



PLAY AUSTRALIA

Building a healthy Australia through play

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PLAY

11 JUNE 2026

2026 THEME

“Protect Play,

Protect Childhood”



Advocacy Toolkit

for Play Australia members, communities and allies

Contents

This Advocacy Toolkit gives you everything you need to mark International Day of Play 2026 in your community, organisation, school or service.

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01. Time for Action



On 11 June 2026, Australia joins more than 100 countries around the world to celebrate International Day of Play.

This year's theme is ***“Protect Play, Protect Childhood.”*** It is a call to action for every individual, organisation and government to stand up for children's right to play, and in doing so, to protect childhood itself. Play is not a luxury. Under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Australia ratified more than 35 years ago, every child from birth to 18 has a legal right to play, rest and leisure. That right belongs to toddlers and teenagers alike.

Yet in Australia today, one in three children is not getting the play they need. Childhood is being squeezed by overcrowded schedules, screens, and shrinking spaces. The science is clear: in just 30 minutes of play, one third of the neurons in a child's brain are changed. Play literally grows brains, and it builds the resilience, creativity, empathy and physical health that children carry with them for life.

Play Australia is taking action. We are writing to political and community leaders across the country and distributing this Advocacy Kit to our members. We are asking OSHC and all children's services, schools and early childhood settings to take the **#31MinuteChallenge**, adding an extra 31 minutes of free, unstructured play to their day, in honour of Article 31, and joining the UK and Ireland in this call. An ideas sheet is available for services and schools

wanting more ways to commemorate the day. We are also launching the Churchill Fellowship Report by our CEO Robyn Monro Miller, *Weaving Play into the National Fabric*.

This kit is your toolkit for action. Use it. Share it. Write the letter. Ask your school or service to take the #31MinuteChallenge. Host a community play meet-up. Every voice multiplied across communities becomes a movement leaders cannot ignore.

Every child deserves to play. Let's make 11 June the day Australia says so, loudly and together.

02. 2026 Theme

“Protect Play, Protect Childhood”

This year's international theme is a call to action for every individual, organisation and government to stand up for children's right to play, and in doing so, to protect childhood itself.

When we protect play, we protect children's health, happiness, learning and development. We protect their future.

This theme challenges all of us to look at the barriers children face: shrinking spaces, over-scheduling, screen time, risk-averse cultures, and to take meaningful steps to remove them.

03. What is International Day of Play?

International Day of Play is celebrated on 11 June each year. It is a global day to recognise, celebrate and protect every child's fundamental right to play.

Established by the United Nations and championed by the International Play Association (IPA), the day shines a light on the vital role that play has in children's lives: their health, wellbeing, learning, creativity and happiness. It is a day for communities, schools, governments and organisations around the world to take action in support of children's right to play.

In Australia, Play Australia is the national peak body advocating for play. We use International Day of Play as a moment to amplify our year-round work, connect our members to action, and call on leaders at every level to take play seriously.

Australian Branch Secretariat for IPA World

Play Australia is proud to be the Australian Branch Secretariat for IPA World, the International Play Association, which has championed children's right to play globally since 1961. This means we represent Australia in the international network of play advocates and bring world-leading research, ideas and connections back home. *Find out more at ipaworld.org.*

04. The Right to Play: Article 31

Play is not a luxury. It is a right, enshrined in international law and essential to every child's development.

Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) guarantees every child the right to rest, leisure, play and participation in cultural life. Australia ratified the UNCRC in 1990, making this a legal commitment. Yet too many Australian children are still being denied their right to play.

The Real Definition of Play

“Play is activity that is: chosen freely by the child; enjoyable and pleasurable; intrinsically motivated, not undertaken for an external goal or reward; and non-literal, it may involve imagination or make-believe.”

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 17 (2013)

General Comment 17 is the most comprehensive international guidance on Article 31. Read it in full at refworld.org/docid/51ef9bcc4.html

05. Who Gets to Play?



The UNCRC covers ALL children from birth to 18 years of age.

