

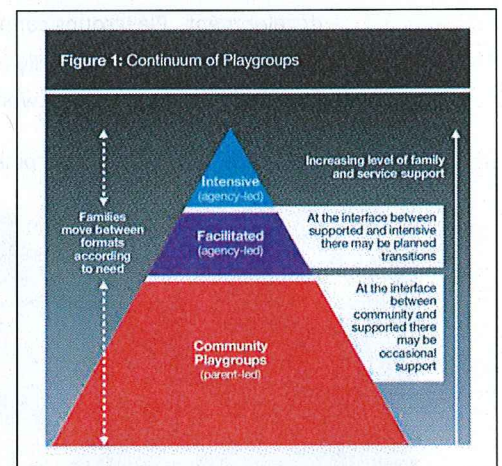
# Welfare Review Submission - Playgroup Victoria

## Pillar Two: Strengthening individual and family capability

*Reforms are needed to improve lifetime wellbeing by equipping people with skills for employment and increasing their self-reliance. To strengthen individual and family capability changes are proposed in the areas of mutual obligation, early intervention, education and training, improving individual and family functioning and evaluating outcomes.*

### Introduction:

What parents do at home with young children has the greatest impact on a child's social, emotional and intellectual development<sup>1</sup>. Strong attachment between a parent and child strengthens the effect of learning experiences and enhances the child's progress and development. Playgroup is a powerful centre of learning for young children, in partnership with their significant other and provides the platform for engaging parents in their children's learning and wellbeing. Community playgroups are organised by parents for parents in their local neighbourhood. These are truly the foundation of civil society with families assisting families on a voluntary basis in their local communities. In rural areas they are often the most accessible and only early years learning and support platforms for families. Community playgroups provide the universal base of the continuum of playgroups [ see right] and are a highly cost effective strategy to assist families in the early years to support the health and wellbeing of their children. They are also key to ensuring transition to early learning opportunities such as kindergarten and provide parents with critical support and opportunities to participate in civil society.



Supported and intensive playgroups provide a platform to professionally work with vulnerable children and families on key issues of attachment, parental capacity, understanding of the importance of child development knowledge, development of appropriate home environments for children and are a successful early intervention strategy. They are vital entry points into the service system for families and often are the most effective strategy in engaging families which the service system find hard to engage with. Too often they operate in isolation of other playgroup types.

Supported playgroups can be divided according to the level of need they target and whether they actively plan for transition to community playgroups. The latter is termed a transition playgroup and targets families who with some time limited support can learn to successfully participate in a volunteer based community playgroup.

Playgroups for young families are a critical platform to achieve participation in their community. Community and supported playgroups assist families to forge new relationships which sustain beyond their children's early years. They enhance family and community functioning by reinforcing the most important relationship a child has, that which occurs with a confident parent acting as their first and most enduring educator. The Victorian survey of playgroup participants in 2013 found that 88% of parents said they benefit from playgroup by meeting other parents and developing relationships in their neighbourhood. Playgroups also connected families with local services and supports. The 2013 survey found 35% of parents found out about kindergartens and schools via playgroup, 34% of parents found out about community services, 30% about health services and 83% about library services through their playgroup.

Playgroups act as effective platforms to link services to local families as demonstrated in state annual surveys where playgroup was the first point of contact for information on local services for over 35% of families. Playgroups are a highly cost effective early intervention and prevention strategy providing resources and local relationships and support that are critical for children's development and wellbeing. They support parents in their parenting role from a grass roots basis which research demonstrates is the most effective. The ECD Story<sup>2</sup> found that friends and other parents were one of the most used and least criticised sources for parenting information and mothers groups which are in fact playgroups ranked high as an important source of parenting information.

