McKenna

Rose facilitates the Bairnsdale PlayConnect playgroup and also the Bairnsdale MyTime groups. Rose has been with PlayConnect for over 10 years and has extensive experience and expertise in the field of Autism and play.

*If you are in the Bairnsdale and surrounding areas and would like assistance, please contact Rose.  
ph: 0409 096 587 e: rmckenna@playgroup.org.au*



# Feature Article

In Conversation with Assistant Professor Dana Frantz Bentley



*Wondering, Conversing, Challenging, Creating*

## Understanding Bias in the Early Years

*In Conversation with Assistant Professor Dana Frantz Bentley*

**“You might say that my entire life is early childhood focused!”, said Dana Bentley.**

**Dana’s writing and teaching focuses on social work in the early years, studying children’s emerging political literacies. One thing that captured our attention is Dana’s own pedagogy as an anti-bias educator. We sat down with her to learn more.**

Eighteen years ago, when Dana set out, some things were not talked about all that much. Anti-bias education was one such area. Dana was drawn to it. Even to begin with, she understood that her work was about relationships and empathy. For Dana, her work embodied inclusion and supported communities in meaningful ways. There were indelible links.

*“For me, anti-bias practice is all about wonder. It’s all about questions. If we, as educators, begin with wondering, it opens up the curriculum and the classroom. If we begin with the understanding that we don’t know, that we have to learn from children and families, and that this learning will shape our work as a class, we position ourselves differently, as open and willing to be changed by the communities around us.”*

While ‘bias’ and the notion of it is often part of our collective discourse, it is not always clear what it means. Bias imprints on us all, in ways we may not be aware of. Part of combating these prejudices is questioning.

*“As a white woman, this means that I am always questioning myself too, and my perceptions,” said Dana. “I have to question my own assumptions or ‘knowledge,’ wondering about how my biases, and how institutional bias is shaping what I think that I know. This can be hard as a teacher, when I want so much to have the answers! But this work is all about questions, all about not knowing, about wondering with the children, and about making something new based on who we are and how we come together as a community.”*

Anti-bias, removing biases in education, is fluid, evolving. Dana said there is no one answer when questioning or disrupting preconceived assumptions. She does have some thoughts on the process.

*“In disrupting assumptions, I have to position myself as willing to question, and willing to be wrong. This is something, active, something that I do constantly, and that I try to model for my students as well as my own children.”*

*“The next piece is about empathy, about learning the stories of my students that challenge my assumptions, being worthy to hold those stories, and being willing to be changed by them. It’s this constant process of wondering, questioning, learning new stories and identities, and making space for those new stories to rewrite my reality.”*

Dana has taught in Boston, Cambridge, and Manhattan, in diverse, urban settings with many different identities. For many years she taught in a not-for-profit, United Way agency called *Ellis Memorial*, serving children and families in Boston’s South End. From there she moved to a university-based early childhood center at Teachers College in New York, a place that focused work on diversity and inclusion. Now in the PreK at Buckingham Browne and Nichols School in Cambridge, her work focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**[Read the full article HERE](#)**



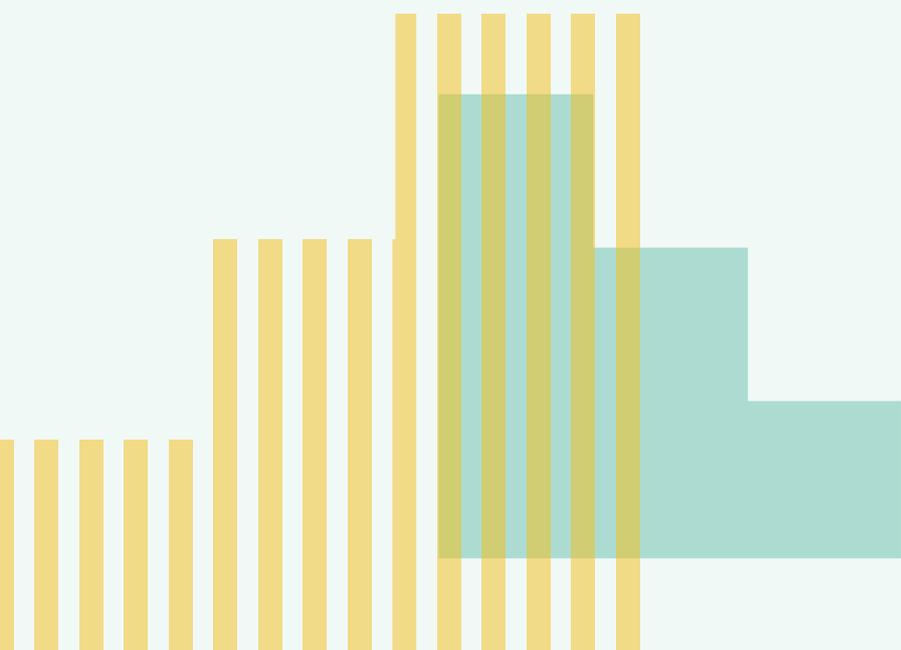
ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF Assistant professor Dana Frantz Bentley