Play is good for all of us, at every age. Adults benefit from play too, through creativity, connection, joy and stress relief. But play holds a critically different place in the lives of children, and it must never be confused with adult leisure.

For children, play is the foundation of healthy neurological and physical development. It is how their brains build pathways, how their bodies learn to move, and how they make sense of the world. The science is unequivocal: play in childhood shapes the adults children will become. It is not a leisure activity, it is developmental infrastructure.

Children also depend on adults to play. Unlike adults, who can choose when, where and how to play, children need adult permission, time, space and support to play freely. That is why play for children must never be adulterated, scheduled into oblivion, treated as a reward for finishing work, or seen as merely equivalent to adult play. For children, play is critically more important.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adults are **duty bearers**, we hold the responsibility to uphold every child's right to play. Parents, educators, employers,

policymakers, planners, councils and governments all share this duty. Children cannot claim this right alone. Adults must make space for play, protect time for play, and design our communities so that play is possible.

This right covers every child

The right to play does not end at primary school. Adolescents are children too, and they are all too often left out of conversations about play. Teenagers need time for unstructured play, creative exploration, social connection and leisure just as much as young children do. Yet the pressures of schooling, screen time, work and adult expectations frequently rob young people of this time.

Any meaningful commitment to children's right to play must explicitly include adolescents: in the design of public spaces, school timetables, community programs and policy frameworks.

When we advocate for play, we advocate for every child, from the newborn to the 17-year-old. Play looks different across ages, but the right is the same.

Play across childhood

- **Infants and toddlers:** Sensory exploration, physical movement, parent-child play
- **Primary school children:** Unstructured outdoor play, imaginative games, peer socialisation
- **Adolescents (12 to 17):** Creative pursuits, social play, sport and recreation, digital play

06. Why Play Matters

Play is how children learn, grow, connect and thrive. The evidence is overwhelming, and the stakes are high.

The Science of Play

In just 30 minutes of play, one third of the neurons in your brain are changed.

Play literally grows brains.

Yet 1 in 3 Australian children are not getting enough play every day. This International Day of Play, let's change that.

Four Key Benefits

- **Cognitive development:** Play builds problem-solving, creativity, executive function and lifelong learning skills. It is the primary mode of learning for young children.
- **Mental health and wellbeing:** Children who play freely have better emotional regulation, reduced anxiety and greater resilience. Play is a natural buffer against childhood stress.
- **Social skills:** Unstructured play teaches negotiation, empathy, conflict resolution and cooperation, skills no classroom can fully replicate.
- **Physical health:** Active play develops motor skills, physical literacy and healthy habits that last a lifetime. It is the foundation of movement and sport participation.

For more facts and evidence, see Play Australia's Case for Play fact sheet at playaustralia.com.au/internationaldayofplay

07. What Play Australia is Doing

On International Day of Play, Play Australia is taking direct action to advocate for children's right to play at the highest levels, and we are backing our members to do the same.

1. Writing to Australian Leaders

Play Australia is directly contacting major political parties, federal and state ministers, children's commissioners, and Governors-General, calling on them to make a public statement or take visible action in recognition of International Day of Play and children's right to play under Article 31.

2. Distributing the Call to Action

We are distributing our national Call to Action to all Play Australia members. We believe in the power of grassroots advocacy. When voices multiply across communities, states and sectors, leaders listen.

3. Supporting Community Action

Play Australia is actively supporting communities, schools, councils and organisations across Australia to take local action on the day, providing resources, templates and guidance so that every community can participate meaningfully.

4. The #31MinuteChallenge

Play Australia is leading a national call for an extra 31 minutes of free, unstructured play on 11 June, in honour of Article 31, across every setting where children spend their time. We are joining the UK and Ireland in this call.

We are asking:

- Schools and early childhood settings to give children 31 extra minutes of free play during the school day.
- OSHC and children's services to add 31 minutes of unstructured play to their day.
- Families to set aside 31 minutes of screen-free play time at home together.
- Workplaces to give staff a 31-minute play break, and lead by example.

