



# Executive Director's message

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2018. We hope that you will find many items of interest within and welcome your feedback and input to future editions. I am sure you will not be disappointed, so please enjoy!

Play Australia continues to go from strength to strength. Today we have members working in the interest of play across the country and by the end of this year we aim on having a Play Australia Branch established in WA, NSW and QLD, in addition to our already thriving branch in SA. Thanks to the many people who are working to achieve this. In order for Play Australia to be a truly national organisation we need to ensure that we have people participating in the organisation throughout Australia.

The Board met recently to work on priorities for Play Australia in 2018 and it was really brilliant to have all 12 members join together in person, given that half of the Board members are now representing play interests in Qld, WA, SA and NSW in addition to those in Victoria. Thank you President Sharon Sykes for facilitating this terrific day, and to Board members for giving us your very valuable time.

Mike Greenaway, of Play Wales will be coming our way for a visit to NSW, Vic and WA. Details will be available shortly.

**Barbara Champion** 



# Play Australia Training in 2018

Dates for the 2 Day (Levels 1 & 2) *Playground Management, Maintenance and Design* program at Westerfolds Park Templestowe in Melbourne for 2018 are as follows:

Wednesday 14 and Thursday 15 March BOOKED OUT

June 20th /21st 9am – 4pm Bookings open now

August 22nd /23rd 9am – 4pm Bookings open now

November 14th /15th 9am – 4pm Bookings open now

We hope to run this program in NSW and SA during 2018.

Also a Maintenance program is being developed specifically for designers of playspaces to increase their understanding of maintenance operations and why this must be considered in the design process.

For more information, or to book online, visit www.playaustralia.org.au



Part 0 Training Session in Adelaide, March 2017

# 2018 Play Recognition Program

Play Australia is very excited to be launching its new 'Play Recognition Program' in 2018 to really celebrate the work of people and projects that promotes the value of outdoor play for children, families and communities across Australia.

Soon we will be calling on nominations for projects to be submitted online via the Play Australia website. Projects are not limited, but can be guided by the categories listed below:

- · Spaces and places for play
- Community engagement activities or programs that promote play
- Strategic planning for playspaces or play programs
- Events promoting the value of play
- Persons or organisations who have made a significant ongoing contribution to promoting the value of play
- Literature that promotes the value of play

Nominations are open to current financial members of Play Australia (individual or organisation) and must have occurred / been completed within the past 12 months when nominated.

A Recognition Committee has been appointed by the Play Australia Board to oversee the review of nominations. This committee will be chaired by board member Carly Goodrich.

Projects awarded will be published on the Play Australia website and associated communications and social media. Award recipients will also receive a memento of their award

Play Australia hopes that this will not only recognise member's work, but also promote a significant understanding of the importance and value of play within the wider community and the play sector itself.

Further information on the program will soon be available at www.playaustralia.org.au/recognition

## **Around the States**

As Play Australia continues to grow nationally we are increasingly amazed by the spirit and dedication of each of the individual branches:

#### Play Australia SA

South Australia is going fabulously. Many events for members were held in 2017, many thanks to members for hosting and supporting these events. SA also leads the way in terms of publishing a regular newsletter to members. In 2018 South



Australia will receive some foundation resourcing from the National Board to further develop their branch activity.

www.playaustralia.org.au/south-australia

#### Play Australia NSW

The hugely successful Sydney 'Kidscape in the Rocks' was held in October, this was an initiative development and driven by New South Wales members in collaboration with the Australia Institute of Architects (AILA). In 2018 we expect to form a branch.

#### Play Australia WA

In November an enthusiastic inaugural branch meeting of Western Australian Members was held, hosted by Nature Play Solutions in Perth. Key issues and interests were raised as to how Play Australia could support members. With Kerry Logan, the new co-opted board member on the National PA Board Play Australia WA will look to also formalise membership and branch activity further in 2018.



Local Government Network Meeting hosted by the City of Moreland at Kirkdale Reserve in Coburg in September

#### Play Australia Victoria

Victoria had another successful year of events and training mostly coordinated through the National Board. The Local Government Play Network (LGPN) continued to support those members providing for play in councils and a number of these valuable networking

opportunities will be open to members across 2018. Dates will be advertised to members throughout 2018.

