



# Member news

*promoting the value of play*

Summer 2020 :: Issue 08



## Executive Director's message

**This year began with many of our members, their families and communities having to deal with the most significant fire season since records began and we understand that it is far from over. Members should feel able to make contact with our office if it is felt that we can provide particular support both personally and/or professionally. It is a very difficult time for all Australians and we are committed to supporting our members wherever possible.**

Our AGM in November 2019 welcomed 2 new Board members, Kylie Brannelly, the CEO of QCAN and Robyn Monro Miller, the CEO of Kids Giving Back, and previously Network, and President of our International Play Association, the IPA. Both Kylie and Robyn bring significant expertise and experience in leading the Out of Schools sectors in Queensland and NSW and we look forward to engaging with the OSCH sector with their support in 2020. Our Board under the leadership of Sharon Sykes, (President) Alli Coster and Carly Goodrich, (Vice Presidents), and Don Wark, (Treasurer) look forward to a most productive year ahead.

Our Strategic Plan 2020-25 to be published shortly sets out our bold new game plan to build PLAY in Australia. Our approach builds on our organization's rich 105 year history and sets out a clear and exciting path into the future - to position PLAY as a national health priority and ensure every Australian values play, supports play and accesses places to play every day.

Over the next five years we will continue to celebrate and foster all the things we love about Play Australia, such as our enduring connections to the people and organisations who have helped our wide-reaching work to date.

Looking forward we will seek to take greater risks and forge new partnerships to broaden our play impact, to benefit all children, young people and adults, particularly those who need more support to PLAY.

The Board has agreed to the employment of a National Marketing Manager with the aim of increasing the quality of our communication with members, as well as significantly lifting the profile of Play Australia across the country. This is an exciting opportunity for the organisation, and we trust that members will enjoy the benefits. – **Continued Page 2**



## Play Australia Training in 2020

The Victorian training dates with places still available are as follows:

**March Wednesday 25 and Thursday 26**  
FILLING FAST

**June Wednesday 17 and Thursday 18**  
Bookings open now

**August Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13**  
Bookings open now

**October Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22**  
Bookings open now

### Cost

\$750.00 + \$75.00 GST = \$825.00 Total (Members)

\$900.00 + \$90.00 GST = \$990.00 Total (Non-Members)

### Time

9.00am–4.00pm each day

### Registration

[www.playaustralia.org.au](http://www.playaustralia.org.au)  
(Under Training/Events)

### Venue

Conference Room, Westerfolds Park, Templestowe, VIC

Further information from Barb Champion at [barb@playaustralia.org.au](mailto:barb@playaustralia.org.au)

## Playground Standards Update

The Playgrounds Standards Committee CS-005 and the Sports and Recreational Equipment Committee CS-101 will both meet in February and members can expect some updates following these meetings. In particular, it is expected that there will be a Standards published on Fitness Equipment.

### – Continued from Page 1

Our 2 Day Training Program will continue in Melbourne in 2020 and whilst we regularly welcome participants from outside Victoria we are determined to develop a quality training program to deliver across Australia. We are also committed to developing programs to be delivered electronically as a key part of this commitment.

Our 1000 Play Streets program has begun with street play happening in the City of Moreland and the City of Darebin in Victoria, the City of South Perth and the City of Vincent in WA and the Sunshine Coast Council in Queensland. There is great

interest in this project and we will work to develop and support the Play Streets movement across the country in 2020.

Members are meeting across the country with Branch development happening in WA, Victoria, SA and QLD and in 2020 we are committed to beginning the NSW Branch, so watch this space for further announcements.

Thank you to our members who continue to engage in supporting quality play opportunities and environments, and best wishes to all Play Australia members for the coming year.

**Barbara Champion**



## Feature

## Saving Soles for Play

**Each year, over 25 million pairs of sports shoes end up in landfill in Australia.**

**A unique Australian pilot project is presently rolling out in Victoria, converting old, used sports shoes into rubber surfacing, gym matting and shop flooring.**

The 'Save Our Soles' initiative is a collaboration between the Australian Sporting Goods Association (ASGA) and recycler Save Our Soles

encouraging consumers to drop off their used sports shoes into designated disposal bins at key footwear retail outlets.

Collected shoes are shredded into smaller pieces before metals are extracted. The remaining material is reduced to a crumb and mixed with recycled tyres to produce matting.

For further information about this program and where you can participate visit [www.asga.com.au/sos/](http://www.asga.com.au/sos/)

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*Many thanks to Victorian member **Cormac McCarthy** for sharing this information with us!*



# Play Warrior Award 2019

## Suzette Hosken

At our AGM last November, the Play Warrior Award was awarded to Suzette Hosken primarily to thank her for her development and management of the online website and search tool Playground Finder.

