



1972-2022

Celebrating 50 years
Playgroup
WA (Inc)



50 YEARS OF PLAYGROUP

in Western Australia

by Lucy Hair



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Some of the logos that have been used to represent PGA and PGWA.

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INTRODUCTION

What is a Playgroup? A playgroup is a group of parents and pre-school children who meet together as members of a family to interact in creative play activities - 'How to Form a Playgroup Brochure', 1974

The definition of playgroup has remained unchanged for 50 years in Western Australia. While the understanding of 'parent' now extends to include grandparents, carers or guardians, essentially the fundamental concept of family members meeting up with other families has continued in communities throughout Western Australia.

There have been many educational, political and social factors that have changed the way society has functioned in the last 50 years. How is it then that the core and fundamental operations of the Playgroup Association of Western Australia (PGA, from 1972) and Playgroup WA (PGWA, re-named in 2001) are still based on the simple premise that parents and children need to grow together through play?

It is acknowledged that PGWA represents hundreds of playgroups throughout the state but this is a history of their representative body rather than a history of all individual playgroups. The objective of this book is to celebrate the positive impact upon and the growth of local communities through playgroups as well as exploring some of the factors that have shaped and influenced the way the PGA/PGWA has operated. Changes in educational policy and government funding of the community services sector feature prominently. In many ways these changes and sometimes limiting constraints illustrate just how important the work of the PGA/PGWA has been in many local communities. Before we explore some of these factors, let's look back to the formation of the Playgroup Association of Western Australia in 1972.



THE SNOWBALLING PLAYGROUP MOVEMENT

In February 1972, a group of like-minded people met at St Andrew's Hall in Barker Road, Subiaco with the intention of forming an association of Play Groups. Margaret Sundborn was elected the first President.¹ There were at least 30 known playgroups in operation around Perth.² Many of these groups had formed organically. For example, the Hackett Playgroup Association commenced in 1967 and evolved from a morning coffee group started by four mothers.³ The Subiaco Playgroup had commenced in the late 1960s in a similar manner.⁴

Playgroups, or equivalents, had existed elsewhere for decades and were all based around parental involvement rather than the employment of qualified teachers. It was believed that 'parent cooperatives' began in the USA in 1916. A similar concept emerged in New Zealand during World War Two and by 1972 there were 640 play centres operating throughout New Zealand. This became the model for Australian playgroups and the Western Australian association commenced just a few months before a similar association was formed in New South Wales.⁵ Playgroups snowballed in other Australian states too with associations formed in Queensland in 1973, Victoria in mid-1974, Tasmania and South Australia in 1975 and the ACT in 1976.⁶

Many of the early Committee members were parents based locally around Subiaco and Nedlands and some of them worked in the medical or social services sector. Wisely, the Committee decided to ask Professor William (Bill) McDonald, Professor of Child Health, to be their Patron.⁷ Dr Geoff Dixon, Psychiatrist in Charge at Princess Margaret Hospital (and husband of Committee member Cynthia Dixon, herself a Clinical Psychologist) and Committee member Ray Morland, a social worker, were advisers.⁸

Professor McDonald and advisers Ray and Geoff often worked with Child Health Nurses who in turn promoted playgroups to new mothers very successfully.⁹ Feedback from the Child Health Nurses confirmed there was a strong need for this type of service within the community.¹⁰ The proliferation of playgroups was swift and exponential. By October 1973 there were more than 100 playgroups known to be operating throughout the state.¹¹

*The Association's ideal situation that 'mothers should not live further than walking distance' from a playgroup was becoming feasible.*¹²

The Playgroup Association was an advisory service rather than a regulator. Early committees noted that 'no two groups are exactly the same' and it was anticipated that there would be differing philosophies, local conditions and needs. The Association's aim was to share information about the playgroup concept rather than regulate groups into rigid conformity.¹³





Even when our children can all go to kindergarten, we feel that the playgroup will still have a very important role to play in the community (The Playgroup Movement brochure, 1973)

The newly formed Playgroup Association concentrated on assisting new groups to form and grow.¹⁴ The Constitution was based around the concept of 'you belong to a group – your group belongs to the Assoc!'¹⁵ Playgroups were never considered a replacement for kindergarten. 'At present playgroups are also providing an alternative means of pre-school education and supplementing an inadequate kindergarten system. But even when our children can all go to kindergarten, we feel that the playgroup will still have a very important role to play in the community.'¹⁶

EDUCATION OR COMMUNITY SERVICE?