#### Play Australia Queensland

Further steps to developing a branch in this region will occur in 2018. Play Australia will be supporting Nature Play Queensland to facilitate a workshop around Playground Standards in March 2018.



#### **By Kerry Logan**

In October 2016, Wendy Seymour, Play Australia member, Landscape Architect and Playspace Design Specialist with Nature Play Solutions in Perth, lost her short fight against a brain tumour.

With Wendy's passing, we lost a passionate advocate for play and I lost a dear friend and great 'play' buddy. Losing Wendy has been terribly sad for her family, friends and colleagues – however, her legacy lives on in the beautiful and engaging playspaces she helped to create and through her desire to share her knowledge and expertise about children's play space design. We could talk for hours about play, design and what makes a great childhood.

Wendy had nearly 30 years' experience in public and private practice, after completing a Bachelor of Arts (Landscape Architecture) with Honours at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh in 1988. But in recent years, Wendy's passion has been play: designing many playspaces for parks, playgroups, community centres, child care settings and schools.

Her designs represent a real understanding of the way children play, what drives their interest and curiosity and how to create opportunities for diverse play experiences that offer creative, imaginative and social play opportunities.

Wendy had particular interest and experience in designing for access and inclusion; and she has designed play environments for people living with physical disability, sensory, intellectual and cognitive disability, ADHD and autism spectrum disorder. She was invited to participate in and present to the Guiding Committee for a project to develop national Inclusive Play Guidelines (funded by Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs) in 2012 in Canberra.

She has presented at national and international conferences and participated in interstate and overseas study tours relating to play.

Another feature of Wendy's designs was the embedding of play within natural landscape features – allowing children to be immersed in nature, rather than separated from it. Wendy knew that this creates spaces that are more playful, with greater diversity of play affordances, fosters children's connection with the natural environment, improves amenity and encourages families to stay and play longer – because the longer children play in open-ended, playrich environments, the more complex their play becomes and the greater the developmental benefits this supports. Her designs allow for play that connect children with nature and provide play in aesthetically pleasing landscape settings using plants and natural materials to provide amenity, loose parts for play and a 'sense of place'.

Wendy was a truly talented designer – especially of play spaces. Underlying this 'gift' was years of research and study – and importantly, lots of time spent visiting different play settings and observing how children played in these settings. She always said that you could never guarantee that children would engage with a play space as designed. Although, Wendy was never disappointed or upset if children played in unexpected ways – to her, it was a delightful surprise and something to learn from.

After seeing Wendy's designs come to life over the last 6 years – I found that because she knew her craft so well, children usually did engage – and enjoy the space – as she intended.

She will be remembered with love, and tremendously missed.



Water play at Carawatha Park



At the 2015 ISGA Conference in Bali. L-R: Wendy Seymour, Kylie Moses, Richard Parker, Carolina Lindblad



Natural elements create an award winning community playspace at Wireless Hill, Ardross, Perth WA (with Nature Play Solutions)



#### By Robyn Monroe-Miller

Looking for the perfect gift for that special child? A gift that will last for the rest of their life? A gift that will entertain, delight and educate them? A gift so priceless that money cannot buy it?

Why not try the gift of play? Free, unadulterated, spontaneous play. Play where time and opportunity is freely given, not rationed or limited by adult agendas.

Play is a gift that is self sustaining. It produces endless hours of magic, imagination, adrenalin rushes and anticipation.

The anticipation of hiding in a cramped space during a game of hide and seek and the thrill of running for your life in a game of chasings are simple pleasures that we can often recall with little effort. Be it hanging from a tree, a Hills Hoist or a modular piece of play equipment – we have all felt the joy of hanging from a height and letting ourselves drop onto the ground below.

Play is the gift that keeps on giving. The sharing of a childhood play experience creates opportunities for further healthy development in the mind, body and souls of those who are given it. Play has been identified as critical in the development of healthy brains<sup>1</sup>.

Just like any gift, play can bring happiness and play can bring disappointment.