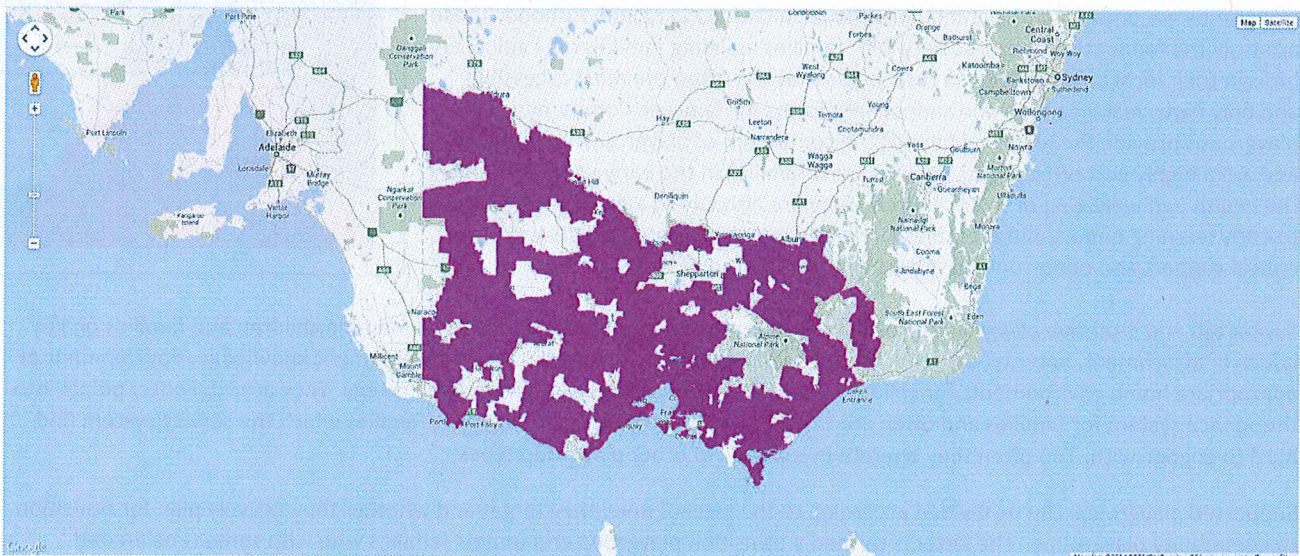
<sup>1</sup> Eleutheriou K., Emerson L., Fear J., van Bueren D., Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story: Social Marketing Campaign. May 24th 2012 Presentation South Australia and ARACY Annual Forum 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story. 2012

In summary playgroups produce outcomes for children, families and communities because:

- Families are where children learn. Parents are a child's first and most enduring educators. The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People [ARACY] noted that parents are the strongest influence in determining their children's life chances.
- Children under 3 learn through play and in relationships with their families and friends. Playgroups build these relationships and provide the platform for play based learning. Dr Rosie Robert's work on Companionable Learning<sup>3</sup> demonstrated that children 0-3 learn in relationships with others which is at the very heart of playgroups.
- Australian research has demonstrated that ongoing participation in playgroups has enabled vulnerable children to make up the social emotional and learning differences that existed between them and their non disadvantaged peers at school entry.<sup>4</sup>
- Families who are active and connected to their community provide a solid foundation for their children's development. Playgroups connect families to their community.
- Families get support primarily from their family and friends. Playgroups bring families together to form lifelong friendships and support networks within their own communities.

The reach of playgroups in Victoria:- pink indicates the presence of playgroups



40,000 children and 30,000 families attend playgroup weekly in Victoria

### ***Mutual obligation***

Page 80 to 85 of the Interim Report considers more tailored and broadening of mutual obligation and the role of income management. In shaping the future directions for mutual obligation the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How should participation requirements be better matched to individual circumstances?
- How can carers be better supported to maintain labour market attachment and access employment?
- What is the best way of ensuring that people on income support meet their obligations?
- In what circumstances should income management be applied?

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, Rosemary Wellbeing from Birth SAGE Publications UK 2010

<sup>4</sup> Hancock K.J, Lawrence D, Mitrou F, Zarb D, Berthelsen D., Nicholson J, & Zubrick S. "The association between playgroup participation, learning competence and social-emotional wellbeing for children aged 4-5 years in Australia." Australasian Journal of Early Childhood Volume 37 Number 2 June 2012