An ideas sheet is available for services and schools wanting more ways to commemorate the day.

5. Report Launch on 11 June

International Day of Play 2026 marks the launch of ***Weaving Play into the National Fabric***, the Churchill Fellowship Report by our CEO Robyn Monro Miller. This landmark publication draws on international best practice and will be tabled with political and community leaders across Australia as part of our ongoing advocacy to place play firmly on the national agenda.

08. How You Can Take Action



You don't need to be a politician or a peak body to make a difference. Every member, every community, every individual has a role to play.

1. Contact Your Local MP, Councillor or School

Write, call or email your local federal MP, state MP, local councillor and school principal. Tell them about International Day of Play. Ask them to make a statement, share a social media post, or take a visible action on the day. Use our sample letter template, it takes five minutes and can make a real difference. Use the hashtags #Article31 and #InternationalDayOfPlay.

2. Share a Play Fact

Pick one fact from Play Australia's Case for Play fact sheet and share it on social media, in your newsletter, or with your network. Tag #InternationalDayOfPlay, #Article31 and #PlayAustralia.

3. Share a Childhood Memory of Play

Share a favourite childhood memory of play with a friend, a family member, or a complete stranger. Post it on social media, drop it into a conversation, write it down for someone you love. Let's remind people that play has been an integral, shaping influence on all our lives. Tag #PlayMemories #InternationalDayOfPlay #PlayAustralia.

4. Give a Child a Prescription to Play

Download and distribute Play Australia's Prescription to Play to children you know, at your service, school, community organisation, or even your own family. Available at playaustralia.com.au/internationaldayofplay

5. Host a #31Minutes Play Break at Work

Invite your colleagues to step away from their desks for 31 minutes and play. Try the Play Australia Play Memories Game, available on our website. Share your photos with #31Minutes and #InternationalDayOfPlay.

6. Guerrilla Hopscotch

Grab some chalk and draw a hopscotch grid at your local park, footpath, school or community space. Share your hopscotch with #InternationalDayOfPlay, #Article31 and #PlayAustralia and inspire others to do the same.

7. Promote the 31 Minutes Where You Are

Take the #31MinuteChallenge into your own world. Ask your workplace, your child's school, or your local OSHC or early childhood service to add an extra 31 minutes of free, unstructured play on 11 June. A short email or conversation can be all it takes. We are joining the UK and Ireland in this call: the more settings that participate, the louder our voice.

8. Host a Community Play Meet-up

Pick a local park and invite your community to come and play on 11 June. All you need is children, they will take care of the play part. Share the meet-up on local community pages and tag #PlayAustralia.

9. Contact Local Media

Use our sample media release to contact your local newspaper, radio station or community media outlet. A local angle, such as your school designating 31 minutes of free play, makes a great story.

10. Share This Kit

Forward this kit to your colleagues, networks, school communities and local leaders. Grassroots advocacy works, and it starts with you.

09. Key Talking Points

Use these talking points when speaking to local media, community leaders, your school, or colleagues on or around 11 June. They capture the most important things to say about International Day of Play 2026.

Lead with the Theme

“This year’s international theme is ‘Protect Play, Protect Childhood’, a call to action for every individual, organisation and government to stand up for children’s right to play, and in doing so, to protect childhood itself.”

Play is a Right, Not a Luxury

“Play is not a luxury. Under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Australia ratified more than 35 years ago, every child from birth to 18 has a legal right to play, rest and leisure. That right belongs to toddlers and teenagers alike.”

Cite the Science

“The science is clear: in just 30 minutes of play, one third of the neurons in a child’s brain are changed. Play literally grows brains, and builds the resilience, creativity, empathy and physical health that children carry with them for life.”

Name the Problem

“Yet in Australia today, one in three children is not getting the play they need. Childhood is being squeezed by overcrowded schedules, screens, and shrinking spaces.”

What Play Australia is Doing

“Play Australia is taking action. We are asking OSHC and all children's services, schools and early childhood settings across Australia to take the #31MinuteChallenge, adding an extra 31 minutes of free, unstructured play to their day in honour of Article 31. We are joining the UK and Ireland in this call.”