**We also thank Ben Hosken too for his continued technical support to enable Suzette's dream to be realized.**

Suzette is passionate about play. Years ago as parent of young children, she was on the hunt for good playgrounds, but found it difficult to find information easily. She therefore came up with the concept of Playground Finder and has invested her business and personal time and money into developing this great app and website that brings play to everyone.

Playground Finder has been the oracle of parental (and child) thoughts and feelings on Australia's playgrounds for over 15 years. Playground Finder allows parents and carers (also children) to sign up, then log information about any playground they are at, this might be adding to existing comments

on a particular location or setting up information on a new location. Playground finder's information is then moderated and published to share with others, locations and address included. This has proven to be particularly useful over the years as parents and carers have shared information about accessible and inclusive playgrounds, fenced and shaded playgrounds and those suited to particular age-groups or visitation timeframes, many times where this information isn't readily available anywhere else.

Playground Finder has been a valuable resource for new parents and families who move house or when families travel, as a location can be entered and all logged 'local' playgrounds appear. Suzette has recently given Playground Finder to Play Australia and we are looking forward to managing its ongoing development.



## All-in-One Finger Entrapment Tool

**This all-in-one finger entrapment tool has been manufactured by Play Australia for the benefit of members and playground risk assessors nationally. There have been nearly 200 sold to date!**

"This all-in-one finger probe entrapment tool has 8, 8.6, 12 and 25mm diameter sections.

Openings >1m above the ground OR within the free space of equipment should be tested for finger entrapment.

An opening is considered a potential finger entrapment if the 8mm section can be inserted, but the 25mm section cannot pass through the opening.

Chains should be tested regardless of height. Chain openings are too large if the 8.6mm section can be inserted.

Chain connections (e.g. S-hooks) have the wrong sized opening if the 8.6mm section can be inserted, but the 12mm section cannot be inserted.

**Important: this all-in-one finger entrapment tool does not have the AS4685 required lengths for the separate probes, however it provides an easy to carry, simple and quick method for checking most openings.**

**www To purchase, go to [www.playaustralia.org.au](http://www.playaustralia.org.au) where you can order and pay online.**





# How Play Can Help Children's Recovery from the Bushfires

**Thousands of children have been affected by the fires, which have burned through more than 100,000km<sup>2</sup> – about 1.5 times the size of Tasmania – since September – Save The Children, Australia**

We all believe that play is a right of childhood, but what happens when everything in a child's world is turned upside down by natural disaster, crisis or conflict? How do children affected begin to comprehend the real immediate danger to their lives, let alone the impact of loss, death and the destruction of their home environment, community and livelihood, as experienced by Australian children this summer season.

In this editorial I want to talk about the effect of our recent bushfires on children's lives and how play can be influential in restoring a sense of security, well being and normal day to day for them again. This is a key step on the road to recovery.

The IPA (International Play Association) of which Play Australia is the Australian member, is hosting their 21st Triennial World Conference in November this year titled 'Play and Resilience' <https://www.ipa2020jaipur.org/>. The main theme of the conference is as follows *'Play is fundamental to securing the child's rights to development and to a healthy life. In the context of increasing numbers of children living in difficult circumstances marked by poverty, disasters and conflicts across the world, play is vital for overcoming adversity, surviving stress and rising above disadvantage. Put simply, play helps*

***in building resilience of children anywhere and everywhere they live.'***

Families across Australia are on edge, children are not only experiencing first hand situations they don't understand, but many children viewing television and print media news are also experiencing anxiety, stress and sadness.

So how can play help children to process their anxiety, stress and sadness exactly? I'd like to outline and discuss a number of ways below:

- Play recreates a sense of normality, safety and security in an environment where children can 'take their minds' away from the immediate crisis
- Play environments can be established anywhere and with a little imagination require very few resources, if resources are scarce
- Play provides a context for children to re-engage with the familiar be that toy, friend, story or game. When everything familiar seems lost, this can be so important
- Play provides children with a vehicle to express their emotions, maybe work through or release the anxiety or sadness felt
- Play also provides parents and carers with much needed respite from care

Lets have a look at these in greater detail.

**Recreating a sense of normality and security**

Children rely on routine and 'things being in their place' for a sense of security in their daily lives. When a natural disaster like bushfire occurs they may be uprooted from their home environment temporarily or even permanently. In the case of bushfire, this may even happen several times during the course of a season. The constant anxiety of needing to evacuate, followed by the unfamiliarity of refuge environments (be they friends or families homes or emergency relief centres) can take a big, hidden toll on children.

