

Playgroup Statement a unified declaration for the future

Australian Catholic University (ACU) has partnered with Playgroup Australia to help develop a national Playgroup Statement outlining the purpose, benefits, and future direction of playgroups.

Associate Professor Karen McLean and Professor Susan Edwards, of ACU's Institute for Learning Sciences and Teacher Education, co-chaired a Playgroup Australia National Advisory Core Group of key stakeholders who contributed to the development of the inaugural Playgroup Statement.

Both Associate Professor McLean and Professor Edwards, who are leading experts in early childhood research, led the writing of the Statement with the National Advisory Core Group.

"This document brings together what we know about playgroups, the benefits of playgroups, and their future direction in a way that is unifying for the sector," Associate Professor McLean said.

"We are thrilled the undisputed importance of playgroups as a fun and effective way for children and their families to enhance their social skills, educational and economic opportunities, support networks and physical and mental health is being acknowledged."

Professor Edwards said it was important to ensure families had access to affordable, inclusive, and developmentally and culturally appropriate playgroups.

"The multiple benefits of playgroups to children, their families, the health and social fabric of communities, and the economy cannot be overstated, and we are committed to continuing our important research to ensure all children have access to a range of suitable playgroup opportunities," she said.

The Playgroup Statement provides a unified definition of what playgroups are, and outlines their benefits to children, communities, families, and social and economic wellbeing, as well as including a call to action on three areas: access and participation, policy formation and implementation, and research scale and translation.

"This Playgroup Statement gives us a foundation for practice, research, and policy," Associate Professor McLean said.

"We can use this to inform policy at a local, state and national level to see what's needed in our communities, what role playgroups take and how we can best support them."

Playgroup Australia CEO Dr Amanda Walsh said the inaugural statement highlighted the role of playgroups in supporting children's development and building strong families and communities.

"Playgroups are undervalued as an element of Australia's social infrastructure," she said.

"We want the Playgroup Statement to kickstart a national conversation on how we ensure that all children and families, wherever they are and whatever their circumstances, can benefit from playgroup."

Media opportunity: The Playgroup Statement will be officially launched at Playgroup South Australia's annual Playgroup at the Zoo event at Adelaide Zoo (Frome Road) today at 11.00am (ACDT). Associate Professor McLean and Dr Walsh will be in attendance and available for interview. Federal Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth is scheduled to speak at the event.

Professor Edwards is also available today for comment.

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