Our Global Role

“Play Australia is the Australian Branch Secretariat for IPA World, the International Play Association, connecting Australia to a global movement that has championed children's right to play since 1961.”

The Call to Action

“Every child deserves to play. Let's make 11 June the day Australia says so, loudly and together.”

Quick Facts

- **11 June:** International Day of Play, observed in 100+ countries
- **Article 31:** Every child birth to 18 has the right to play, under the UNCRC
- **1990:** Australia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- **1/3:** of neurons in the brain change in just 30 minutes of play
- **1 in 3:** Australian children are not getting enough play each day
- **31 minutes:** the extra free play we're asking schools and services to give on 11 June

10. Sample Letter

Use this template to write to your local MP, state member or councillor. Personalise the sections shown in brackets.

Dear [Name],

Re: International Day of Play, 11 June 2026, Request for Your Support

I am writing to bring to your attention International Day of Play, observed on 11 June 2026, and to ask for your support in recognising this important day in our community.

Play is not a trivial matter. Under Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Australia ratified in 1990, every child from birth to 18 has a legal right to play, rest and leisure. Yet research shows that many Australian children, including adolescents, are not getting the play they need for healthy development. The evidence is clear: play is fundamental to children's physical health, mental wellbeing, cognitive development and social skills.

On 11 June, I am asking you to:

- Make a public statement recognising International Day of Play and children's right to play
- Share the day on your social media channels using #Article31 and #InternationalDayOfPlay
- Call on local schools and services to designate an extra 31 minutes of free play for children on the day
- Consider how [your electorate or our council] can better support children's access to play spaces and opportunities

Play Australia, Australia's national peak body for play, is available to brief you further or provide resources (www.playaustralia.org.au). I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you or your office.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]

[Organisation or Role] / [Phone and Email]

11. Sample Media Release

Adapt this for your local context. A local angle, such as a school taking action, increases your chances of coverage.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE · [Date, June 2026]

Local Community Joins Global Call for Children's Right to Play on International Day of Play, 11 June 2026

[Your town or suburb] is joining communities around the world on 11 June to celebrate International Day of Play, a United Nations-recognised day championing every child's fundamental right to play.

[Name of your organisation, school or council] will be marking the day by [describe your planned activity, for example designating an extra 31 minutes of free play for students, hosting a community play event, or drawing hopscotch grids at local parks].

[Your name and title] said: "Play is not a luxury. It is a right. Under Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child from birth to 18 has the right to play. [Personalise with a local or personal statement about why play matters to you and your community]."

Australia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, yet many children, including adolescents, across the country still lack adequate access to play opportunities, safe spaces and unstructured time.

About International Day of Play

Observed on 11 June each year, International Day of Play is a global moment to recognise, celebrate and advocate for children's right to play. It is supported by the International Play Association (IPA) and organisations in more than 100 countries.

About Play Australia

Play Australia is the national peak body advocating for children's right to play, and the Australian Branch Secretariat for IPA World. Visit playaustralia.com.au

Media contact: [Name, Phone, Email]

Hashtags: #InternationalDayOfPlay #Article31 #PlayAustralia #EveryChildPlays

12. Key Messages and Social Media

On 11 June, Play Australia members and supporters can amplify our advocacy by sharing the day on social media. We have made this as simple as possible.

The Easiest Way to Participate

Follow Play Australia on Facebook and LinkedIn, and reshare our posts in the lead-up to and on 11 June. We will be posting throughout May and June with content ready for you to share.

- **Facebook:** facebook.com/PlayAustralia
- **LinkedIn:** linkedin.com/company/play-australia

Reshare. Tag your network. Add a short personal comment about why play matters to you.

Writing Your Own Post

If you would like to write your own post, here are some simple messages you can adapt.

Awareness

“Today is International Day of Play. Every child has a right to play under Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Let's make sure every Australian child can claim that right.”

The Science

“Did you know that in just 30 minutes of play, one third of the neurons in the brain change? Play literally grows brains. This International Day of Play, let's protect children's right to play.”