In 1972, the State Government Education Act required children aged six years to enter full-time schooling. Educational opportunities for pre-school children were less clearly defined. The Federal Government began investigating and investing in early years education through the introduction of The Child Care Act 1972. As the Playgroup Association would point out many times, playgroups differed from formal schooling as the groups were led by parents rather than run by qualified teachers.¹⁷ Kindergartens had operated for decades but at this time, like playgroups, they often relied on the efforts of volunteers and parents to continue operating.¹⁸

In Western Australia, the Pre-School Board was established in 1973 under the Pre-School Education Act 1973.¹⁹ The Kindergarten Association was dissolved as a result of the new legislation. There were significant impacts upon the way kindergartens were subsequently defined, organised and run.²⁰

The Pre-School Board recognised emerging playgroups 'as a significant feature of pre-school education' and emphasised the need to 'preserve the spontaneity of these groups and the considerable enthusiasm of mothers to be involved in establishing these groups.'²¹

The newly formed PGA chose open dialogue peppered with some caution when it came to the Pre-School Board. The Committee noted that the Kindergarten Association had chosen a path of 'confrontation' with the Pre-School Board but PGA made the decision for a more diplomatic path 'to give the government a chance to fulfil its own policy.'²² The Pre-School Board considered its role regarding playgroups was 'to respond to the groups' requests for assistance rather than seek to impose pre-conceived concepts on the groups'.²³

Technically playgroups came under the jurisdiction of the Pre-School Board.²⁴

Practically the PGA was left largely to its own devices as it navigated its way through the rapidly changing early years education landscape. Over subsequent years it would align itself more to the community services sector rather than the education sector.

INTERACTING WITH PLAYGROUP MEMBERS

The central focus of PGA was on sharing information with families and communities. With playgroups mushrooming everywhere, the committee soon realised that some form of delegation was not only a good idea but completely essential to keep up with numerous requests for assistance from new playgroups. In the initial years of the Association, engagement with members was through the magazine *Interaction*, the Play Supervisor's course and an ongoing advisory service.

The Committee commenced work on a magazine as the most suitable platform to distribute information and share ideas with members.²⁵ In March 1973, the first edition of *Interaction* was produced. 'We have chosen *Interaction* as the name of the WA Playgroup Association publication because it is our hope that the Association will help to meet the need for this in the increasingly urban and fragmented society. Without interaction we cannot have integration. Playgroups can increase interaction between parent and child, old and young, husband and wife, aboriginal and white.'²⁶ *Interaction* would go on to be the main source of communication with members for almost four decades.

A Play Supervisor's course was developed in early 1973 with the hope of not only passing on skills to individuals but to establish a band of local contacts as the faces for PGA within communities.²⁷ There was considerable demand for the Play Supervisor's course although it did not result in a large number of 'Supervisors' so much as identifying there were large numbers of parents wanting to increase their skills and confidence in educating/playing with their children.²⁸ From the course, it also emerged that there were many skills members had that could be shared with other members.²⁹

PGA was a small band of Committee members doing an extraordinary amount of work. Queries about playgroups were being handled by Committee members on their home phones – a dedicated office was several years away.³⁰

Finances were extremely modest with just \$58.16 in the PGA bank account at the time of the first AGM in February 1973.³¹ Similarly, the production of *Interaction* was content-rich based on the extensive knowledge within the committee and prepared with huge amounts of voluntary artistic skill and labour. It was assembled using someone's kitchen bench or dining table before it was ready to mail out to members. Several people involved in these early editions remember that assembling *Interaction* editions was a very social evening out.³²