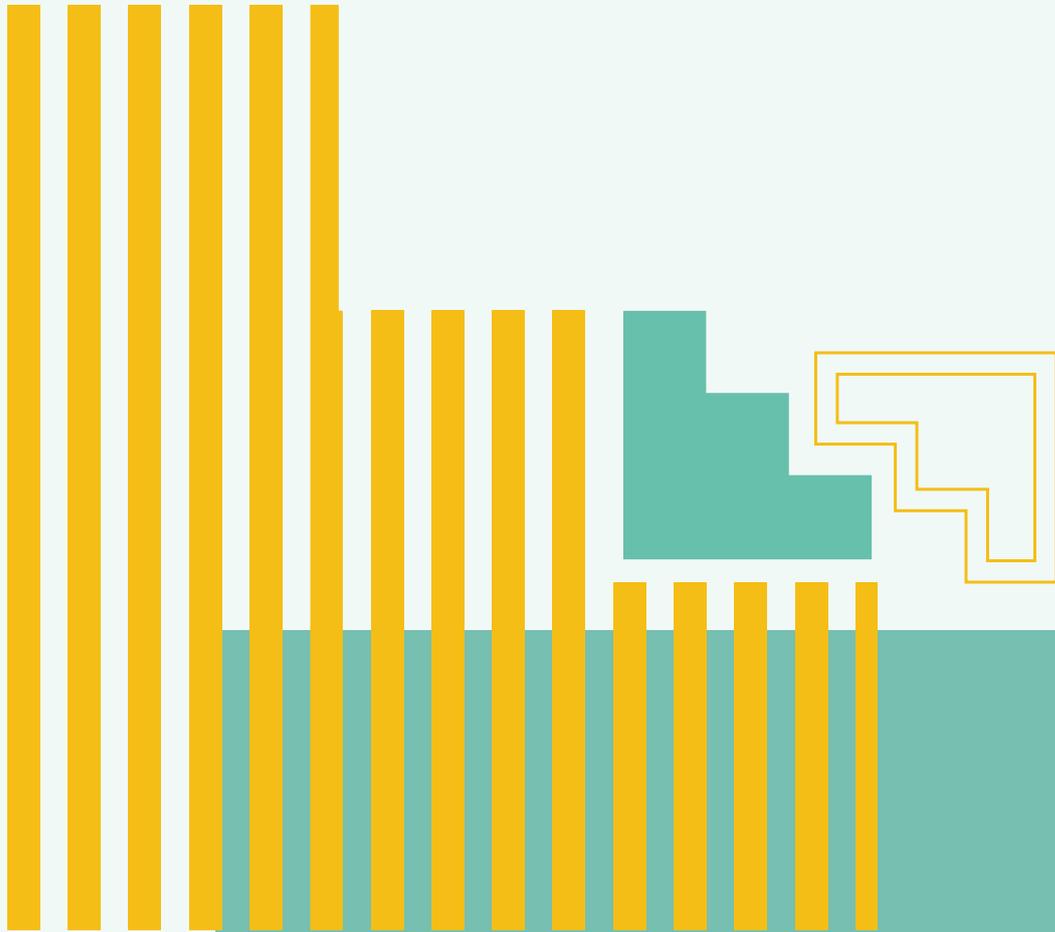


PICTURED Assistant Professor Dana Bentley and her child

*“Creativity and artistic practice are the place where children challenge the status quo, where they problem solve, they wonder, and they imagine what might be.”*

- Assistant Professor Dana Bentley, Lesley University





# Research

Incorporating Social Emotional Learning into  
Pedagogical Practice

## Strong Beginnings

### **Emotional and social development is core to our lives. Research shows how the early years shape the years to come.**

Antoinette White, an academic from Monash University, recognised how social emotional experiences in the early years of life have the potential to have long lasting effects on our lives. She has dedicated her studies to examining this more closely. As she has discovered, the incidentals of early life experiences shape us in subtle and profound ways.

*“If I were to pick out a specific finding that has driven my research, it would most likely be the long-term effects for the individual. My passion is in enhancing the lived experiences of individuals, particularly those from minority groups.”*

The major focus of Antoinette’s research has been on what kind of social, emotional experiences create optimal learning opportunities. She reviewed evidence-based preschool social emotional learning programs, identifying best instructional practices. She found puppets, role play, artwork, games, songs, and visual resources were used by evidence-based programs to develop, reinforce, or communicate children’s understanding of social and emotional concepts/skills. Antoinette created evidence-based resources, designed to support educators to meaningfully and intentionally meet the outcomes of the **Early Years Learning Framework**.

*“All of which relate to social and emotional development,”* said Antoinette.

These resources can be used in the home setting, a playgroup setting, or an early years setting with an educator.

*“We know social emotional learning is effective when it is focused, and we know children develop through collaboration with more competent others. The home and preschool setting therefore provide an ideal context.”*

*“I would encourage the adults to identify the child/ren’s area of greatest developmental need, the preferred learning style, and instructional activities that would best suit. Start small. Work through the learning sequentially, just as you would in any other learning area. Provide instruction, allow time for rehearsal, and give plenty of behaviour specific feedback on performance.”*

As hoped, Antoinette observed the educator develop more intentional, explicit, and meaningful practices as a result of the resources. This dynamic interaction between the educator and the resources resulted in a significant increase in the children’s social and emotional development. Antoinette has been at the forefront, witnessing meaningful connections through the educator and the child, the parent and the child. She draws on her lived experience.