Play can be painful. It can tear at your skin and leave a scar, it can bruise your body and it can sometimes bruise your ego. Play can draw blood and at the same time draw delight.

Sometimes play can produce acts of cruelty, discrimination and segregation. Likewise play can bring joy, laughter, inclusion and belonging.

The experience of play, positive or negative, does not negate the importance of play for shaping the social and emotional identity of humans<sup>2</sup>.

Play is a versatile gift given regardless of size, colour or taste... consider:

- Play is colour blind you can be any colour to play.
- Play is classless your family income and background does not depend on play.
- Play is portable it can happen anywhere.
- Play is universal it belongs to no one in particular, but to everyone who wants it.
- Play is enjoyed by animals, children and adults.

External factors may influence your choice of companion, your location or the type of play but it will not stop you from what is a natural, intrinsic desire to play. Play sustains us. Even in most war torn and ravaged countries we witness play.

Like all gifts, play signifies a celebration.

Play is a celebration of life and living.

Play challenges our imagination and takes us on a journey of exploration and self discovery.

Play brings us beautiful memories of childhood friends and shared experiences that we then carry with us through our lives. No matter where we go or how far we travel, we take the gift of play with us and it never wears out.

Play embodies freedom and expression; it gives wings to imagination and allows for reinvention.

So why do we need to fight so hard to have play respected when it is such a wonderful gift?

The biggest threat to play is the adult led paradigm that play wastes rather than enriches time. To view play as confined to scheduled outings and programs or led by adults is not a gift; it is a punishment.

Opportunities for self-directed play are essential.

We have a responsibility as advocates for children to reshape the perception of play to create the impetus for real and lasting change in our community. A community where opportunities for play are sacred. Where spaces for play are integral in all community planning and not just reserved for a brief period in the school playground. We need to create opportunities for the development of an appreciation for the value of play and a universal understanding of the negative impact on our own society when play is restricted. Our own gift to ourselves should be to empower our friends and family to give play priority in their own lives and in the lives of children.

In the words of David Elkind, "When we adults unite play, love, and work in our lives, we set an example that our children can follow. That might just be the best way to bring play back into the lives of our children, and build a more playful culture."

The greatest gift we can give this year, and in the years ahead to all children, is time to play, beautifully wrapped in the love and respect from those of us who have not forgotten how precious the gift of play is.

<sup>1</sup> Bergen, D. Plays Role in Brain Development. Association for Child Education Internationa (ACEI)

<sup>2</sup> Ginsberg, K. The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds. American Academy of Paediatrics 2007

<sup>3</sup> Elkind, D. Cognitive and Emotional Development Through Play. Greater Good Magazine 2008

#### **Conversation Starters**

# Signage in Playspaces

Conversations in the play sector are curious things, often loaded with conjecture and consternation. The recently debated hot topic of 'signage in playspaces' is one such instance.

From a recent misunderstanding around the suitability of particular play equipment for a certain age-group a discussion arose about the provision of signs by councils within public playspaces. The intent was to provide guidance to parents, carers and possibly children around some of the basic safety and use requirements of equipment and also provide a level of information on emergency or maintenance contacts. This is also identified in Part 0 of the new Standard AS:4685 - 2014 in section 6.3.10 'Signs'.

The Standard recognises the placement of signs 'where appropriate' in public playgrounds that provides details on the playground itself, its locality and contact numbers for maintenance. It does also allow for positive guidance on the use of equipment.

A debate ensued within Play Australia itself and was further tackled at a Local Government Play Network Meeting hosted by Moreland City Council at Kirkdale Reserve, Coburg in July last year.

#### Key responses arising from participants at that meeting were:

- Signage should be avoided whenever possible. Where unavoidable, put signs at the entry to parks or reserves
- Use Maternal & Child Health services to spread information re the importance of playing outside, risk taking etc.
- Use temporary signs when signage is needed
- Chalk useful to mark on pavements as it washes away
- Use council Facebook pages and council websites with information to encourage play
- Signage is not required to enforce regulations
- The presence of staff in parks may be useful for explanation

Join this conversation and let us know what you think? Email newsletter@playaustralia.org.au







# Outdoor Learning Environments

Spaces for Exploration, Discovery and Risk Taking in Early Years

Edited by Helen Little, Sue Elliot and Shirley Wyver (Allen & Unwin 2017)

This comprehensive pedagogical guide for early years and primary education looks to promote the key role of outdoor play in natural environments. Edited by renowned authors and leading academics, Helen Little & Shirley Wyver from Macquarie University and Sue Elliot from University of New England.

