

Strategic Plan->

July 2020 – June 2025

make time today for outside play



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Welcome

Play Australia's vision is to see a connected and healthy Australia where PLAY is a part of everyone's daily life.

We believe **PLAY** is essential because it provides us all with our physical, social, mental and emotional foundations, in order to establish healthy habits in our children and young people that last a lifetime, so we can all **experience optimal health and wellbeing.**

When we consider that **only 1 in 3 Australian children engage in free play outdoors daily** and the overall health of Australians is at all time low levels, it is of great concern.

We all have a responsibility to act now, to help our children **PLAY TODAY** so we can all experience a better tomorrow.

Our Strategic Plan 2020–25 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.

We are excited about our bold new game plan to build PLAY in Australia and we welcome you to not only read this plan, but to join us in our mission to promote the value of PLAY and support all Australians to PLAY every day.

Play Australia





we are

"Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts"

Article 31, United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child





Our Vision for Play

A connected and healthy Australia where PLAY is a part of everyone's daily life.

Our Play Mission

To promote the value of PLAY and support all Australians to PLAY every day.

Who we are

Play Australia is the peak national advocacy organisation for PLAY. We're a notfor-profit charity that is membership based and has been supporting play for over 100 years.

We support outdoor play by way of inspiration, advice, access to information, provided by qualified people and professional services.

As the Australian branch of the International Play Association (IPA) we protect the human rights of all children to play, as recognised within Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Who we care about

We care about the health and wellbeing of all Australians and recognise the importance of embedding play into everyone's daily lives to achieve better life outcomes.

Our focus is on early intervention to establish healthy life-long play habits and as such, the majority of work is about enhancing health and wellbeing outcomes for children (0-12 years) and young people (13-17 years old).

With that said, we also appreciate that adults (particularly parents) play a critical role in supporting and encouraging children's play and we believe there is a need to return play to the lives of adults as well.



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Our Members

We can't talk about who we are, without talking about our valued members, who play a critical role in defining our priorities and supporting the ongoing operations of our business.

Our members are from a range of backgrounds including:

- Play experts (i.e. nature, mud play and loose-parts experts)
- Urban Designers, Open Space Planners & Landscape Architects
- Playground designers and manufacturers
- Early Years & Schools
- Artists and Horticulturalists
- Researchers & Students
- Local & State government

The following tables provide a snapshot of who our members are and where they come from (based on 2019-20 data).



As part of this 2020-25 strategy we will be looking at how we can continue to support and grow our membership base, particularly outside of Victoria.



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Our Strategic Partners

Over the years we have formed strong connections with an array of important organisations to develop shared and united approaches to create community impact.

Particularly we would like to recognise the invaluable financial and in-kind contribution from Sport & Recreation Victoria within the Victorian Government to enable our organisation to effectively deliver our industry training and advocacy work for the last 30 years.

More recently we would also like to acknowledge the important support from Sport Australia in their grant funding of 1000 Play Streets.

Other strategic partners include, but are not limited to:

- Queensland Community Activities Network
- Environment Education in Early Childhood
- Community Child Care
- Parks and Leisure Australia
- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects
- Grandparents Australia
- People & Parks Foundation
- Children with Disability Australia
- Child Care Alliance

- Playgroup Australia
- Outdoors Victoria
- · Early Childhood Australia
- Nature Play WA
- Nature Play QLD
- Nature Play SA
- Kids in Nature Network
- Cancer Council
- Touched by Olivia Foundation

Lastly, we're also grateful to our philanthropic partners who have provided important financial support to help us deliver on priorities – including, but not limited to:

- Warrawong Foundation; and
- Creswick Foundation

Our State Branches

We are growing our national structure and since 2015 have established state branches and networks of support across Australia, in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia (as indicated on the map below).





Our Board

We are operated by a volunteer Board of highly skilled individuals from different backgrounds, who all care deeply about play.

Board representatives are elected at our Annual General Meeting to manage the legal and financial responsibilities of Play Australia, as well as informing the strategic direction of the organisation.

There are twelve Board members who come from all across Australia. Nine are elected by our membership and three are co-opted by the Board itself.

