

## **Joan Matheson Award for Distinguished Service**

**Dr Barbara Chancellor was presented with the Joan Matheson Award for Distinguished Service at the 2022 Annual General Meeting.**

The best part about being on the Board of Play Australia for so long is all the wonderful people I have had the opportunity to meet. When I first came along to an AGM in Hawthorn Town Hall all those years ago, I realised I had found my tribe. Here they all were talking about 'play' with a shared understanding that I also believed in. Prior to that, I had the IPA magazine to remind me that there were others out there somewhere who believed in the importance of children's play and that was something but to have colleagues who regularly met and supported play provision in so many ways was really great. Over the years they continued to be an inspiring and supportive group of highly motivated people.

My contribution to 'play' has been mostly through my academic research which has centred around children's outdoor play, in school playgrounds, early childhood settings and public open spaces. It has been a fascinating area to explore. I have been privileged to work in research collaborations with colleagues in many parts of the world and have regularly published and presented research in international forums. The work we do in Australia is important to international understandings given that we were part of the beginnings of the playground movement over a century ago.

As a member of the International Council of Children's Play (ICCP) I have had opportunities over the years to meet and collaborate with play researchers from diverse cultures and this has been fascinating. I am a founding member of the Board of the International Journal of Playwork Practice (IJPP) and involved in their international seminars. I also regularly review for the International Journal of Play (IJP).

My experience has been that children's play is important to people around the globe however defending every child's right to play continues to be critical work and the International Play Association (IPA) and Play Australia are central to this work. The collaborative nature of these organisations and the diverse expertise they bring together are their strength. Outdoor play is fundamental to children's learning, health and wellbeing and is therefore a worthy cause. Keep up the good work everyone!