*“It provides a strong foundation for meaningful relationships and positive mental health, and has been associated with positive school transition, school engagement, and enhanced academic performance.”*

**[Read full article here](#)**



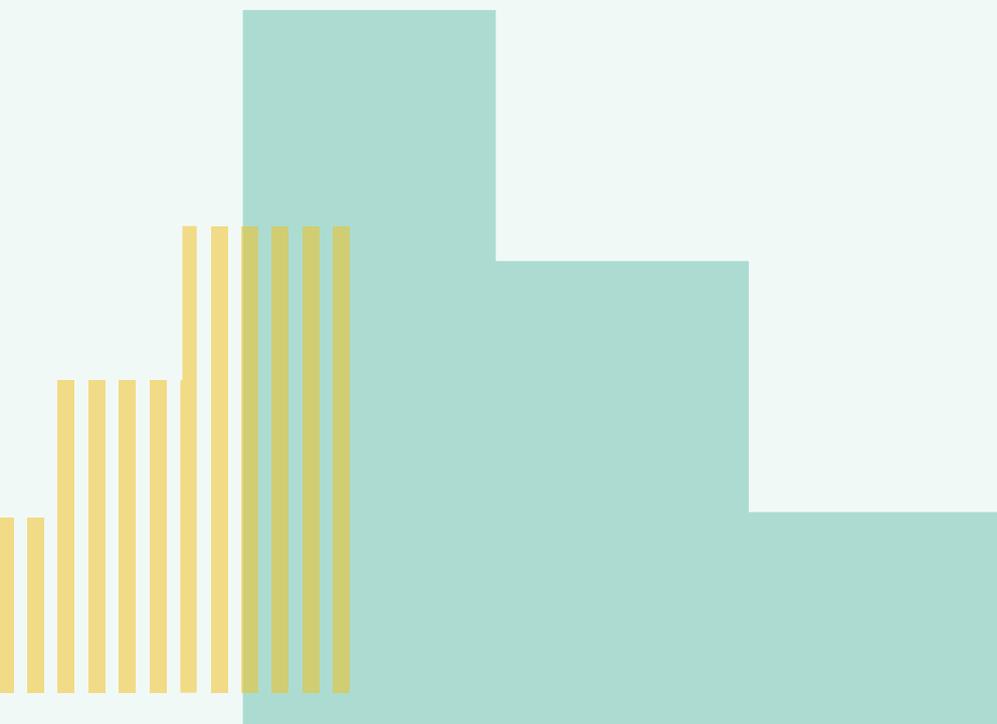
*“Social emotional development in the early years has the potential to predict important life outcomes, at school, at work, in day to day living, and across health domains.”*

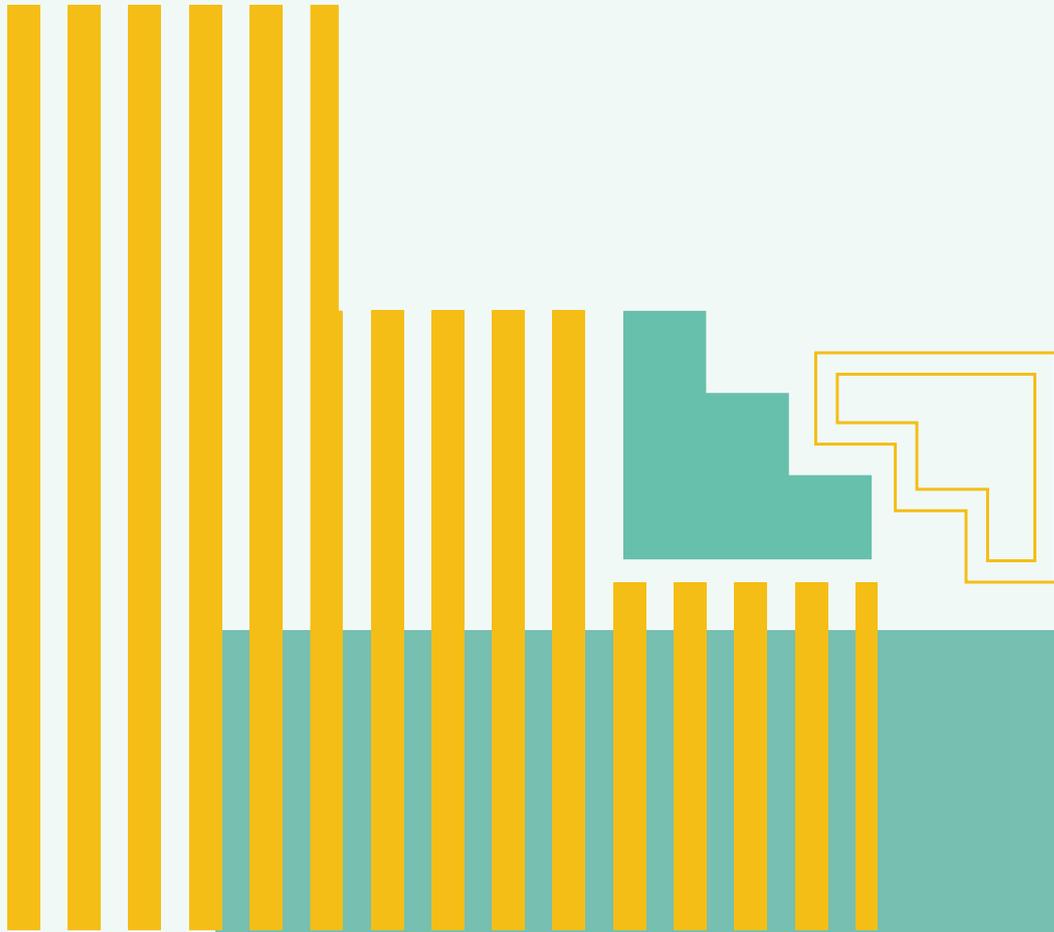
- Research Assistant, Antoinette White  
from Monash University