Where we work from

Our team operates from our national office based at Westerfolds Park in Templestowe, Victoria.

Due to our national focus we also use online platforms to connect regularly with our Board and partners Australia-wide, reflecting a truly national approach.



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Our Financials

As Play Australia adopts our new five year strategic plan, we are optimistic about a stronger financial outlook with increased investment via government, commercial and philanthropic partners as well as increasing our earnings through a greater range of goods and services.

The below tables indicate our diverse income sources and operational activities to date.



Play Australia is committed to good governance and transparent financial management practices to ensure we meet all our obligations to investors as well as acting on all regulatory advice provided by the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission.



Our sy values

Be connected for change

We are a vibrant and growing organisation with a big picture vision and believe that the fastest and most impactful way to create big change is to work with others who care about the same things we do.

Be kind to each other

We are committed to achieving big impact, however not at the expense of our people, partners and communities. We believe the world would be a much better place to live in, if we all looked out for one another a bit more.

Be inclusive of all

We recognise that there are many people who live in Australia, who through no fault of their own, struggle to play every day, and it's important we all share a commitment to taking the extra steps to help them play.

Be adaptable and agile always

We are always seeking to improve the way we operate our organisation and how we deliver our priorities for change, which means being curious and questioning accepted practices to actively find better ways of working.

Be playful every day

Lastly, we can't forget that we're an organisation focused on play, so it's important we enjoy the ride and have fun along the way!





Our History

We're 105 years young and still counting ...and play remains essential to the nature of being a child.



ABOVE: Our 1930's archives portraying play "the work of children".



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Our History

1914–1923

We originated as the Guild of Play, formed in poverty-stricken Melbourne in response to a vast number of children pouring into the dangerous and often unhealthy streets of the inner city. During this troubled time, we helped to establish playgrounds (donated by organisations and companies) to get children off the streets with a view to improving their physical health and moral codes. Councils were recruited to join as members at the annual cost of 1 guinea.

1923-1933

We continued operations under a new name, Playgrounds Association of Victoria, to reflect our strong focus on playground development.

1933-1980s

We then became known as the Playgrounds & Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV) as we broadened our business and introduced Play Leaders who were funded by local councils to support children to play in playgrounds and schools, as well as providing exercise and learning games. May Smith (now Hughes) fondly remembers being a 17 year old in the 1950s and studying two years to become a Play Leader.

1961

We became the Australian secretariat for the International Play Association (IPA) in the same year it was founded. Joan Matheson played a key role in the IPA, attending many conferences held overseas, whilst managing PRAV for 40 years!

1980s-2010

We became more focused on the provision of training and advice on playground standards to alleviate some of the injuries that were being sustained by children. We took a lead role in the dissemination of the Australian Playground Standards in the 80s, as we became a part of the 'Play for All' unit of the Victorian Government. Importantly, we recognise the valuable contribution of the Victorian Government to support the ongoing operations of our organisation, keeping us afloat over many years.

1993

Our Board successfully canvased for the International Play Association Triennial World Conference to be held in Melbourne, and subsequently the organisation began focusing on providing network support for individuals and groups involved in children's outdoor play.

2011-2019

We changed our name to Play Australia and commenced transformation into a national entity with state branches, collaborating with a range of different groups to promote children's play, whilst maintaining focus on disseminating information on Australian Playground Standards.

2020 (TODAY)

We are a highly valued member organisation that has developed volunteer branches in most states as well as securing federal funding for the first time through Sport Australia which has helped us expand our operations and deliver the 1000 Play Streets movement. We continue to be grateful to receive funding from the Victorian Government and we feel excited by the future of Play Australia ...as we undertake this bold new game plan to support play for all Australians!





Our Play Focus

"Play is a part of life" Amelia, 7



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Child's Play

We recognise the importance of children (aged 0-12) experiencing a wide array of play opportunities in a range of different environments to support their health and wellbeing.

Our play focus is predominantly on promoting the value of unstructured play that is child-led and intrinsically motivated within outdoor environments.

The below diagram shows our PLAY continuum, which presents four different kinds of play, with adults playing various roles to organize, facilitate, supervise or permit children to play independently.