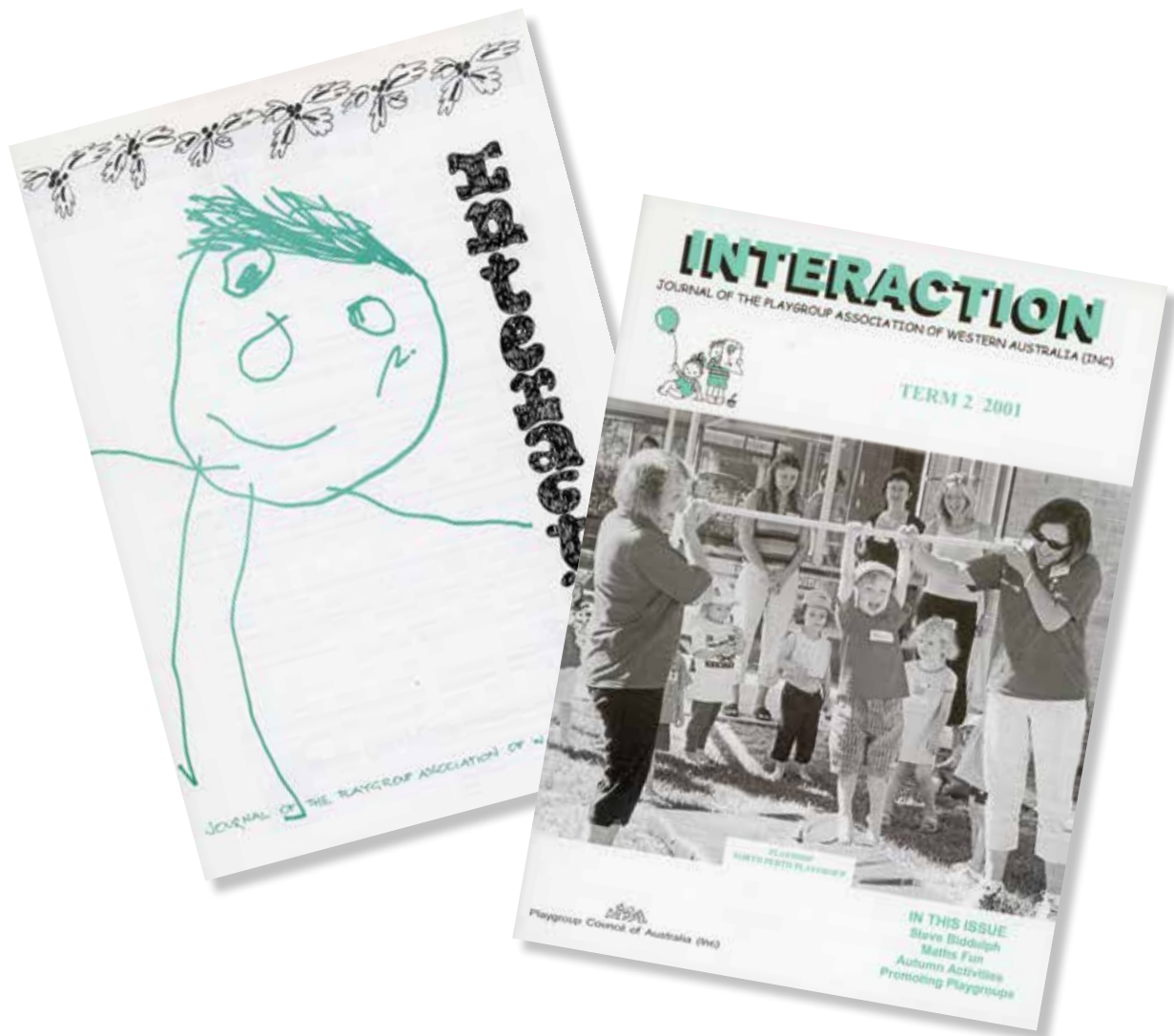


“We have chosen *Interaction* as the name of the WA Playgroup Association publication because it is our hope that the Association will help to meet the need for this in the increasingly urban and fragmented society. Without interaction we cannot have integration.”



INTERACTION

One of the fundamental principles of PGA was to share information with members and prospective members. One or two newsletters were assembled before a decision was made to produce a magazine around three or four times a year. The first edition of *Interaction* was published in March 1973. The early editions were A5 with black and white only. Limited funds meant that the magazine had to be produced at minimal cost. It was sold to non-members for 20c a copy to recoup some of those costs. Eversley Davies was the first editor. She remembered compiling the newsletter with the help of Tricia Valdman and a band of volunteers.³³



Interaction was clearly intended to provide information about the Playgroup Association and particularly to share advice about forming playgroups or identify common problems many playgroups faced. It always contained craft and activity ideas for parents to share with their children. *Interaction* usually featured a child's drawing on the cover.