*“Social and emotional skills support virtually every other aspect of a child’s development.”*

- Commonwealth of Australia





# Playgroup Stories

"After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world."

Phillip Pullman

## Darebin Creek Bush Playgroup

*“When I started running the playgroup I realised the amazing connections you have with parents who come to these things and you see them having them with each other as well because they have so much in common and generally they are diverse people, but they all have that common love of being outdoors. I just really underestimated the power of that community when I started.”*

- Victoria Milne, Playgroup Facilitator



PICTURED Attendees of Darebin Creek Bush Playgroup PHOTO BY Sinead Halliday

**Many layers of purpose are at work at Darebin Creek Bush Playgroup. Families from around the Thornbury area venture out along their local nature reserve. Here they reconnect.**



PHOTO BY Sinead Halliday

At first many thought it was a good idea to get outside and allow their children to develop more skills- but it grew into something more. It grew into friendship, community and a chance to take stock and engage with the natural world, for which we depend on. Many parents walk away feeling refreshed and calm. The children love it and build their capacities in a range of areas. All in all, it is a wonderful thing.

There are several groups that meet here and around the bush trails in Thornbury, on various days of the week. One such playgroup meets here on Thursdays. Today around a dozen parents are here with one or two children. There are a few Dads getting amongst the play and grandparents, too. Playgroup leader Victoria Milne welcomes them all onto the mat to begin the session. Everyone is in a cheery mood as the sun shines and spring flourishes around them. Yet this genuine warmth appears to be the staple of the group, all the year through.

**[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)**



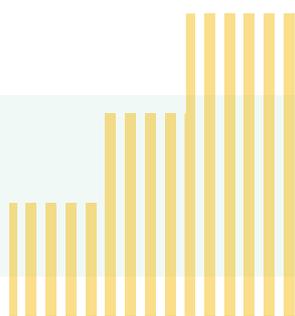
## Age is no Barrier to Belonging

### *Cabena Playgroup*

Nurturing the wellbeing of the community is multi-dimensional at Cabena Playgroup in the City of Monash, the local community at Cabena Child and Family Centre is thriving. People from all walks of life come to the playgroup here to socialise and play. Flexible hours mean that families can drop in over a five hour period three days a week, and also on some nights and Saturdays. They playgroup also runs during the holidays. It is a place full of opportunities, irrespective of age.

*“As a community the more people engage together, the greater they have of a sense of belonging. That sense of belonging brings connectedness, support and care for one another. This is great for our community and excellent modelling for children with an overall a positive impact on people’s wellbeing.”* - Belinda Davies, Playgroup Development Consultant.

**[Learn more about this fantastic playgroup HERE](#)**



## Communities at play

## Come Together One and All

### *Selandra Playgroup*

This colourful and inviting space in Clyde North quickly fills with chatter and creativity as families wander in for a morning of play. There is lots to capture the imagination here and the kids are well and truly captivated in the arts corner, on the music mat, in the water trough, during science experiments and throughout their singalong.

*“It is wonderful that the people in the area can walk through a door and potentially experience something new – for free. It’s hard to bottle up the feeling you get when you witness, and are part of, the transformation of a big empty room into a space for play, connection and fun.”*