Contributions from a range of experts from different disciplines support evidence-based research around the positive effects of outdoor play for pre-schoolers involving risk-taking, whilst noting the constraints on contemporary children lives due to the impacts of technology, increasing urbanisation and social change. Expanding mainstream Australian cultural perspectives, this book also explores indigenous approaches, as well as international perspectives on play in both Papua New Guinea and Norway.

Not only does this guide examine the outdoor spaces within purpose-built educational settings, but it also looks 'beyond the fence' to other natural environments accessible to children in their local communities.

This book is undoubtedly a 'go-to' text for practising educators, with a wider 'outdoor play' audience beyond that.

Outdoor Learning Environments is available for purchase in Paperback or as an an Ebook from Booktopia www.booktopia.com.au

# Play & Folklore Archive Page

Play Australia has recently uploaded the entire archive of the Museum of Victoria's 'Play and Folklore Magazine'. Which you can find right here:

#### www.playaustralia.org.au/play-folklore

The newsletter include "articles, letters, memoirs and research studies that examine what children do when largely free of adult direction or control- their colloquial speech, songs, games, rhymes, riddles, jokes, insults and secret languages, their friendships and enemies, their beliefs and hopes" (Museum of Victoria)

Early Childhood Professionals and all those interested in play will find a wealth of fascinating games and cultural heritage in these amazing magazines!

#### Advocating for Play



# The Play Rights of Children with a Disability

**Tackling Graffiti in Playspaces** Some recent advice from the General Manager of UMS, Mike Hoy on the safety implications of substances used for removing graffiti from play equipment:

Good Advice

- The diversity of materials used in manufacturing play equipment and the types of medium used by graffiti vandals means that there isn't a 'single' solution
- Painting out graffiti of painted timber, concrete or other painted surfaces is a simple process and doesn't have immediate impacts on children (other than it needing to dry). Colour matching and overspray in windy conditions however can be an issue
- 'Graffiti-Proof' Coatings can be expensive so should possibly only be used on specialist assets or those that would be difficult to maintain if graffitied (i.e. murals, artworks etc.)
- Citrus-based 'Graffiti-Proof' products tend to be more low-risk
- However most 'Graffiti-Proof' Coatings are only as effective as they are maintained by regular re-application. Once the coating is damaged by abrasion or multiple graffiti removal attempts he coating becomes degraded and graffiti more difficult to remove
- Where surfaces are unprotected and chemical treatment is requirement, the products used to remove graffiti WILL have some constituents that are poisonous if ingested in large enough quantities (i.e. caustic compounds, needed for removing the graffiti)
- In these circumstances washing or wiping down surfaces after completing removal will remove the chemical as well as the residual graffiti medium that comes off the surface

IPA believes that every child must be afforded equal opportunities to enjoy his or her right to play in their everyday lives. Children with a disability have the same right to sufficient time and space to play freely, in the ways that they choose, without being unduly overprotected.

Many children with a disability face multiple barriers that restrict their day-to-day opportunities to play. These barriers include the imposition of adult-decided activities, inappropriate environments, inaccessible facilities, negative attitudes and inappropriate social policies and programmes, which restrict the lives of disabled children.

IPA believes that families, care-givers, professionals and authorities must recognise the value of play, both as a right in itself and a means of achieving optimum development.

To enable children with a disability to enjoy their right to play, pro-active measures are needed to remove disabling barriers and promote accessibility such as: awareness raising amongst adults and peers; age appropriate support or assistance; accessible and inclusive environments, facilities and transport.

IPA strongly endorses the view of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that play is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.1

IPA therefore seeks to preserve, protect and promote children with a disability's right to play as expressed in article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). IPA wishes to draw attention to article 23 of the UNCRC and article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons which further encompass play rights for children with a disability.