The orange highlighted area to the far left represents our 'Play Focus' on child-led play that is either supervised or unsupervised by parents and caregivers.

In addition, we are also committed to promoting the value of independent play that sees children (when they're ready) playing in private and public spaces unsupervised by adults.

This kind of play is important because it builds more confident, independent and ultimately more resilient children and young people, which again, means better health and wellbeing outcomes for communities.

Young People's Play

Similarly our play focus for young people (aged 13-17) is on promoting and supporting their involvement in unstructured outdoor play, which may include participation in unorganised sport and active recreation. It's important that we recognise that it's not uncommon for young people to define play differently, in comparison to views shared by younger children.

Regardless of what play is for young people, we believe our young people would play a lot more, if they had greater say in shaping their play spaces and opportunities, which means Play Australia is committed to raising the voices of young people to co-design public play spaces and play opportunities that better meet their diverse needs.



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Play needs to be a part of everyone's daily lives and adults are no exception.

Play for all

Research demonstrates that if we can build healthy physical activity habits in our children and young people then we increase the likelihood of them being active throughout their adult lives.

And whilst a major focus of Play Australia revolves around the role of adults in supporting regular outdoor unstructured play opportunities for children, we are also committed to helping more adults play as well.

Play forms a critical part of our physical activity spectrum as illustrated in the table below: **Opportunities for physical activity as part of everyday life** (VicHealth, 2019).





Our work sofar

"You can get smarter from any games you play"

Nathan, 9



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Our work so far

To date, Play Australia has had three main roles:

- Services to members
- 2 Providing training on outdoor play and playground planning, design and management
- 3 Advocacy to promote and support play in Australia

These roles have been supported in collaboration between Staff, Board members, State Branches, Members and Strategic Partners.

We have provided a short summary of this work below.

Services to members

Our time has largely been directed towards services for members, which includes;

- · Coordinating training on Play and Australian Playground Standards
- Coordinating networking events
- Providing access to play resources (i.e. Play Today campaign)
- · Providing access to latest news and research
- Telephone advisory and support

Training

Play Australia's training program provides a comprehensive schedule of workshops and seminars across a broad range of issues relating to outdoor play.

Our training allows people involved within the industry from all different areas to network together and keep up to date on best practice in playground planning, design and management.

Advocacy

These activities include:

- Representation on the Australian Standards Committee CS-005
- Promotion of quality design of play spaces and play opportunities through publications
- Promotion (as opportunities arise) of the child's right to play including media engagement
- Promotion of exemplary play work via our Award program
- Online promotion to support national reach including developing podcasts and webinars.

1000 Play Streets

More recently in 2019-20 we have also been supporting play via our 1000 Play Streets movement which has seen us working closely with a range of partners to help Australians reclaim their streets as places to play and connect. Work includes:

- Piloting regular Play Streets in QLD, VIC and WA to reduce the regulatory burden on communities
- Developing a national package for councils Australia-wide to support Play Streets.

Thanks to Sport Australia for providing this valuable funding opportunity for our organisation.



Our of the second secon

"If we don't play we get weak and if we play we get stronger"

Rajat, 8



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Our context and our need

In Australia the health and wellbeing of our children and young people is worrying.





1 in 7 children

are experiencing a mental health condition (Beyond Blue, 2019)

Now more than ever before, it is essential that our children play today to experience a better tomorrow. Play is essential because it provides the foundations of physical literacy in order to establish healthy habits that last a lifetime:

Play creates healthy children

Play supports children's physical development and activity levels to support a healthy lifestyle.

Play connects children with their community

Play within communities allows families and neighbours to connect and enables children to develop socially.

Play balances risk-taking and safety

Play develops risk competency in young children which can build confidence, decisionmaking and problem-solving skills, later on.

Play supports children's learning

Play supports independent self-learning by allowing children to practice skills and challenge themselves.

So what is concerning, is that only -





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If we take a broader look at physical activity in general, we see that only 30% of Australian children (aged 2-17 years) meet daily physical activity recommendations (AIHW, 2018) and the statistics get progressively worse as children get older.