- Mylie Nauendorf, Playgroup Victoria Events Coordinator

**[Read more about this fun and lively playgroup HERE.](#)**



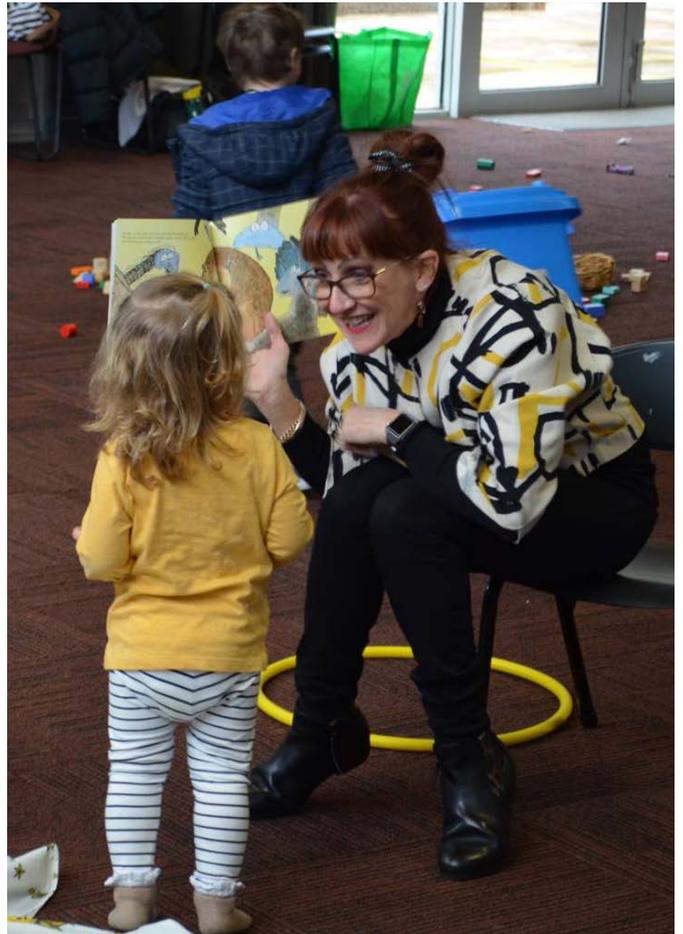
*Share your playgroup stories with us! [events@playgroup.org.au](mailto:events@playgroup.org.au)*

*“Playgroup allows and encourages people to be themselves, to feel comfortable and enjoy time with their children.”*

- Leanne Dhami, Playgroup Development Team Leader



PHOTOS BY Mylie Nauendorf



*"It is a central gathering place for the community."*

- Bambi Afford, St. Patrick's Principal



PICTURED Top left and right: St Patrick's Gordon Playgroup attendees with principal Bambi Afford - Bottom left: School students at play PHOTOS BY Sinead Halliday

# Snow, Play and Adventures

## *St Patrick's Gordon Playgroup*

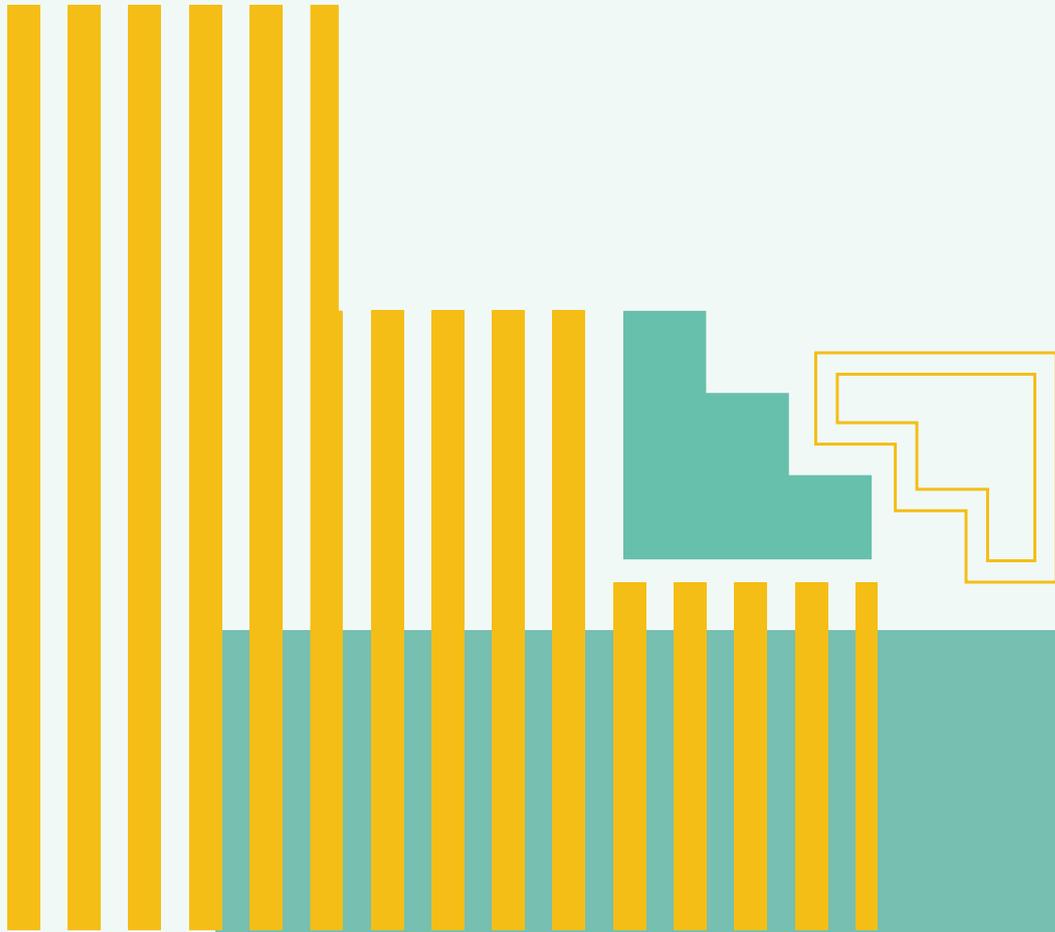
About an hours drive from Melbourne is a quaint little town called Gordon. On the outer edge of town you will find St Patrick's Primary School. The old brick facade is home to around 40 students, two goats, a variety of chooks, a rooster, a life-size chest board, an undercover basketball court, beautiful scenery and lots of room to play. On the day that we visited, it snowed.