In the recent bushfires many child-friendly spaces or places for play, or even playgroups have been created in relief centres for children to play together. These spaces provide a regular social conduit for children and over time a new kind of routine normalcy for them in an environment that is stable and secure. For children evacuating to friends and family in other locations, again the local community playspace or playgroup can be that opportunity for a positive connection from children's home lives to be established.

**Play environments require very little resources and can be established anywhere**

This needs no explanation, as needs must. In emergencies like bushfire, resources are usually stretched to just managing the immediate threat to safety and provisions of bedding, clothing, food to meet basic needs.



Emotional needs are often considered secondary and even children's access to school education and with it their social network may be disrupted, or even lost.

Providing for play in child friendly spaces in emergency relief centres can be achieved with very little effort, other than the space and freedom to do so. Play may also be organised by children themselves if given the opportunity and even the provision of simple tools for play like books, balls, bikes, paper, colouring or crafting materials, dress-ups, something to climb and open space to run around will suffice for children to play either indoors or outside.

### Play as context for re-engaging with the familiar

Whilst children evacuated from bushfire effected areas may have had to leave most of their precious possessions, toys and possibly pets behind, engagement with a place for play may provide the chance to connect with children, games and activities that are familiar and feel a small sense of control return to their lives.

### Expressing emotions through play

This is where play can begin to provide much needed support for children who have experienced the trauma of bushfire or evacuation because of bushfire threat.

The security of a place for play can provide children with the opportunity to open up about their concerns, questions, worries or fears about their situation, what they are hearing adults around them discuss or what they've seen and experienced first-hand.

Book stories in particular can be

good resources to support children's discussion and give adults a suitable way of explaining to young children what is happening around them. The opportunity to break loose and either express themselves creatively through music, dance, art or building or just imagine alternatively realities for escape from the reality around them, can also be therapeutic.

### Carer respite

A crisis situation, like a bushfire emergency tends to place the focus on the most vulnerable in our communities, our children. Sometimes this can however be at the detriment of the carers who matter most to those children. Clearly the immediate threat of danger brings out the most protective instincts in all adults, but this is problematic. Adults already tasked with a multitude of serious issues to work through, have very little opportunity for rest or even positive interaction with their children. Yes the normalcy issue again.

Child-friendly spaces for children to play may be that point where carers can actually relax for a moment and even possibly enjoy some quality, positive time with their children amidst the trauma. This goes far to support parents and carers in their own personal recovery from bushfire and the reconnection with their children that constitutes healthy family life.

It is important to note that whilst we focus on the immediate impact of a disaster like severe bushfires, as safety is paramount, the trauma, repercussions and disruption of these events are felt by children and their families for a very long-time afterwards – long after the charity appeals and service support has faded.

Play has the capacity to provide the ongoing support required by children for recovery. This doesn't change the pressure of ongoing financial strain or the heartache of rebuilding a home or community faced by their families, but it goes a long way to giving them that sense of positive continuity that is so needed to help them build resilience and overcome the adversity of their situation.

Several key charities and organisations have been supporting children in particular during the recent bushfire emergencies across Australia, particularly in the provision of toys and child-friendly places at emergency relief centres. For further information please visit the following:

[www.unicef.org.au/appeals/bushfire-and-drought-response](http://www.unicef.org.au/appeals/bushfire-and-drought-response)

[www.savethechildren.org.au/donate/more-ways-to-give/current-appeals/bushfire-emergency#](http://www.savethechildren.org.au/donate/more-ways-to-give/current-appeals/bushfire-emergency#)

[www.holliehughes.com.au/bushfires/](http://www.holliehughes.com.au/bushfires/)

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/talking-to-children-about-bushfires](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/talking-to-children-about-bushfires)

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**Elizabeth Cummins** is a practising landscape architect and author. A qualified early years educator, her practice focuses on design for play. She is a co-author of 'Getting the Balance Right'. Play Australia's guide to Risk Management and writes, presents and trains on the use of risk-benefit assessment as a tool for play provision. She is also the current editor of Play Australia's Member News and Secretary of the Play Australia Victorian Branch.

In this issue we will look at two different publications charting space and play from two alternative perspectives. The first a research project that investigates actively creating spaces for children from the built environment, the other a reflection on the manipulations of spatial environments created by children's play.