There were a few artists in the 1970s but from April 1978 *Interaction* was illustrated by the talented Penny Davis (now Hudson).³⁴ Penny's distinctive and charming drawings became a defining feature of *Interaction*. Recognising Penny's considerable skills, her drawings were used as the basis for many PGA publications, flyers and posters. Her logo showing children with a balloon was used for many years to represent the Association.³⁵

The format changed several times – it became an A4 version in mid-1985. *Interaction* was edited by a Volunteer Editor and various playgroups compiled and distributed the magazine on a rotational/volunteer basis. A paid editor was appointed in 1996.³⁶ The increasing number of professional staff from the mid-1980s is clearly reflected through *Interaction* containing many reports and articles from the Development Officers and Field Liaison Officers. It often featured 'Fluffy Ducks' a column devoted to household hints and play activities.



Single-colour or two-colour editions gave the magazine a more appealing look from the early 1990s as printing costs became more affordable. Similarly, photographs were used from the early 1990s onwards. Penny Davis, now known as Penny Hudson, continued to provide her whimsical illustrations that gave *Interaction* such a consistent and inviting look before she retired in 2004.

Interaction went through at least two makeovers, the 'green' and 'orange' editions, before it was phased out in 2009. It was replaced with *Totline* that was available for all playgroup associations throughout Australia from 2010 to 2013. *Little Things* was published quarterly from 2013. Similarly, a fortnightly newsletter was emailed to members from July 2007 that later changed to a monthly publication.³⁷ Since the mid-2010s, a range of online and social media platforms have been used to communicate with members as well as two monthly e-newsletters to playgroup committees and members.³⁸

The methods used to engage with members have changed but the Association has always used such platforms effectively to adhere to their core objective of sharing information with members. *Interaction* is representative of how PGA/PGWA achieved that for more than three decades.

THROWING SNOWBALLS

*In her President's report in mid-1974, Cynthia Dixon commented, 'Perhaps it is the President who fires the snowballs, but it's the committee that makes them!'*³⁹

This comment is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it was an indication of how closely the Committee needed to work together to progress their objectives. Secondly, it was also symbolic of the Association's preferred method of operation being gentle persuasion rather than confrontation. The pile of snowballs also implied that there were many groups, organisations and government representatives who needed to learn about the Association. Also, snowball fights are usually fun and therefore representative of the Committee following their own mantra of learning/sharing through play.⁴⁰

In addition to reaching out to members, the PGA was also liaising with like-minded groups and professional bodies and organisations. Child Health Sisters, as mentioned previously, were an obvious match as were the Lady Gowrie Centre, Ngala, Wanslea and the Nursing Mothers' Association.⁴¹ PGA also kept a close eye on any developments in State Government Education through liaising with and making submissions to the Pre-School Board.⁴²

Lex Grey, who had been heavily involved in the development of Play Centres throughout New Zealand visited Perth in 1973 upon invitation by the Committee.⁴³ Grey gave a well-attended and well-received series of public talks. He also visited several playgroups and was very supportive of the work the PGA was doing.⁴⁴ He made suggestions about representation on the Pre-School Board but, like the PGA Committee, was wary of becoming formalised. At this time President Cynthia Dixon had met with Pre-School Board Chairman, Dr Mossenson several times. The meetings were not overly productive as she diplomatically noted in *Interaction* that 'we are hoping to gradually work out where we fit in with the Board'.⁴⁵ The Committee had a clear objective regarding the Pre-School Board, 'the main thing we're after is government finance not government control'.⁴⁶ PGA would have to wait over a decade for State Government funding.

The number of playgroups was still growing exponentially – as was the work of the Committee.⁴⁷ All this work required a dedicated office space. The PGA had its first office in the Community Development Centre in Selby Street, Shenton Park by August 1973.⁴⁸ Just a few months later they had moved to the Melting Pot in Nedlands. PGA moved many times over subsequent years.⁴⁹





Wickham Street, East Perth, 1989

MULTIPLE MOVES

The Playgroup Association had six homes during the 1970s and early 1980s before they moved to Meerilinga in 1982. Establishing an office was high on the Committee's agenda as much of the work was being done from their respective homes. PGA relied heavily on whatever temporary, and preferably free, accommodation arrangements could be made.

