

Good evening, I'm Jeff Speake, Director of Safe Play Systems, former board member of PRAV and Play Australia, and PRAV Life Member. I was a board member for just over 20 years, and for the entire time I was on the board this year's recipient of the Joan Matheson Distinguished Service Award was also there.

The ***Joan Matheson Distinguished Service Award*** is awarded to a person in recognition of their significant contribution made to the development, promotion, and advocacy of play in Australia and this year's recipient is **Cathy Kiss**.

When you look at commitment to the play sector few could argue that anyone, either directly or indirectly involved in play, has been prepared to put in more private time, in a voluntary capacity, than Cathy Kiss. For a quarter of a century Cathy has worked tirelessly in the promotion of play and for that we thank you.

Following the death of PRAV's Executive Officer, Gerard Leeds, in 1997, Cathy, Felix Hemingway, and I, worked very hard to keep the organisation 'alive'. Working in a voluntary capacity, out-of-hours, we had many, many, meetings at our homes and offices and had to decide whether to keep the organisation going. We thought that it was worth saving because of PRAV's history and I am pleased to say that we were proved to be right. When Felix was made a Life Member of PRAV in 2012, he told us that "*there would be no Play Australia if it weren't for the drive, dedication and stamina of Cathy Kiss*" and I heartily agree.

As a board member for 24 years, with 12 years as President, no one has put more into PRAV and Play Australia than Cathy Kiss. She was Project Manager for *The Good Play Space Guide* "I can Play too", a Victorian State Government guide on access in play spaces. And Cathy was a committed member of the Australian contingent at various IPA's conferences throughout the world.

Cathy's individual drive, motivation and purpose is such that her efforts on transforming PRAV to Play Australia clearly eclipses other work we may have done in the past. We feel that Cathy, more so than anyone, had a clear direction of what Play Australia can, and should be. Her dogged determination and countless hours of personal time have ensured that as an organisation Play Australia strives forward.

In addition to her work for PRAV and Play Australia, Cathy was awarded the Parks & Leisure Australia **Frank Stewart Distinguished Service Award** in 2014. The award recognises an individual who has provided a significant contribution to the development, promotion and advocacy of the Parks and Leisure Industry of Australia through their personal and professional endeavours over many years.

So, Cath, thank you for your constant drive and commitment. I have no doubt in my mind, that you are the **heart** of Play Australia – and a worthy recipient of the ***Joan Matheson Distinguished Service Award***.