Playgroup Victoria would like to highlight to the Committee the opportunities parents are already taking by volunteering in their local community playgroups in the early years of their children's lives. This is mutual obligation in action for many parents. Community playgroups are kept alive by active participation of parents in the organising of the business and play / learning aspects of playgroups. Playgroups train parents for involvement in civil society organisations such as sporting associations, school parent bodies and kindergarten committees. In participating in playgroup committee's parents are developing core employment skills which Playgroup Associations on the eastern seaboard are seeking to recognise through formal certification processes. Parents are participating in business planning, fundraising and marketing activities, financial management, planning of evidence based early learning opportunities, stakeholder management, membership management and facility management. Anecdotally Playgroup Victoria knows these are key pathways into employment and further education for many under skilled women following the birth of their children. There is an opportunity to leverage increased participation of parents with children 0-3 years by recognising the volunteering in community playgroups as mutual obligation and thereby encouraging parents who may be more vulnerable, to participate more fully in their local playgroup. This participation can be in community playgroups or supported playgroups for those families requiring ongoing facilitated support. This should not be a forced initiative but one which recognises existing participation and supports / facilitates appropriate participation of parents and their children who are new to playgroup. In particular there is a role for Centrelink in assistance with playgroup fees for families with limited income and as a referral point to connect families to their local playgroups. By encouraging parents to participate in playgroups whether community or supported, the social support system will be intervening early to connect parents to key parenting supports in their community, enabling parents to access the ongoing support they need from others and from the local service system as well as exposing children to critical early learning opportunities which will set them up for school and more formal early years learning opportunities. This initiative will also ensure that parents are equipped to be the confident first educators of their children which evidence tell us is critical to a child's lifetime wellbeing.

### **Early intervention**

Page 85 to 88 of the Interim Report considers risk based analysis to target early intervention and investment and targeting policies and programmes to children at risk. In shaping the future directions for early intervention the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can programmes similar to the New Zealand investment model be adapted and implemented in Australia?
- How can the social support system better deliver early intervention for children at risk?

Playgroups play a key role in early intervention and prevention by enhancing parent and child attachment, strengthening social connectedness and creating links to services for families working through child protection issues and concerns.

Central to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children is the concept of civil society and the value of increasing social and civic participation in community. Child abuse can't be solved by child protection and welfare services alone. It requires population-based measures and the strengthening of protective factors such as parent-child attachment and social support. (Scott, 2012). Dawson and Berry (2002) identify effective engagement with families as contributing directly to positive outcomes, family preservation and the prevention of child placement. Many welfare and family support agencies use playgroup to work closely with the family unit. Facilitating a weekly supported playgroup for clients offers an excellent platform for engagement, role modelling appropriate parenting behaviours and enhancing parent and child attachment through play. At playgroup there is an opportunity to observe parent-child interaction and engagement of parents in discussions on the challenges of modern day parenting and parenting strategies. Playgroups are by their very nature, family-focused and provide multiple opportunities to enhance a family's capacity to feel empowered and make positive changes in their lives. Community capacity-building approaches, such as playgroups, focus more on the ability of families to draw support from their own less formal networks within the community, linking vulnerable families to other families within their own community. "The safety and wellbeing of children is primarily the responsibility of their families, who should be supported by and within their communities." (The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (COAG 2009) <sup>5</sup>

The social support system can directly facilitate participation of children at risk in playgroups through assisting with removal of cost barriers to participation and working with families to encourage appropriate playgroup participation to build attachment, parental capacity and service support. This can work in tandem with other Commonwealth initiatives which fund supported playgroups and the infrastructure to support community playgroups. The social support system can assist families with the direct costs of community playgroup participation eg travel, playgroup fees as well as assist community playgroups to reduce costs to families by subsidising venue hire.

This is particularly critical in rural and regional areas where community playgroups may well be the only early years' platform that is available for children at risk 0-3 years of age. Playgroup Victoria is involved in a Victorian Government-funded innovative pilot project with Early Learning Association of Australia [ELAA] to fund regional community playgroup development workers to promote increased participation of parents and children in playgroup and more effective transition to ongoing participation in 3 year old kindergarten. The establishment of these connections between playgroups and early learning services is an important component of the early learning cycle that helps to deliver the life-lasting social and economic benefits for the child. Where kindergarten is not commercially viable in small communities, playgroups can also act as the platform for delivery of early learning programs. This is particularly critical for children at risk in more isolated communities. This is a highly cost effective initiative at \$130,000-00 investment per region per annum.

## ***Education and Training***

### ***Improving individual and family functioning***

Page 90 to 93 of the Interim Report considers cost effective approaches that support employment outcomes by improving family functioning and the provision of services especially to people with mental health conditions to assist them to stabilise their lives and engage in education, work and social activities. In shaping the future directions for improving individual and family functioning, the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can services enhance family functioning to improve employment outcomes?
- How can services be improved to achieve employment and social participation for people with complex needs?

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<sup>5</sup> Playgroup Victoria Policy Brief No 5. Playgroups and Child Protection. July 2014.