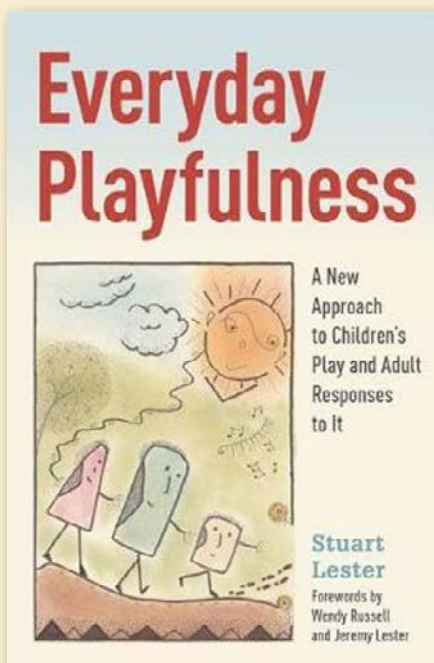
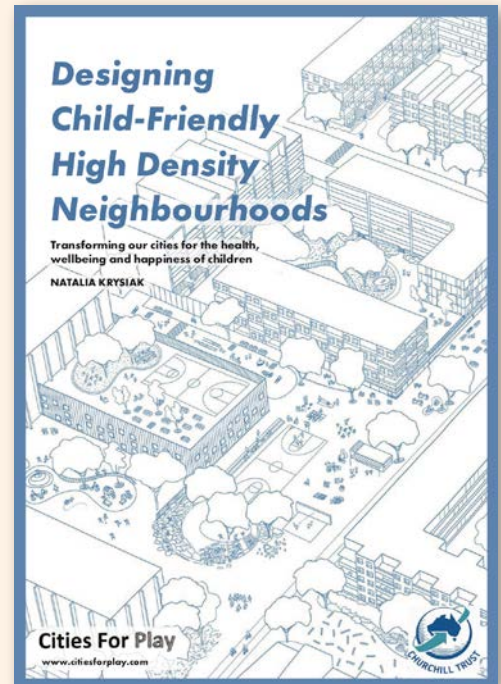
### Designing Child-Friendly High Density Neighbourhoods Natalia Krysiak (Cities for Play 2019)

**Natalia Krysiak is a practising Australian Architect based in Sydney who was a Churchill Fellow in 2019. Natalia has always had a keen interest in how cities and spaces can be designed to promote the health and well-being of children. In 2017 Natalia established 'Cities for Play' which aims to inspire and promote strategies for playful cities.**

This report is the culmination of Natalia's research into vertical cities such as Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore, where families all live in higher-density neighbourhoods, as well as Vancouver, Toronto and Rotterdam where city councils have been actively working towards creating more child-friendly urban environments.

As well as presenting case study exemplars of how we might increase liveability for children and their families, it also considers how broader planning policy can also influence these environments. Natalia reflects on how Australian cities need to start seriously considering better inclusiveness for children where their needs are meaningfully considered in the design of our cities.

This publication is available for download at [www.citiesforplay.com](http://www.citiesforplay.com)



### Everyday Playfulness Stuart Lester (Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2020)

**British Playworker & Academic, Dr Stuart Lester passed away suddenly in May 2017, leaving a huge legacy of knowledge in the 'psycho geography' of children (how their environments are playfully explored) and an approach that views play as a 'process' rather than a 'product'.**

Colleague Wendy Russell best describes Stuart's work as a 'method for supporting children's play so as to not colonise it for an adult end'. This book is a published manuscript left mostly complete at Stuart's passing and completed by Wendy Russell and Stuart's brother, Philosopher Jeremy Lester in Stuart's memory.

Deeply thoughtful and rich, the book is a collection of obscure concepts, mundane moments of nonsense that richly illustrates different ways of thinking and working with children's play for academics, educators, designers and parents alike.

In Stuart's acknowledgements he states "Of course children are [central to this], people who spend very little time 'thinking' about play but expend incredible energy and skill in continuing to navigate and negotiate time and space for playing". Wonderful anecdotes and 'practical ways' concepts of play occur in everyday life are dotted throughout grounding some of the more esoteric ideas discussed.

This publication is available for purchase at a range of different commercial booksellers both within Australia and abroad.

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*Pia's Place Slide by Lypa*

## Innovative Cool Concrete 'Aussie' Slides

**With much discussion in recent newsletters around heat and playgrounds, we are pleased to feature an innovative approach to this issue by two of our member's, the concrete slide.**

These slides can be designed to be inclusive, robust and cool for Australian playspaces. Sydney-based director of Architects of Arcadia, Fiona Robbe has spent 20 years searching for good inclusive alternatives to plastic and steel slides, that can be produced in an infinite variety of colours and has flexible attachment to structures. Fiona says "We hope that these slides offer real alternatives in parts of Australia experiencing cyclones or extreme weather conditions (where shade structures are not easy to install)."

