

A message from the Executive Director, Barbara Champion



As this newsletter goes to air we are hurtling towards the end of 2014. Our Play Australia team are busily planning new and innovative

membership services for you in 2015. A major project to be launched early in the new year is the development of a new website. This will improve members access to the wealth of advice and resources available to you and support the growth of Play Australia into a truly national organisation.

Welcome to Ellen Regos

It is with huge enthusiasm that I welcome Ellen to Play Australia as the Training Development Coordinator, who commenced in July. Ellen has a diverse

set of skills and experience to enable her to excel in growing our training programs nationally and I look forward to working with her enormously.

Our members highly value the provision of training across the wide spectrum of play, and we now have the capacity to continue what we provide now, and to expand our provision to meet the needs of our members and new groups of providers across Australia.

Play Australia South Australia (PASA)

PASA development is underway and the Steering Committee comprising members from Local Government, designers, manufacturers and suppliers, and risk management, lead by Greg Keep, is working towards a launch

in February 2015. The Board is very excited about this development and will support our colleagues in SA to build support for play throughout the state. There are many issues to work on in the development of state and territory branches and the Board and SA Steering Committee has commenced this important process.

SA enjoys a long history of support for play across all sectors, but there has not been the means to bring the sectors together. We are extraordinarily thankful to our colleagues in SA who are currently working hard to make this happen in 2015.

Barbara Champion,
Executive Director

A most deserved and distinguished award

The Play Australia Board, staff and membership congratulate Cathy Kiss on receipt of the Frank Stewart Distinguished Service Award. This is the most prestigious individual award bestowed by Parks and Leisure Australia for the significant contribution Cathy has made to the development, promotion and advocacy of the parks and leisure industry in Australia.

This award was announced at the PLA 2014 Conference in Cairns during August.

Cathy has practical experience in all aspects of open space management - from writing strategies for a municipality to implementing that strategy through the development of recreation environments. She has extensive experience and skills in the planning, development and management of sporting and recreational facilities, and a particular passion for children's play.

Currently Cathy is employed as a Senior Parks Planner at the City of Melbourne. She has been a Board member of Play Australia, formerly PRAV, the Playgrounds & Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV) for 22 years, serving in a variety of leadership roles, including as President for 10 years.

Cathy is most serious and passionate about her profession, and has always been prepared to make the time to participate, to motivate others, to inspire and to support anyone committed to the aims and aspirations of the parks and recreation industry. The industry as a whole has benefitted hugely from her work over 25 years and she is a most worthy recipient of the Frank Stewart Award.

"It is such a great honour to receive the Frank Stewart Distinguished Service Award, and I am very excited! It is one of the most special experiences of my life. I have so much admiration for the work my colleagues in the Parks and Leisure industry do around Australia. So to be recognised by my peers is wonderful encouragement - and I would like to extend my grateful thanks to them for this incredible gift." Cathy Kiss



Congratulations Cathy, we are immensely proud of you and your achievement.



Welcome to Training @ Play Australia, a new and regular addition to this quarterly newsletter, that will inform you of the latest developments and upcoming training sessions.

In this new role I will be developing a national training program for Play Australia. The provision of training is an integral part of your membership services and over the next three years the training program will expand across Australia.

Play Australia has a vision - 'to create an effective national membership organisation that will significantly influence the provision of play in Australia' and training will assist to make this happen.

I'd like to thank the 130 people who responded to the invitation to take part in a short online survey. Your contribution has assisted Play Australia to factor your needs into our training plan currently being developed. And congratulations to Marcia Armstrong, Manager Youth and Early Services, City of Woodonga who is the lucky person to win a free training session in 2015!

If you have any further feedback on training or would like to find out how to be involved, I can be contacted directly:

Ellen Regos
Training Development Coordinator
Phone: 0438 856 322
Email: ellen@playaustralia.org.au

So now it's on with the job! I look forward to meeting you at our training events, but please feel free to contact me if you required any further assistance.

I look forward to working with you.

Ellen

Getting to know..... Ellen Regos

I started work at Play Australia in July this year.

As a young girl I liked to play with all my dolls and teddies in a circle as I instructed them on writing and mathematics. So it is not surprising that I qualified as a teacher many years later!

Sustainability has been a passion that has influenced my work over the past 20 years. I also love food gardening! I am currently undertaking a Masters in Sustainability and Social Change and will continue to teach at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne on a Friday.