Playgroup Victoria issued two policy briefs on Playgroups and responding to Mental Health<sup>6</sup> in late 2013. As the subject matter was vast, the policy brief was separated into 2 distinct briefs. The first brief (3.1) offered a review of what the key literature has said in relation to mental health, parenting and child development. The second policy brief (3.2) looked specifically at how playgroups can be utilised as a platform to work with families experiencing mental health issues and provided two Victorian examples of successful playgroup models. The brief concluded that playgroup provides a safe and supportive environment for parents to focus on their relationship with their child, and an opportunity for both parent and child to develop and enhance meaningful social and emotional connections outside of the family. During times of trauma and crisis, playgroup wraps supportive relationships around the child and family reducing social isolation and loneliness. Families often find practical support from within the playgroup circle, like offers of child minding, meals, transport to medical appointments or even just someone else to call on in times of need. In addition, a supported playgroup facilitator may refer a parent or family in to other community or health services as appropriate to their needs.

There are many playgroup models appropriate for families who are experiencing different layers of complexity with their mental health. Supported or Intensive Support Playgroups (ISP) are run by a playgroup facilitator and may include a family support worker and other professionals to offer targeted and specialised support to families within the playgroup setting. Many groups are embedded within family support or health services and are an integral part of their suite of services for families, parents and children. Playgroup Victoria would refer the Committee to the Our Time Playgroup [Northern Area Mental Health Service and Anglicare Victoria Preston] should they wish to see the outcomes of a supported playgroup located within a mental health service.

In rural and regional areas where community playgroups are often the only playgroups it is possible that engagement with local mental health or a primary health service could see a session for parents created within the community playgroup. In this instance, mental health staff and parent leaders co-facilitate the group. Many parents experiencing Post natal depression are already supported within community playgroups.

There are opportunities here for relevant support agencies to take advantage of this by engaging with playgroups, by linking in to existing playgroups, or by establishing a new playgroup for target families. This could be either the intensive or supported playgroup model, depending on the strengths and capacity of families and whether funding is available. Intensive where the families need specialist high level support with transition to supported or intensive housed within a mental health or primary health agency and supported where families still have complex needs but can benefit from less intensive work. Families can attend a supported or ISP for the period of time that they require extra support. Agencies may then consider the option of transitioning families into a community playgroup to continue to receive support at a less intensive level.

There are excellent examples of playgroups being used in a suite of family support services to work successfully with parents with substance use issues whose children are in and out of the out of home care and child protection systems. We refer the Committee to the SUPPS program [Substance Use in Pregnancy and Parenting Service] at Barnardos South Coast in NSW to see what is possible in the use of playgroup. This is a gold standard program.

The social support system has a key role to play in facilitating access for parents with complex mental health and substance use issues and their under 3 year old children to playgroups but also in funding key initiatives. Playgroups are a soft entry point to the broader service system and one which parents are often happier to access due to the fact they are less stigmatised. They are highly cost effective with unit costing for supported playgroups at \$28,000-00 per annum per playgroup and intensive supported playgroups at \$80,000-00 per annum. Funding support for community playgroups in regional areas can come through playgroup development workers at \$130,000-00 per region per annum [without rural and remote weightings].

When looking at employment prospects this submission has already highlighted the link between playgroup participation and the development of employment and further education pathways. Australia-wide volunteers take on playgroup leadership roles in the following areas:

- play practice/early childhood development - organising age & developmentally appropriate play activities for children & parents attending Playgroup
- playgroup leadership - running the playgroup including committee roles, fundraising and marketing
- community development - building community support for and pathways into playgroups & services for families, advocating for appropriate venues and resources for young children and raising funds to support local community & family initiatives.

It is these volunteer leaders with the support of state associations who drive the activity of community playgroups and ensure succession and sustainability of the playgroup in the local community. Evidence from Playgroup Assns. shows that many parents use their volunteering as a way of gaining work skills that leads ultimately to employment opportunities. This is an area with strong anecdotal evidence but no formal evaluation and may well be an area of investment that the Committee could recommend.

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<sup>6</sup> Playgroup Victoria Policy Brief No 3.1 and 3.2 Playgroups contributing to family mental health and wellbeing. 2013

## Evaluating outcomes

Page 93 of the Interim Report considers improved monitoring and evaluation of programmes aimed at increasing individual and family capability to focus on whether outcomes are being achieved for the most disadvantaged. In shaping the future directions for evaluating outcomes the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can government funding of programmes developing individual and family capabilities be more effectively evaluated to determine outcomes?