A playgroup started up here earlier in the year. It has since blossomed. Discover more about this wonderful community school below on our blog.



PICTURED-Enjoying the snowfall PHOTO BY St Patricks

**[READ FULL ARTICLE HERE](#)**



# What's On

There are lots of good things in store for term four, including one of favourite events of the year, Romp and Stomp



# Romp & Stomp

Looking into nature

Melbourne Museum  
Wednesday 23 October  
10am–2pm

Join Yella from the *Musical Sprouts* as she goes on a...

## MUSICAL TREASURE HUNT

through the Forest Gallery

Wed October 23, at Melbourne Museum  
11am - 3pm

[www.musicalsprouts.com.au](http://www.musicalsprouts.com.au)



# Romp and Stomp

23rd October 2019

This year Playgroup Victoria and Melbourne Museum invite you to look a little closer at the natural world through art, music, performance, stories and of course, play and the great outdoors! This event is tailored to children aged five years and under, but it is also for the parents, carers, grandparents, siblings and friends. It is an opportunity to reconnect with one another and the outside world, all while learning valuable things along the way.

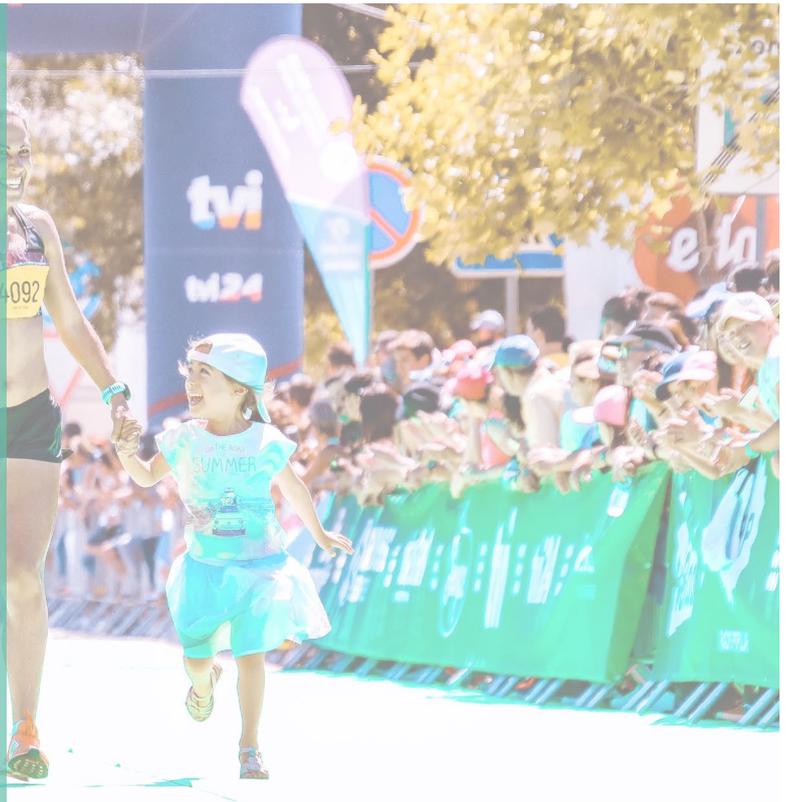
This year's lineup is set to be colourful and exciting for all - Dance and sing along with live performances from The Tip Toe Giants, workshops with Musical Sprouts and interactive Polynesia and Tongan Dance sessions. Get building with LEGO Australia, engage your senses with Incy Wincy Fingers, enjoy giveaways from Tooshies by TOM and lots of useful information from Road Safety education.

[LEARN MORE HERE](#)

## Run for a Cause

*"It seemed fitting that the Sebastopol Primary School "Playgroup Hub" be included as a charity partner. There are seven playgroups operating from the school over the course of a week. The children at these playgroups get to experience the safety and security of a school environment, and learn and develop skills that will help them now and into the future. Many of the playgroup families are keen to be involved in this event, and the Ballarat-based Playgroup Victoria team co-locate at the school, so it is the ideal collaboration."*

- Maureen Hatcher, Playgroup Development Consultant: South-West Region



**Playgroup Victoria will be a charity partner for this year's *Run For A Cause in Ballarat* - a wonderful local initiative that supports early learning programs for disadvantaged children. Any funds raised on the day will go to the Sebastopol Primary School Playgroup Hub, contributing to an early years outdoor area for all to share. Anyone considering registering, please support our cause.**