As a mother of two teenage daughters I have been an advocate of play based learning, not just for children but for adults too. I look forward to meeting you in the near future in my new role.

WHAT'S COMING UP



Two Day Training Program Series

It is recognised today that children are spending more time indoors than ever before, and that we must adopt strategies to encourage children and families to be outdoors in the natural environment.

Dates: **Wed 19, Thur 20 November 2014**

Time: **9.00am – 4.00pm**

Location: **Recreation House, Westerfolds Park, Fitzsimons Lane, Templestowe, 3106**

Register online at www.playaustralia.org.au



Outdoor Play in Early Childhood Settings – Loddon Shire

Play Australia teams up with Loddon Shire to present an extra session of our popular outdoor play series

Presenters Kerry Rogers and Pattie Morgan

Dates: **Mon 27 October 2014**

Time: **9.00 – 3.30 PM**

Location: **Loddon Shire, Serpentine Council Chambers**

Register: ph - 03 5437 7999
email - earlyyears@loddon.vic.gov.au

Play Australia turns 100!

So it's time for a party to celebrate

As they say, "my how time flies when you're having fun!" Well what fun it's been.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Play Australia (previously Playgrounds & Recreation Association Victoria, Guild of Play), which is no mean feat in this day and age. How proud we can all stand and say that we have been part of an organisation that has, and continues, to promote the value of play.

On November 13 we will be joining together in Melbourne, the first home of our organisation, to commemorate this outstanding achievement. We look forward to sharing this special occasion with our members!



When the Guild of Play was first formed, there were some high profile office bearers including the Mayor of Melbourne and a past Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin.

The Guild had a number of objectives including to encourage the creation of playgrounds in the crowded suburbs of Melbourne. A large percentage of Melbourne's population at the time were children and without playgrounds, they played wherever they could. They were viewed as a nuisance in suburban parks, gardens and streets where their play was disturbing to many members of the public.

Councils were recruited to join as members of the Guild at the annual cost of 1 guinea. Many organisations donated play equipment to the playgrounds. The first was in Lincoln Square in Carlton, where today there is still some play equipment under some trees.



Left: David Bond inspired us to go wild about play

We went WILD for PLAY

In September Play Australia was delighted to host a screening of David Bond's PROJECT WILD THING in partnership with Outdoors Victoria and The Australian Camps Association. The added bonus was having David Bond as the special guest for the evening and he certainly inspired us with his feature-length documentary film.

David explains, "I have just spent an amazing couple of weeks here in beautiful Australia showing my film all over the place. Project Wild Thing is a film about the disconnection between children and the natural world.

"When I came over from the UK I didn't think that this would be a problem here in Australia, or as big a problem as it is in the UK, but it is.

"This is a problem that cuts across geography, it cuts across social economic groups and it's all down to the barriers that we've put up in the modern world between children and nature. They are barriers like traffic, commercialisation of childhood, fear of stranger danger, health and safety concerns.

"These are big problems in Australia. So that's why I made Project Wild Thing."

When only 1 in 10 children regularly play in 'wild' outdoor places and children's roaming area has shrunk by 90% in a generation, now is certainly a good time to watch and learn from this engrossing film.

Thank you David for sharing your insights, passion and great sense of humour about how we can help our children to just play!

For a peak at the film trailer and learn how you can get involved go to <http://projectwildthing.com/>



Transforming a kindergarten outdoor garden



Melissa MacMaster –GEKA

The Glen Eira Kindergarten Association (GEKA) was formed in 2012 and currently operates eight kindergartens in the Glen Eira area. With the advantage of having early childhood expertise and extensive experience managing the organisation (both in management and on the Board), GEKA has been able to assist the kindergarten educational teams and parent advisory groups to reinvent their outdoor space.

GEKA are supporting their kindergartens to transform their outdoor areas which they consciously call gardens. This generates the sense of a place of beauty and delight, like a backyard rather than a playground.

We recently met with Melissa MacMaster, Manager, Education and Curriculum for GEKA to find out how they went about this. Here is what we found out.

Creating trust and partnerships

One of the great difficulties for individual parent managed services is the annual turnover of committees of management.



Caulfield South Kindergarten – designed by Brian Verdon

Melissa says, “Yes, we all need to meet the requirements of the regulations, but regardless of the regs children have a right to learn in a beautiful space.”

This makes it difficult for the planning required and then the execution of major developments. As the operator, or a new incoming committee, you inherit the decisions of past committees and the play spaces.