Action

“It's International Day of Play and Play Australia is asking OSHC, children's services, schools and early childhood settings to take the #31MinuteChallenge, adding 31 minutes of extra play to honour Article 31. We're joining the UK and Ireland in this call.”

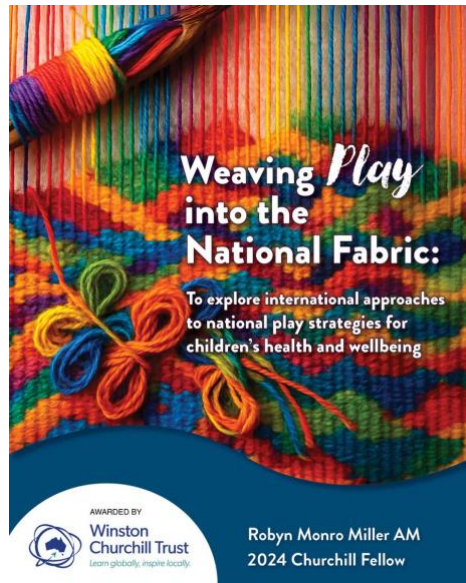
Personal

“On International Day of Play, I’m thinking about [what play meant to me as a child, what play means to the children in my life, or why play matters in my work]. Every child deserves to play.”

Official Hashtags

- **Always use:** #InternationalDayOfPlay #Article31 #PlayAustralia
- **Use regularly:** #EveryChildPlays #RightToPlay #31MinuteChallenge #ProtectPlay
- **Post-specific:** #GuerrillaHopscotch #ChurchillFellowship #SchoolPlay

13. Report Launch



Weaving Play into the National Fabric

Churchill Fellowship Report by Robyn Monro Miller AM, CEO Play Australia

Play Australia is proud to mark International Day of Play 2026 with the launch of our CEO's Churchill Fellowship Report.

This landmark publication examines how play can be woven into the national fabric of Australian life: across policy, community, education and health. Drawing on Robyn's Churchill Fellowship research across leading nations, it brings international best practice to Australia and makes a compelling, evidence-based case for placing play firmly on the national agenda.

The report will be formally tabled with federal and state political leaders, children's commissioners, Governors and community leaders as part of Play Australia's ongoing advocacy campaign.

Members are encouraged to share the report with their networks, local leaders, schools and community organisations. Every download, every share, and every conversation it generates helps build the case for children's right to play in Australia.

DOWNLOAD FROM 11 JUNE 2026

playaustralia.com.au/internationaldayofplay

14. Resources and Useful Links

Play Australia: All IDOP Resources

Includes: Prescription to Play, Case for Play fact sheet, Play Memories Game, sample letters, media releases and all member resources.

playaustralia.com.au/internationaldayofplay

IPA World: International Play Association

International resources, research and advocacy on children's right to play. The global home of International Day of Play.

Recorded message for events: IPA World is producing a recorded message that members are free to use at their International Day of Play events. It will be circulated via social media and available on YouTube. Play Australia will advise when it is ready. ipaworld.org

UN General Comment 17, Article 31

The full text of the UN's most comprehensive guidance on children's right to play, rest and leisure. Essential reading for advocates and policymakers. refworld.org/docid/51ef9bcc4.html

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The full text of the UNCRC, including Article 31. Covers all children from birth to 18 years.

unicef.org/child-rights-convention

Find Your Politicians

Look up the contact details for your local federal, state and local government representatives.

- **Federal MPs:** aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members
- **Federal Senators:** aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Senators
- **State and territory parliaments:** search “[your state] parliament members”
- **Your local council:** search “[your council name] councillors”

International Day of Play: Official Sites

- **United Nations:** un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-play
- **UNICEF:** unicef.org/international-day-of-play



Every child deserves to play.

Let's make 11 June the day Australia says so.

P L A Y A U S T R A L I A

National Peak Body for Play · Australian Branch Secretariat for IPA World

playaustralia.com.au/internationaldayofplay