Playgroup Victoria has developed an outcomes framework [ refer attachment] using Results Based Accountability. This approach is accessible to all levels of the service system and the Committee is encouraged to consider its benefits in defining the outcomes for the individual and family consumers of the social support system. A brief summary of the approach is provided for the Committee:

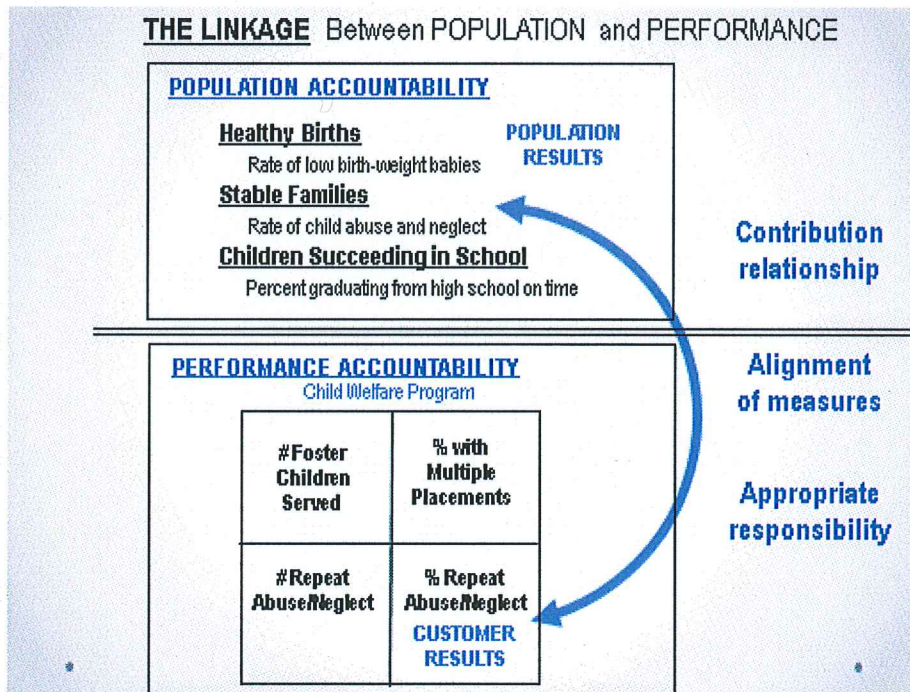
Results-Based Accountability™ is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that can be used to improve the quality of life in communities, cities, states, territories and nations. Results-Based Accountability™ can also be used to improve the performance of programs, agencies and service systems. It is a process which can be used in the planning, monitoring, evaluation and management of all human services. It is a process which defines measures and monitors outcomes.

Results-Based Accountability™ starts with ends and works backward, step by step, to means. For communities, the ends are conditions of well-being for children, adults, families and the community as a whole such as *Residents with Good Jobs, Children Ready for School, A Safe Neighbourhood, or A Clean Environment*. For services, the ends are how customers/ consumers are better off when the program works the way it should such as the percent of people in a job training program who get and keep good paying jobs.

What particularly stands RBA apart from all other planning and management models is its distinction between 2 forms of accountability:

- **Population Accountability** which is the responsibility of governments, territories and states and concerns itself with outcomes for a whole population and
- **Performance Accountability** which is about outcomes for client populations and is the responsibility of programs, agencies and service systems.

This clear distinction allows agencies to identify, measure & monitor the outcomes they are obtaining for their consumers and the contribution it makes to population wellbeing without having to demonstrate that it has a direct impact on whole populations or provide for costly evaluations. This approach works best when implemented within a quality improvement philosophy rather than as a blunt instrument where outcomes are seen as achieved or not achieved. It allows for truly reflective practice & quality improvement to occur within agencies and service teams and provides an accessible evidence base on outcomes for funding bodies. The schema below shows the contributory relationship between outcomes at the service / agency level to population level outcomes which governments hold accountability for. By developing a service system wide measurement methodology which is developed with and accessible for funded agencies and programs it is possible to demonstrate clearly the aggregated contribution of a service system such as the social support system to population results such as Stable Families.