Since joining with GEKA, parents and educators no longer have the added difficulty of keeping the momentum going as they have consistent management and guidance at all times. Parents on the advisory group (committee) can work closely with the team at GEKA to raise funds for projects that are reflective of the National Quality Standards (2011).

At Caulfield South Kindergarten the parents took an active role, working cooperatively with GEKA to transform their outdoor garden. Fortunately two parents stayed on the committee for an extra year to see out the completion of the new garden.

The outdoor area was an awkward ‘L’ shape and they maximized every inch available to them to create extra play space with an innovative and interesting design for children.

They engaged Brian Verdon from BV Designs, who now works closely with the GEKA team to transform many of the outdoor gardens. Brian’s work reflects his ability to understand the complex needs of the early years.

With the Caulfield South Kindergarten community on board, GEKA took the role of facilitating decision making from an early childhood perspective and providing further ideas for thought. Guiding the parent advisory group through the lens of the Quality Framework and National Quality Standards.



The rubber era

The space was all covered in synthetic under surfacing! This decision was taken 5 years ago, driven by risk aversion and peer pressure, as back then it was all the rage. Beautiful old trees were ringed by rubber. Children became frustrated by the lack of opportunity for exploration, digging in the dirt and it is much better for children to touch and feel nature.

Melissa says, "If we are going to get children to develop a love for the earth they have to touch it, feel it and taste it! If part of being a high quality service involves imbedding sustainable practices and appreciation for the environment, how do we achieve that if we don't expose children to nature?"

"I've heard the new deficiency is vitamin 'N' deficient being nature deficient. Poor mental health and wellbeing is on the rise and not enough people are appreciating that the effect of outdoors and nature has an impact, I can't help but sit and wonder that we need to make this link more visible. Just get out there, breathing in fresh air, just being present in nature. We don't have to organise to DO anything, just the joy of being outside, connecting to nature is enough."

How do you bring nature into the program?

The educators need to take ownership of the space with the children and families, and actively promote the notion of taking 'collective responsibility' in the Kindergarten community. If we have a goal to get children to love the earth we have to start with the educational team. Exposing and flooding staff with aesthetically pleasing environments, getting educators to view images, imprint on their minds and then inspire them to go and do it. We send out regular provocations to the team to stimulate their thinking and possibilities for programing.

Educators need to be role models, get in touch with their own child within, offering children those same opportunities. We ask people to connect with their values, draw on their early childhood experiences. If educators don't connect with their own values that will then impact their practice.

Melissa says, "Our generation had a sense of 'freedom' in our childhood, and we need to connect with this and think about how we can offer this to the children we are working with today. We remember what it was like to be out in the street, up in a tree, out for the whole day, and not squashed by potential risks. We have initiated a risk benefit analysis instead of a risk assessment. We have shifted our focus from what things could go wrong, but what can go right! The physical and psychological benefits from climbing a tree, the feeling of confidence and responsibility of walking to the local park is all but lost with many children. We are bound by regulations and fears but we can still make it happen. Be prepared to free your mind up from risk and look at the benefits."



Bentleigh East Kindergarten - embedding a love of, and care for the earth

Image of the child

Too often children are seen in the realm of what they need to develop and improve. We start with a positive and affirming image of the child as capable, confident, competent, respectful, responsible and knowledgeable. Then build from these strengths.

Melissa says, "Aunty Di is an indigenous elder of the Wurundjeri people in Melbourne and recently said, "We walk on the footprints of our ancestors". I ask myself often, what are we leaving behind? We want to leave a legacy for other children; this is what we have inherited, the here and now, but we also need to think about what the future generations will say about our footprints. We want to work with our educators to leave a legacy that invests in the quality of today and enrichment of our tomorrow!"

Children have developed a greater respect for their space. The freedom to play indoors and outdoors also helps create a calm environment. The children's sense of wonder has increased in the yard noticing changes in the plants, the smells and bugs.
Bentleigh East Kindergarten

As educators, we have reflected on the impact the newly renovated play spaces have had on the learning environment. With lovely fresh white sand surrounded by large sandstone rocks, the children were drawn to the area and over the weeks they have enjoyed this new play space, demonstrating their engagement in more positive social interactions in this area.

We have seen the children taking responsibility for the new garden and trees, watering the plants regularly and respecting the area by not standing on or using the garden area.