Fiona's inspiration for the concrete slides her manufacturing company-arm Arcadian Products makes comes from the likes of Japanese-American sculptor and landscape architect Isamu Noguchi, and granite slides in New York and Amsterdam.

Nature Play Solutions in Perth have also been designing and building concrete slides through their equipment production company Lypa since 2011, when the late Wendy Seymour was working with them and researching more inclusive play options. They also produce

a variety of colours and stone finishes by honing their slides prior to polishing.

Chris Lawrence, Director of Nature Play Solutions agrees that the cooler aspect of these slides is a clear benefit, with the concrete not heating in the same way as steel, yet providing a slippery surface.

"In terms of flexibility we are able to produce a slide for pretty much any starting height," states Chris "In childcare we have a concrete slide with a 900mm starting height and we recently installed a double concrete slide with a 3 metre starting height".

One question often asked about concrete slides is the weight of the product and how easy it is to manoeuvre onto site. Concrete slides do require lifting equipment as they are mostly manufactured off-site. For larger slides they can be brought in and assembled in sections, however they will need a bobcat at least, or more often a crane (either hiab truck or franna) to move them into place onsite.

A key driver for the development of these slides has been research around the effects of static generated by the use of plastic slides by children with cochlear implants for hearing loss. There are however varied opinions on this. Fiona indicates "We are presently getting our slides to be tested by Acoustoscan for their heat absorption and we will also

check the co-efficient of friction."

Set into a mound or attached to structures the polished concrete surface provides a wonderfully slippery surface when the angle of the incline is 'just right', which can be a bit of an art to achieve.

What is a given though is that with constant use, a concrete slide only gains in slipperiness!

Many thanks to Play Australia members Fiona Robbe from Architects of Arcadia in Sydney and Chris Lawrence from Nature Play Solutions in Perth for their contributions to this feature.

**www** For more information on concrete slides visit, [www.arcadianproducts.com.au](http://www.arcadianproducts.com.au) or [www.lypa.com.au](http://www.lypa.com.au)



*Concrete Slide by Arcadian Products*



*900mm high concrete slide by Lypa.*



*Different height concrete slides by Arcadian Products*

# Members Corner

Our place for information and profiles on Play Australia Members and Membership

## Member Profile

## Kym Symoncini

Dr Kym Symoncini from the University of Canberra is an academic, who is a former primary school teacher. At the forefront of the STEM Curriculum (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) Pilot Program in Australia, Kym regularly delivers professional development for early years teachers in STEM.

**She is also a key leader in two international projects based in Papua New Guinea, one in particular about delivering quality elementary education to boys and girls there. This issue we speak with Kym about the importance of play, particularly in schools.**

### Tell us briefly about yourself

I am an Associate Professor of Early Childhood and Primary Education at the University of Canberra. I am interested in children's rights, especially children's right to play. I work a lot in Papua New Guinea and try to help parents and teachers realise the importance of play. I am currently investigating primary school children's perceptions of their play outside of school in the ACT.

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

I became a member of Play

Australia after attending the World International Play Association conference in Istanbul 2015. It's great to be part of an association that just focuses on play.

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

Together with Marcus Veerman from Playground Ideas, Sue Elliot and Victoria Carr, we facilitated a community designed and built playground using local materials in a PNG school where previously there was only a grassed area and children weren't allowed to play.

As part of their coursework I ask my early childhood students to advertise, organise and facilitate a pop-up loose parts playground for the community where they display



Kym Symoncini

posters and brochures that advocate the importance of play.

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

I have attended a 2-day playground workshop which was very informative. Recently Barbara Champion (Chief Executive of Play Australia) spoke to our early childhood students about advocacy work.

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

Play is so important for children's development and too many people don't realise that play is a right of the child. In primary education, the curriculum is prioritised over play-based learning. In early childhood education, guided play and intentional teaching are often emphasised over free play. I see it as my job to advocate for free play and to remind people to let children play.

## 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 themes and ideas for future editions to pass on to our editorial team. If you have something you'd like to share please email [newsletter@playaustralia.org.au](mailto:newsletter@playaustralia.org.au)



The Play Australia Member Logo is available for use by members on your website and communication materials to help us promote the value of play. Further information about conditions of use from [barb@playaustralia.org.au](mailto:barb@playaustralia.org.au)



*promoting the value of play*

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