Australian children meeting our recommended amounts of daily physical activity (AIHW, 2018):



Interestingly, a recent global study on teen physical activity, sees Australia performing amongst the worst in the world, ranking 140th out of 146 countries (The Lancet, 2019).

PLAY can support our children to meet the Australian 24hr movement guidelines (2019):

- Our 1-5 year olds need at least 3hrs of daily physical activity with at least 60 minutes of energetic play spread throughout the day; and
- Our 5-17 year olds require a minimum of one hour of moderate to vigorous activity each day. And more movement is better!

Another major concern is the poor mental health amongst our Australian young people.

According to the Australian Government's Mental Health of Children and Adolescents Report, 2015:



Poor mental health can arise due a range of complex factors, with that said we know that there are clear links between an individual's social connections (number and strength) and their levels of mental wellbeing.

"Connections matter. Strong ties with family, friends and the community provide people with happiness, security, support and a sense of purpose. Research shows that being connected to others is important for mental wellbeing and can be a protective factor against anxiety and depression" (Beyond Blue, 2016).

Our children and young people need to have the ability to develop and maintain quality relationships, which means that they must develop key skills – including:

- **SOCIAL SKILLS** ability to connect with others and get along.
- EMOTIONAL SKILLS ability to control emotion and reactions.
- **COGNITIVE SKILLS** ability to understand what is going on.

And PLAY provides an essential opportunity for our children and young people to develop these skills in the most natural of ways.

We know the earlier our children play, the better, as play can enhance the early development of children by 33% to 67% by improving language skills and reducing social and emotional problems, which contributes to greater resilience when faced with challenging circumstances (Fischer, 1992).



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In summary, we have identified **THREE** critical action areas that our Play Australia 2020–2025 Strategic Plan will focus on, to improve the health and wellbeing of our children and young people.

This is our commitment:

To improve the health and wellbeing of our Australian children and young people we will support the provision of outdoor free play to:

- 1 INCREASE THEIR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- 2 IMPROVE THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING
- **3** GROW MEANINGFULLY CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Importantly, this is not the end of our commitment.

The health and wellbeing of our adults is as equally as worrying as our children and young people:



Therefore, through our work focussed on children and young people we commit to supporting adults to play whenever possible, **to improve adult health and wellbeing.**



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Our bext 5 years

"We have a whole life to live and most of that life we are working. The other part of our life should be play to help us grow"

Vaishnavi, 10



A systems-based approach

We recognise the leadership provided by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in developing the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030 to create more active people for a healthier world.

And whilst our five year strategic plan is broader than providing just physical activity outcomes, we will follow the WHO's recommendation to adopt a systems-based approach to ensure our interventions don't just target individuals, instead address the broader behavioural influencers at play – to ultimately support better health and wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and adults.



Example in action – our Play Today Campaign

- A key focus of our Strategic Plan 2020-25 is to deliver our Play Today Campaign which aims to support every Australian child to **PLAY TODAY.**
- Our campaign success hinges on our ability to connect our PLAY system.
- For example, we will form connections with strategic partners including children's service providers, in order to develop and supply relevant Play Today resources to promote the value of play to parents.
- In due course we aim to build the *awareness, knowledge and confidence* amongst parents to afford more time for children's daily unstructured outdoor play in homes and communities, which in time will include exploring broader system-based opportunities to improve urban design and legislation that promotes and supports play.







Our priorities and outcomes

We have identified four key priorities for Play Australia in 2020–25.

The following tables provide further information on WHAT WE PLAN TO DO, encompassing 13 different activity lines.

OUR ACTIVITIES		HOW WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL:
1.1 Build the business	se for play	 Play receives increased investment (government, commercial, philanthropic)
1.1 Build the profile o (within communit state/national age	and	 FOR COMMUNITIES More Play supporters subscribe to our campaigns More Play partnerships developed with government/agencies/industry/ambassadors More people talking about the value of play on social media (#PlayToday) and traditional media (radio, television, newspapers) Play profile features more prominently in health forums and events FOR STATE/NATIONAL AGENDAS More Play data is captured to contribute to nation health planning (i.e. AusPlay, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Active Healthy Kids Alliance) Play interventions feature more prominently in government strategy Play has increased government representation (i.e. Minister for Play)