## Event Details



**Date:** Sunday November 17 2019

**Events:** Half Marathon (21km), 10km, 5km, 1km.

**2019 Event Cause:** Early Childhood

**Estimated participants:** Over 4,000

**Attendance Exposure:** Over 10,000

**2019 Fundraising Goal:** \$90,000

**Volunteers:** Over 200

**Charity Partners:** Ballarat Reads, Eureka Mums, Uniting Ballarat, Ballarat Community Health, Playgroup Victoria, Eureka Community Kindergarten Association, Ballarat Toy Library

**[LEARN MORE HERE](#)**

# ALL COME OUT! TO PLAY!

RESPECT  
=  
EQUALITY

JOIN US ON A WHIRLWIND MUSICAL ADVENTURE WHERE FUN IS THE MAIN GAME! ALONG THE WAY WE WILL CELEBRATE RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH STORY TELLING, SONG & DANCE. THIS IS A FUN INTERACTIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER!

BOOKINGS AT [PLAYGROUP.ORG.AU](http://PLAYGROUP.ORG.AU)

Save the Date!



PICTURED A full house for the Playgroup Conference 2019

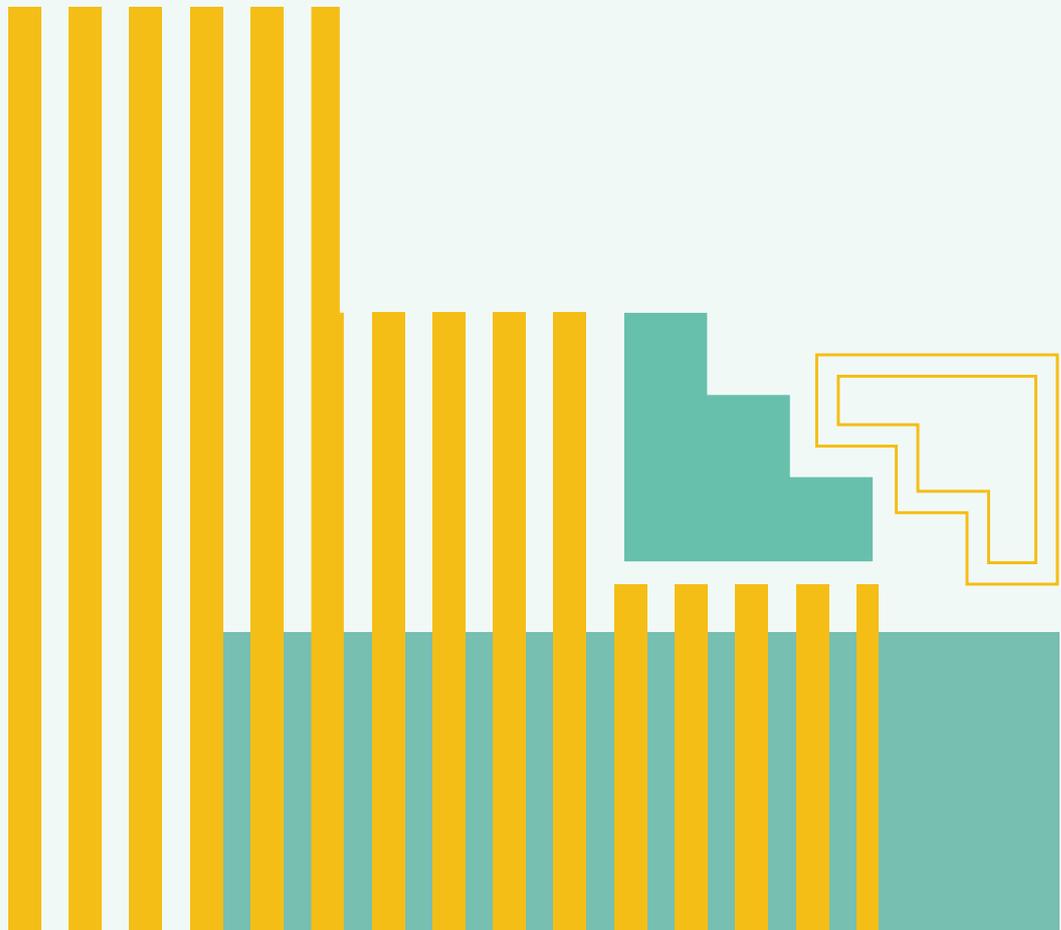
## Playgroup Makes a Difference

The Playgroup 2020 conference is coming and you don't want to miss out! The event will be on Thursday March 19th 2020 at the Hawthorn Arts Centre.

Next years conference will be continuing the overall theme of *Playgroup Makes a Difference* with a focus on 'Inclusion'. The conference will provide opportunities to engage with timely knowledge and research. Join us as we exchange ideas and share practice wisdom.

The Hawthorn Arts Centre is a grand historical building very conveniently located, with easy access to public transport. There is reasonably priced accommodation nearby.

Keep an eye on our website for updates. We look forward to seeing you there!



# Resources and Media

# Nature play

Spring has sprung here in Victoria. It is a great time to explore outside. There is so much variety in the garden and in our local green spaces. Join as we shake off the chill of winter and rejuvenate and play in the great outdoors.