Children have told us<sup>2</sup> that their lives would be happier and healthier if Governments took children's right to play seriously. IPA fully endorses this view.

# Thinking Differently about Play Wendy Russell Tour

In November 2017 we were fortunate to have a rescheduled tour by leading UK Playwork / Professional Studies in Children's Play academic, Dr Wendy Russell from the University of Gloucestershire. Wendy and her 'play' partner, Stuart Lester from the university had intended to visit in early 2017 but the tour was unable to proceed due to Stuart's sad and unexpected death just beforehand.

Wendy valiantly took up Stuart's mantle and added it to her own work, presenting a series of wonderfully engaging and thought-provoking sessions in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland. Participants ranged from parents to educators, to council staff and landscape architects.

Wendy talks about play as an integral and inextricable part of a child's world, not reliant on place or time

necessarily, but certainly an example of how children are present in world. Wendy believes that it is not the 'what' or the 'why' of play that we need to worry about, rather the 'how' That play is being, on the verge of becoming, moments and movements in the 'inbetween' where life actually happens! The 'Thinking Differently About Play' Tour was proudly supported by the Creswick Foundation.

<sup>1</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2013) General comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts (art. 31)

<sup>2</sup> Children participating in the making of IPA child-friendly article 31 posters (2013)

### Play Australia AGM 2017

Play Australia's Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 22nd November in Melbourne. Attended by many members, we were inspired by the work of our guest speaker children's play researcher and cultural heritage interpreter Judy McKinty (The Play Lady). Judy has worked for many years in schools around Australia observing, interviewing and collecting games, rhymes and play anecdotes from primary school students.

#### Play Australia Life Members 2017

We would like to congratulate our most recent life members for their dedicated service to the promotion of play in Australia:

Simon Bradley (SA)

Prue Walsh (QLD)

**Don Wark** (QLD)

**Peter McLennan** (VIC)

**Cormac McCarthy** (VIC)

**Ric McConaghy** (NSW)

Kerry Logan (WA)

#### Joan Matheson Distinguished Service Award 2017

The Joan Matheson Award is given each year to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the development, promotion and advocacy of play in Australia. It is awarded in memory of Joan Matheson, an exceptional woman who made a life-long contribution to the development of Play Australia.

This year's award recipient is Judy McKinty. Judy has been researching, collecting and sharing children's play and folklore for more than 25 years. She has worked for the National Library of Australia, Museum Victoria and the University of Melbourne and other significant cultural places. Her work includes an oral history on Aboriginal Children's Play with June Factor, string games workshops in Bunjilaka Aboriginal Gallery and field research for a national study of children's play. She is co-editor of 'Play and Folklore' and an Honorary Associate of Museum Victoria. Her favourite games are Marbles, Jacks and string games.

**Feature** 

# Sydney Play Day

#### Kidscape in the Rocks

On a sunny Sunday in October the City of Sydney invited its children into its heart to play at the inaugural 'Kidscape in the Rocks' event in First Fleet Park.

A fabulous leadership initiative of Play Australia New South Wales (PANSW) in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Architects (AlLA) saw the coming together of diverse perspectives; from designers, planners, suppliers, nurserymen, students, family members, coffeemakers and even blue teddy bears to make this a special day for children and their families.

Hundreds of children descended on the whole park with glee, gusto, wonder and excitement to engage in the best kind of play....play with nature and loose parts. Parents gave continuous feedback about how much they appreciated the event, but really the children's smiles said it all!

A special thanks must go to Fiona Robbe in particular who inspired members to give up a beautiful Sunday to deliver on making this event so much fun, particularly for the often overlooked 0-5 year olds.

Many children who participated experienced the 'diversity' of outdoor play for the very first time. Playing with mud, building and sawing with boxes, playing with and learning about plants and painting rocks to name a few.

An army of volunteers (many of them Play Australia members), sponsors and supporters should be commended not only on their hard-work, but their inspiration, commitment and joy to making this a showcase for the first of many play day events to come.

As Fiona described the day "It's like a boat, that became an ocean liner cutting through the tossing waves! A wild ride....in the best kind of way."





