



Consider the Power of Play in Shaping Australia's Future

For Immediate Release

BRISBANE, 27 July 2010: Balancing the rising cost of living with childcare and education commitments will be a key issue for many families in the lead up to the 2010 Federal Election. Playgroup Australia calls on all parties to acknowledge the need to support parents in their role as their child's first educator and consider how the power of play in early childhood can contribute to a strong and sustainable future.

While some may consider two children under five a handful, playgroups around the country cater for around 145,000 under five year olds each week! This makes the collective membership base of the state and territory playgroup associations the largest group of families with young children in Australia. Together with Playgroup Australia, over 105,000 families have a very real interest in the continued financial and political support for Playgroups across Australian communities, in order to inspire and support children's early development through play based learning, and strengthen parental support networks outside structured health and welfare programs.

Playgroup Australia Chief Executive Officer Karen Merange calls on all parties to confirm their commitment to the ongoing role and funding of Playgroups.

"We would like to see renewed consideration of the important role of playgroups in social equity, health and education outcomes for families with young children," says Ms Merange. "We have identified a number of areas in which extra government support could result in playgroups achieving broader outcomes."

"In particular, there is a strong link between Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) results and playgroup attendance. We believe an approach that promotes greater participation in community led playgroups will result in developing social capacity, as well as improved child development, school readiness and ultimately AEDI results."

"The success to date of the Supported Playgroup program in reducing social isolation should also be continued with additional funding to establish programs aimed at engaging vulnerable families. These include grandparent carers, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families, mothers living with Post Natal Depression and families supporting children with a disability."

"Playgroup Australia welcomes the introduction of Paid Parental Leave and the extension of education rebates that help Australian parents find both the means and the time to nurture their child's development in the early years. We ask our government to actively support the principles of COAG's Early Years Learning Framework by providing free and universal access to playgroups."

Playgroup Australia calls for improved outcomes for Australian children and their families through an extended role of playgroups in health, education and family and community services initiatives.

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