We have harnessed this transitional time as a way of supporting children to develop a "growing appreciation and care for natural and constructed environments" (NEYLF, Outcome 2 p.21).
Caulfield South Kindergarten

Outdoor play in public spaces

Would you like to participate in a new research project?

Dr Barbara Chancellor is the senior lecturer, School of Education at RMIT University and is currently undertaking a research project about children's outdoor play in public spaces.

This project will be conducted in Melbourne through the lens of Play Australia, previously PRAV and the Guild of Play.

Dr Chancellor is seeking your participation:

"As part of this work, I am seeking photos and stories about playgrounds in Melbourne over the last 100 years.

During the early 1900's when playgrounds were beginning to be built, many private companies donated play equipment and large numbers of Melbourne residents donated money. Councils were encouraged to pay memberships to fund playground development and details may be recorded in council archives.

All such information is of particular interest to me in my research. If you can assist in this project please contact me via email barbara.chancellor@rmit.edu.au or via Play Australia info@playaustralia.org.au"

Outdoor play: Does avoiding the risks reduce the benefits?

Helen Little, Shirley Wyver - Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University

This paper aims to examine outdoor play in the light of social and environmental factors that have impacted on children's play experiences, particularly in urban Western culture. It provides a review of the literature since 1990, drawing on findings from a range of disciplines.

It is argued that stimulating and challenging experiences involving physical risk are an important and necessary aspect of children's healthy growth and development; yet social, institutional and educational factors apply implicit and explicit pressure on early childhood staff to eliminate or minimise experiences involving physical risk.

The increasingly restrictive regulation of early childhood services is considered in terms of the impact of risk avoidance in outdoor play for children's optimal growth and development.

....the importance of play as a 'scaffold for development, a vehicle for increasing neural structures, and a means by which all children practice skills they will need in later life' (Isenberg & Quisenberry)

To view this full research paper members can login on our website playaustralia.org.au and view in Resources.



7 Senses Street Day

Saturday 15 November 2014



7 Senses Foundation

Bringing the common sense back to our neighbourhoods.

At the recent Play Australia Board meeting, Tobias Volbert introduced us enthusiastically to the 7 Senses Street Day.

This national event was created by Tobias to demonstrate that our streets should be (and can be) more than just traffic channels; they should be places that engage our 7 senses and in doing so create healthier and happier neighbourhoods that include people of all abilities and wellness, and cultivate activity and play.

Would you like to hold a 7 Senses focused event or activity in your street this November? You too can demonstrate that a 7 Senses Street brings people together and ignites a sense of community.

Why get involved?

Do you believe our children should be able to safely ride their bike in your street?

That neighbours should actively engage with one another in the street – coming together at a shared bbq or garden?

Or even that the plain grassed area between your front fence and the street could be so much more than that spot you mow once a month?

7 Senses Street Day is a chance to demonstrate the 100 little, low cost things we could change in our neighbourhoods that would result in large improvements to our sense of community, our health, and our overall happiness.

To get involved go to www.7senses.org.au



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Play Australia Member Profile

Introducing Lesley and Wendy - The Two of Us!

What is the focus of your 'play' work?

- preparing playspace policy and practical guidelines that underpin the planning and development of play spaces – the what, the where, the why (.. or why not!)
- calculating the lifecycle cost of play assets including renewed, upgraded, new playspaces, and dare we say.. decommissioning of play spaces!
- playspaces in small communities
- *new!* .. landscape design that incorporates natural play areas, and builds in scope for community and council partnerships



What brought you together?

A wicked sense of humour and a shared philosophy about planning of playspaces ...

- keep strategic planning for playspaces concise and practical so the message, direction and aspirations are clear
- it doesn't have to be big and brassy to be 'you beaut'
- back to basics
- link to local – history, theme, people
- budgets for renewal and maintenance – it's not adding up!

Projects you are particularly proud of?

- The Whitehorse Playspace Strategy – Lesley worked with council on this project that had its challenges but the outcome was testament to the diverse council team involved. It's been referenced in numerous playspace planning documents and it won a 2012 PLA planning award.
- Wombat Bend Playspace – Wendy was the team manager on this, one of the first, inclusive play spaces. It was one of the initial play spaces to successfully integrate natural and artistic features into the play environment. Again a strong, diverse team made this the success it is.

A special thanks to Play Australia and members whose willingness to share and exchange information is amazing! This has been invaluable to our work and in turn, to our clients.

To contact Lesley and Wendy email lesley@lmhconsulting.com.au



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