# IPA News New Australian

**President** 

Exciting news! Robyn Monroe-Miller, Chief Executive Officer Network of Community Activities of was elected the first Australian president of the IPA at the recent Calgary conference. Robyn will serve her term as president until the 2020 IPA conference in India

#### IPA Conference Wrap Up

In September 2017 the Triennial International Play Association Conference (IPA) was held in Calgary, Alberta Canada. It was an opportunity for many different faces of play to come together for 5 days to present, debate and share knowledge and experience from all the corners of the globe.

Keynote speakers Dr Peter Gray and Dr Roger Hart set the tone with their different research around ever tightening impacts on children's free play in the USA.

Youth initiative 'Feathers of Hope' brought inspiring stories from the voices of young 'First Nation' Canadians to the forum.

A panel representing IPA's 'Researching Play in Crisis' project outlined the continuing work around play undertaken in 6 different countries affected by disaster, humanitarian crisis and suffering poverty.

There was most certainly a collective sentiment present and noticeably it seemed that 'managing risk in play' is much better understood and practised in Australia, than in most of our counterparts.

We look forward with anticipation to the next conference in 2020 in Jaipur, India.

www.ipaworld.org

# **Members Corner**

Brilliant work undertaken by our members in 2017 and welcome to all new members of Play Australia. We look forward to another very successful year ahead for our 103rd year!

#### Member Profile

# Judy McKinty



Introducing Judy McKinty 'The Play Lady'. Judy is an independent children's play researcher and cultural heritage interpreter who has been researching, collecting and sharing children's play and folklore for around twenty-five years. She is also Play Australia's 'Joan Matheson Distinguished Service Award' Recipient for 2017.

#### Tell us briefly about yourself

I'm an independent children's play researcher with a special interest in children's traditional games and folklore. Most of my work has been in primary schools – being outside with the children and learning about what they like to do in the playground at recess. The focus of much of my research has been on the relationship between play and place, and how children use and adapt features in the environment for their play.

#### What prompted you to become a member of Play Australia?

I joined Play Australia because I wanted to raise awareness of the importance of children's own play culture and advocate for free play in schools. It's also good to be part of a network of 'play people' sharing ideas & resources.

# Is there a highlight achieved within your work that you could share regarding an innovation for children's outdoor play experiences?

My research is mostly about tradition and change in children's play, so it's the children themselves who are the innovators, and the keepers of tradition at the same time. The highlight of my work has been discovering the very moving story behind the construction of a unique piece of playground equipment, called 'The Cat and Mouse', and the way it connects the lives of one little girl from the 1980s and the children who play there today.

#### How does Play Australia support you as a member?

Play Australia has given me the opportunity to talk to diverse audiences, and has been a valuable source of information and resources, particularly important for an independent researcher.

#### Why is it important for you to work in the play sector?

I became interested in children's play in the 1980s, while working in the 'You're IT!' exhibition in the original Melbourne Children's Museum. I discovered that traditional games are familiar to adults and children alike, and to people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Play, like music, can be an international language. I believe it is so fundamental to childhood that children must be supported to play the way they want to, whenever and wherever they can.

#### **Board News**



#### Introducing Play Australia's Board

#### The Play Australia Board is growing nationally.

We now have co-opted members representing 5 different states on our national board with Bec Ho (NSW) and Amanda Balmer (SA) continuing on with us and new faces Kylie Warren-Wright (Qld), Kerry Logan (WA) and Don Wark (Qld) joining us in the past year. This has meant changes in the way we meet and communicate, but we are rising to the challenge mastering new technology to be able to do so.

In Victoria continuing board members from 2017/18 include; Sharon Sykes (President), Alli Coster (Vice-President), Mark Chatman (Treasurer), Barbara Chancellor, Bron Joslin, Carly Goodrich and Liz Cummins representing many different aspects of the play sector. We are looking forward to a busy 2018!

# Got Something to Share on Play?

We'd like to make our Members News a little more interactive. As such we'd like to hear from you on thoughts and ideas for future editions. If you have something you'd like to share email newsletter@playaustralia.org.au



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