Mark Friedman: Results-Based Accountability™ Implementation Guide: A Comprehensive Resource for the RBA/OBA Community [http://www.raguide.org/2\\_1.shtml](http://www.raguide.org/2_1.shtml)]

## Pillar Four: Building community capacity

Vibrant communities create employment and social participation for individuals, families and groups. Investments by government, business and civil society play an important role in strengthening communities. Also, access to technology and community resilience helps communities build capacity. Building community capacity is an effective force for positive change, especially for disadvantaged communities.

### Role of civil society

Page 112 to 116 of the Interim Report considers the role of civil society in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of civil society the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can the expertise and resources of corporates and philanthropic investors drive innovative solutions for disadvantaged communities?
- How can the Community Business Partnership be leveraged to increase the rate of philanthropic giving of individuals and corporates?
- How can disadvantaged job seekers be encouraged to participate in their community to improve their employment outcomes?



Recent ARACY research evidence<sup>7</sup> demonstrates that educational disadvantage is spread throughout the community and a sole focus on disadvantaged communities is less effective. It concluded:

“ Greater incidence of poor wellbeing in higher SES children in some areas, e.g.:

- Mental health: Prevalence of high or very high levels of psychological distress in youth
- Illicit drug use
- Alcohol or drug-related violence
- Antisocial behaviours in children
- Teenage pregnancy
- Asthma
- Meeting the dietary guidelines & daily recommended serves for fruit & veg

... ***So targeted approaches only to poor SES communities wont work*** “

The need to provide a universal prevention program for children 0-5 years and their families is amply evidenced by this recent AEDI evidence on children experiencing multiple vulnerabilities.

There is a clear role for corporate and philanthropic support for playgroups to assist in providing this universal platform. Housing developers should be providing establishment funding for 3 years to state based playgroup associations to facilitate the development of community playgroups in newly forming communities. These new housing developments provide affordable housing for young families and result in dislocation of families from their traditional extended family supports and means families have a need to develop new relationships in newly forming communities. Playgroups for young families are a critical platform to achieve this connection. Community and supported playgroups assist families to forge new relationships which sustain beyond their children's early years. This strategy grows both family strength as well as building community capacity and connection for a relatively small investment. Sustainable support after the 3 year period for playgroups will then come from membership to their state associations which provides key infrastructure support such as insurance and resourcing. Please refer to the Playgroup Victoria website for evidence on the scope of this resourcing. [www.playgroup.org.au](http://www.playgroup.org.au)

Philanthropic providers have already seeded work in communities requiring supported playgroups. There however is real room to grow this work to incorporate the full continuum of playgroups and ensure that families who have strengths to participate can transition from supported to community playgroups releasing up resources to work with those families who will require ongoing support through supported playgroups. Each community needs its own suite of playgroups depending upon its strengths and resources and both corporate and philanthropic support can assist communities to define and implement the right mix of playgroup services for their unique profiles.

Playgroups are already key drivers for business in the local community. Victorian playgroup survey results for 2014 indicate that 37% of families found out about good local businesses through their playgroups. Local business already supports their community playgroups with fund raising and this is returned through local patronage of business by playgroups. A lovely example of support is local men's sheds making toys for playgroups. These relationships are forged by the community playgroups facilitated and supported by their state association. This work could be easily strengthened through strengthening of the state based playgroup associations who provide the necessary co-ordination, facilitation and support to keep community playgroups operating and agencies running supported playgroups professionally supported. Community playgroups renew every 3 years which means there is a need to keep a constant and concerted focus on participation of families in playgroup. It is this work that associations undertake which keeps playgroups sustainable. Playgroup Victoria turned 40 in 2014 indicating that playgroups are not a fly by night phenomenon but a core component of civil society.

There are also many excellent examples of business support for playgroups such as local banks providing training and support for Committee Treasurers and community banks providing products specifically designed for playgroups to make the financial management easier. There is a great need to grow this work to achieve consistency across the country.

As discussed previously in this submission parents who are disadvantaged job seekers can benefit greatly from participation in playgroups as will their young children. Playgroups are a vital early entry point for families into the broader social service system and are poorly leveraged by this system. Playgroup Victoria looks forward to being able to work with government to improve their leverage of this wonderful civil society resource.

<sup>7</sup> Eleutheriou K., Emerson L., Fear J., van Bueren D., Engaging Families in the Early Childhood Development Story: Social Marketing Campaign. May 24<sup>th</sup>

## Role of government

Page 116 to 120 of the Interim Report considers the role of government in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of government the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can community capacity building initiatives be evaluated to ensure they achieve desired outcomes?
- How can the income management model be developed to build community capacity?

