



Gudjagang Ngara Li-dhi
Aboriginal Community Centre

THE BENEFIT OF PLAYGROUPS ON CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT FACTSHEET - SEPTEMBER 2022

The right to play is a fundamental human right enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY FOR CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT IS WELL ESTABLISHED

It is so important, in fact, that the United Nations has declared it a basic right for every child.

Playgroups provide an opportunity for children to regularly engage in unstructured play with other children of a similar age and developmental stage, offering opportunities to develop their physical, emotional, social and language skills.

Playgroups also have a range of positive effects on parents and carers that translate into better outcomes for children, such as reduced social isolation, improved parenting skills and self-confidence, increased knowledge of relevant community services, and a greater awareness of their child's needs.

CHILDREN WHO ATTEND PLAY GROUPS ARE EQUIPPED WITH THE SKILLS TO CONTINUE LEARNING

Children engage in a variety of different play activities including dramatic play, physical play, and constructive play, each of which can impact on different aspects of childhood development including fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, language skills, social skills such as co-operation and taking turns, as well as problem solving skills.

These benefits extend well beyond primary school. Higher levels of educational success, employment and social skills have all been linked to moderate levels of participation in quality early childhood education.



Children who attend playgroup are half as likely to have developmental vulnerabilities when they start primary school



CHILDREN WHO ATTEND PLAYGROUPS ARE LESS LIKELY TO DEVELOPMENTALLY VULNERABLE

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a national assessment conducted every three years to examine how children have developed by the time they start school.

According to AEDC data from 2015, there are marked differences between children who attend playgroups prior to school and those who do not. Children who attend playgroups have higher social skills and more emotional maturity. The biggest differences between children, however, is in their language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. In fact, children who do not attend playgroups are more than two times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than those who do.

TABLE 1. AEDC results (% vulnerable) for children who did and did not attend playgroup prior to school

Did the child attend playgroup prior to starting school full-time?					
		Yes (n = 42, 952)		No (n = 76,293)	
		n	%	n	%
Developmental domains	Physical health and wellbeing	2,772	6.8%	8,849	12.3%
	Social competence	2,625	6.4%	8,538	11.9%
	Emotional maturity	2,309	5.7%	6,897	9.6%
	Language and cognitive skills	1,507	3.7%	7,284	10.1%
	Communication and general knowledge	2,075	5.1%	8,885	12.3%
Summary indicators	Vulnerable on one or more domains	6,402	15.8%	19,761	27.5%
	Vulnerable on 2 or more domains	2,823	6.9%	10,589	14.7%



Physical health and wellbeing

Children's physical readiness for the school day, physical independence and gross and fine motor skills

Social competence

Children's overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approach to learning and readiness to explore new things

Emotional maturity

Children's pro-social and helping behaviours, and absence of anxious and fearful behaviour, aggressive behaviour and hyperactivity and inattention

Language and cognitive skills

Children's basic literacy, interest in literacy, numeracy and memory, advanced literacy and basic numeracy

Communication skills and general knowledge

Children's communication skills and general knowledge based on broad developmental competencies and skills



HALLEA, 2

Amanda is a proud Gundungurra woman from La Perouse, Sydney. She moved to Darkinjung Country with her husband in 2018 to pursue local work opportunities. Their daughter, Hallea, was born at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Amanda enrolled Hallea, now 2, in playgroup and swimming in March 2022, as she was concerned with the impact pandemic lockdowns and limited opportunities to interact with other children and adults would have on her: "The only people she was really interacting with was me, my husband, my mum who looks after her while we work, and strangers at the shops."

Hallea now attends playgroup twice a week and swimming lessons once a week, all run by GNL.

Amanda describes improvements in Hallea's fine motor skills, her social-emotional development, and her cognitive skills: "Coming to playgroup has done a lot for Hallea socially and her development. She's made heaps of friends, and she's connecting to culture. She's getting more confident in the water and she's eating healthy foods that she wouldn't before because she watches the other kids. She's better at concentrating and listening, she could never stay sitting down whereas she does now, she'll sit and listen to a story."

Playgroup has also had a positive impact on Amanda's life as well: "It's been a great opportunity for me to socialise and build my own connections as well. We haven't been [on Darkinjung Country] long, so I don't have a great lot of friends down here. But I've been able to build those connections now."