**[Click here to download the Nature Play Resource](#)**

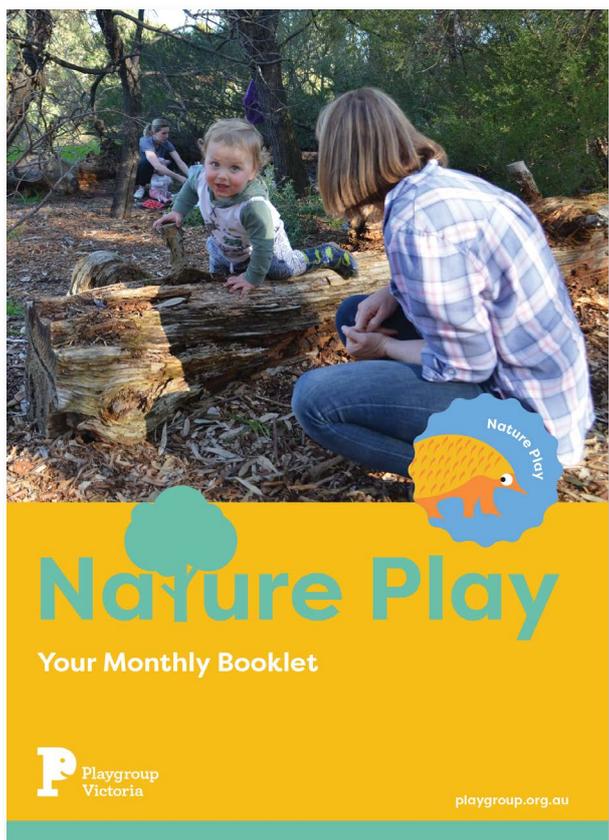


IMAGE COURTESY OF Jarrod Paine

# Bush Play Project

This resource is designed to help families and playgroups explore the outside world, without fear for what might be out there, what might happen, or what barriers might stop families from venturing outdoors. It is a motivator and a friendly helper. Jarrod Paine from North East Victoria authored the guide in a bid to encourage bush play as part of the 'BushPlay Project'.

*This resource is available to Professionals.*

*Please contact us to access this resource: [events@playgroup.org.au](mailto:events@playgroup.org.au)*

# Articles of Interest

There has been a lot of interesting media coverage this term, check some of the stories below.



September 11

*The Courier*

Federation University steps up to boost Ballarat's Run for A Cause

**Read more HERE**



September 7

*The Sydney Morning Herald*

Turning back time to my first watch.  
By *Laura McGeoch*

**Read more HERE**



August 31

*The Guardian*

A letter to... the neighbours who complain about our baby.

**Read more HERE**



September 11

*9 News Western Victoria*

Ballarat's Run for a Cause

**Watch HERE**



September 7

*Sydney Morning Herald*

Why Australia's culture around work and parental leave is trapping fathers  
By *Annabel Crabb*

**Read HERE**



August 27

*The Age*

Old People's Home For 4 Year Olds is raw and real but necessary TV

**Read more HERE**



September 9

*ABC News*

Intergenerational playgroups reduce social isolation for parents, aged care residents  
by *Erin Semmler*

**Read more HERE**



SEPTEMBER 5

*Mammamia*

'I took 10 months paternity leave. Everyone asked me what I was doing with the "time off"  
by *Blake Woodward*

**Read more HERE**



August 27

*Radio National*

Could intergenerational care be the answer to our aged care crisis?  
**Listen HERE**



September 8

*The Project*

Modern parenting is throwing up all sorts of new challenges. But there's one area which has barely changed with the times - and that's who stays home with the kids.  
By *Annabel Crabb*. **Watch HERE**



September 2

*ABC 774*

Playgroup Victoria CEO Danny Schwarz spoke on Afternoons with Richelle Hunt on ABC Melbourne about intergenerational playgroups and the importance of play through the ages. **Listen HERE**



August 25

*The Project*

Why Are Aussie Kids So Stressed These Days?  
**Watch HERE**

## Emerging Minds

### Children thrive through play

How can you support parents in child led, shared play? When parents play and interact with their children, they are doing the all-important work of building their child's brain. Play also helps to create the nurturing relationships that provide the foundations for positive child development and mental health. Emerging Minds offers a range of free, easy-to-use tools to support parents to play with their children.

**To find out more head to: [www.emergingminds.com.au](http://www.emergingminds.com.au)**



### Child360 app

**The Child360 app** is a tool for parents to use on their own or with a practitioner. It is designed to help parents reflect on how they are going in supporting their children's social and emotional wellbeing and identify areas where they can help strengthen resilience.

### External newsletters

**Early Childhood Australia**

**Child Wise**

**The Fatherhood Research Network Bulletin**

**The Mighty Girl**

**The Royal Children's Hospital**

**Immunisation News - healthVic**

**Municipal Association of Victoria**

**Raising Children**

**Parenting Research Centre**

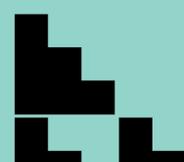
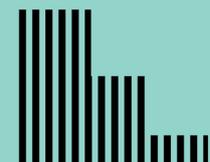


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