Outcomes:

Play is recognised as a national health priority



2	We all support Play		
	OUR ACTIVITIES	HOW WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL:	
2.1	Lead the PLAY TODAY campaign	 More interventions are delivered to engage parents and build confidence to support children's play within homes and communities – <i>including targeting parents of vulnerable children who are at greater risk of missing out on play opportunities</i> Increased partnerships to build support for interventions, particularly with key community service providers for children and young people – for example: <i>Maternal Child Health providers, Childcare providers, Kindergartens, schools, Outside Hours School Care networks, youth groups, and neighbourhood houses</i> More shareable assets to support future interventions Greater sector learning available to grow knowledge about supporting play within communities. 	
2.2	Lead the 1000 Play Streets movement	 Increased numbers of councils creating Play Streets policy for their communities Increased numbers of Play Streets occurring Increased numbers of Play Streets sustaining within local communities Increased profile of 1000 Play Streets via media and digital sharing (#1000PlayStreets) Positive feedback from councils and community about Play Australia support. 	

Outcomes:

1000 Play Streets are activated nationally to build the health of communities Parents (and caregivers) allow time for children to play freely outdoors every day





We all access places to Play

	OUR ACTIVITIES	HOW WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL:
3.1	Deliver play space design and risk management training	 New online training package developed Increased number of training sessions delivered Increased number of attendees High satisfaction levels via feedback.
3.2	Pilot the youth play space project	 New community play space pilot event/s delivered with outputs codesigned by young people Increased number of industry representatives involved Increased number of young people involved High satisfaction levels via feedback
3.3	Grow Playground Finder ™	 Increased numbers of playgrounds listed across all states Increased number of users High satisfaction levels of users.

Outcomes:

Play is embedded within the design of public spaces in Australia

Young people connect with each other and play in public spaces

Playground Finder is the premier platform used by parents to source information on playgrounds.



4	Strong business	foundations
	OUR ACTIVITIES	HOW WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL:
4.1	Recruit and retain happy and capable PEOPLE who have the collective capacity to deliver on priority outcomes	 Our Board has broad national representation Our Board has a breadth of experience and reach to support operations Our Staff deliver on the priorities of the organisation Our Staff self-report high satisfaction levels Our Board and Staff are leaders who actively take risks to push the play agenda forward.
4.2	Recruit and retain MEMBERS from all around Australia (organisations and individuals)	 Increase number of members across states Increase diversity of member type across states Reduce membership churn High satisfaction levels of members.
4.3	Grow STATE BRANCHES and play networks	 Our State branches coordinate activities to support play in local areas Our State branches report high satisfaction levels with the national office Play network groups are established in Tasmania, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory.
4.4.	Grow our REVENUE to support our operations	 Increase revenue via government, philanthropic and commercial partners Increase revenue via more products and services to support stronger commercialisation of Play Australia.
4.5	Grow our DIGITAL CAPABILITY to ensure we work efficiently and maximise play impact	 Our CRM effectively manages our data and supports reporting Our new insights dashboard (feedback loop) informs operations Our website is redeveloped to improve public and industry engagement.
4.6	Adopt GOOD GOVERNANCE	 Quarterly reports are available on business plan priorities Our evaluation of activities provides us with data on (i) impact success and (ii) process – to support continuous improvement of our operations Our administration & financial management meets legal requirements.

Outcomes:

We deliver on our big game plan and meet our legal requirements.



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Our y Play /

We await the day when we see a truly connected Australia where people play every day, across our cities, suburbs, regions and remote areas, whilst connecting with their neighbours and communities.

We look forward to seeing our neighbourhoods designed to foster play every day and filled with the laughter of children, young people and adults – playing with fearsome independence, in any way they choose, or playing together as strong and empathetic communities.

Our governments and leaders of industry will recognise play as a national health priority and our people will enjoy better health and wellbeing outcomes from spending more time playing outdoors daily.

This is our play future.

We at Play Australia are committed to working toward a healthier play future to benefit all who live in Australia.

So join with us, to urge everyone - our parents, teachers, leaders of industry, policy makers, designers and media – to help our children PLAY TODAY so we can all experience a better tomorrow.



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