In evaluating community capacity building initiatives government needs to treat community as the consumer, define what the result is it wants for community and determine the key indicators of measurement of the result. It also needs to look at the different segments of community in this process as community is not homogenous and is to some extent self defined. Community for young families will differ to community for young adolescent jobseekers. Therefore government will have a number of different communities as consumers and different characteristics of capacity to measure.

Results Based Accountability methodology is used by Playgroup Victoria for this purpose and is recommended to the Committee for investigation as a methodology to achieve its own outcomes re role of government. For young families key performance measures relevant to community capacity could include:

- % 0-4 year olds participating in playgroup as a proxy measure for parental participation. We know from evidence that participation in volunteer based civil society organisations strengthens communities.
- Strength of civil society associations in the community eg sporting groups, interest groups, general volunteerism
- % families reporting they feel well connected to their community

To be truly effective in this measurement process the definition of the consumer/s needs to be real and accurate and therefore government has a strong role to play in co-designing its outcomes and measures with communities and civil society organisations. Without this government runs the risk of developing outcome measures which miss the mark. The Family Support program was a classic example of this when it failed to recognise that 47% of its consumers were community playgroup participants in a volunteer based model and developed its outcomes framework based upon only the consumers of its secondary level professional services such as Family Relationship Centres.

## Role of local business

Page 121 to 123 of the Interim Report considers the role of local business in building community capacity. In shaping the future directions for the role of local business the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- How can communities generate opportunities for micro business to drive employment outcomes?
- How can mutuals and co-operatives assist in improving the outcomes for disadvantaged communities?

As amply demonstrated in this submission community playgroups build key business competencies within parents who take active roles within the playgroup. There is extraordinary room to explore with state playgroup associations the rewards and motivators for disadvantaged parents to take on these more active roles such as certification pathways. It has long been the wish of playgroups associations to develop Cert I -III qualifications in marketing, management, business development, child care or early years education from the work that is undertaken by parent leaders in community playgroups. With the appropriate support from state associations, playgroups and parents can be encouraged to take up these opportunities should the development work on certification be funded. Linking this certification with local business opportunities would ensure that there are real pathways for employment for parents to move into locally when their children enter more formal education.

Community playgroups are co-operatives of parents at the local neighbourhood level. When using the term parents in this context it means dads, mums, grandparents, aunts, uncles and kinship carers who all participate in playgroups. Resourcing them to take advantage of their local business and service resources is something state associations have always done however given that State Playgroup Associations have received no growth funding for nearly a decade and have had to in many states reduce their service delivery and support this work could be easily strengthened with relatively small investments by government.

## Community Resilience

Page 125 to 126 of the Interim Report considers how community resilience can play a role in helping disadvantaged communities. In shaping the future directions for community resilience the Reference Group would like feedback on:

- What strategies help build community resilience, particularly in disadvantaged communities?
- How can innovative community models create incentives for self-sufficiency and employment?

This submission commends playgroups both community and supported to the Committee as an existing innovative model to build self sufficiency and resilience for families and communities. There are some aspects of innovation which can be easily harnessed:-

- The service system could recognise that families have been supporting families for years and with a little more consistent and solid investment by government in state playgroups associations they can grow family participation in playgroups ensuring greater reach of outcomes for children and parents.
- Government could fund State Associations to implement the innovative model of housing supported playgroups within community playgroups which will improve both transition for families from a supported to a volunteer model but also normalise the experience of families who require ongoing support. Such a program has been proposed in the current DSS grant round for priority sites in Victoria and requires trialling to fully develop the practice model.
- Improving the planning of playgroups within communities will significantly boost resilience and self sufficiency. In the past poor planning and placement of supported playgroups has undermined community playgroups by not accounting for the continuum which already exists in the community. This has led to the demise of community playgroups thus reducing the resilience and self sufficiency of the community. This can be seen in NSW with the widespread funding of supported playgroups. Playgroups need to be planned using the continuum of playgroups matched to the needs of families and communities. A higher needs community will require more supported than community playgroups with provision for robust transition playgroups. A more self sufficient community will have more community playgroups and transition playgroups and less supported and intensive playgroups. Moving communities from higher needs to self sufficiency is a complex task but can start with good planning in the early years.