The first office was Room 47 in the Community Development Centre in Selby Street, Shenton Park. It is believed the office was established around August 1973 and made available through connections with the medical network many Committee members had.⁵⁰ They were only there for a short time and had moved into the 'Melting Pot' in Hampden Road, Nedlands by December the same year. It was explained in the minutes that the Community Development Centre 'didn't work out as we hoped'.⁵¹ Similarly, the Melting Pot was only a temporary arrangement as the Committee resolved they 'should cease using the Melting Pot by end of 1974'.⁵² The Committee noted, 'both the location and setting were unsatisfactory for most mothers and children'.⁵³

With assistance from the United Parish of Victoria Park, PGA moved to 16 Mint Street, East Victoria Park by May 1975. The building was used as the Victoria Park Counselling Centre and PGA was able to use part of the premises as office and storage space.⁵⁴ During 1976, Committee meetings were held at 16 Rheola Street, West Perth on the first Monday evening of each month.⁵⁵ PGA did make an approach to use space at Rheola Street but was advised that all available spaces were used during weekdays.⁵⁶



Woodville Lane, North Perth, 1997

By 1978, PGA was operating from a new location, 'Fleur House', 1167 Hay Street in West Perth and shared an office with the Australian Pre-School Association.⁵⁷ The premises at 'Fleur House' were adequate but the Committee noted a paint and clean was needed. At least one Committee member voted to move 'if something suitable was available.'⁵⁸

By January 1979, PGA had moved to leased premises at 299 Rokeby Road in Subiaco. This was another short-term move as a year later the building was sold and proposed to be demolished.⁵⁹ By May 1980 they had decided to 'pay up and get out!'⁶⁰

Office space became available at the Lady Gowrie Centre, 250 Gloucester Street, East Victoria Park, from May 1980.⁶¹ Lady Gowrie was not as centrally located as previous premises, but the Perth City Council provided much-appreciated rental assistance for PGA.⁶² Like the Rokeby Road office, PGA only remained at Lady Gowrie for around one year. They were offered rooms in Meerilinga in Hay Street, West Perth in 1981 and moved there in 1982.⁶³

With their first long-term accommodation in place, PGA grew enormously while at Meerilinga.⁶⁴ So much so that it was reported that 'our committee had trouble fitting around the meeting table'.⁶⁵ PGA remained at Meerilinga for eight years before the purchase of 35 Wickham Street, East Perth in 1989.⁶⁶

Wickham Street, like Meerilinga, was a stable base for the Association. The Lotteries Commission funded part of the purchase costs. By the mid-1990s, the area around East Perth was changing and it became more difficult for members to find parking. A new home needed to be found. PGA purchased premises at Woodville Lane, North Perth in 1997.⁶⁷ In 2022, PGWA is still based in Woodville Lane.

'We have started from small beginnings and mushroomed to an organisation of considerable size throughout the State' – Cynthia Dixon, 1974

A decentralised model of local Zone Coordinators was developed to alleviate some of the workload. This was likely to have been a revival of the idea of having a series of local contacts the Committee had hoped would emerge from the Play Supervisor's Course. 'We feel that by decentralizing we will not only take the load off the Association but that each community will be able to respond to the local needs more adequately.'⁶⁸ The first meeting of the Zone Coordinators was April 1974.⁶⁹ The metropolitan area was divided into 27 zones. As 17 people nominated to become Zone Coordinators, some zones had the same Coordinator. The seven country zones were supported by seven Zone Coordinators.⁷⁰

At Federal Government level, the 'Fry Report' (1974) examined provision of places for early years education. Playgroups, while contributing 'to genuine needs in the community' were outside their terms of reference.⁷¹ In 1974, the State Government trialled a pilot program for Pre-Primary centres in state schools.⁷² Educational programs for children below the age of five were not a priority for State Government at this time although the Pre-School Board considered submissions in relation to anything outside their terms of reference.⁷³

*PGA's submission focused on playgroups being a community of families with benefits not only for the child but for the parents as well.*⁷⁴

Much of 1974 was devoted to working through issues surrounding the Pre-School Board. PGA was of the opinion that it may have been better to come under the Community Recreation portfolio 'because in large part we were afraid of regulations and unreasonable restrictions if we come within the Pre-School Education Board.'⁷⁵ At a meeting with Minister MacKinnon, the government attempted to lure PGA with a promise of funding. Cynthia Dixon reported back to members that, 'I pointed out that we have started from small beginnings and mushroomed to an organization of considerable size throughout the State without any governmental assistance at all and, whilst it may seem strange, we have recently decided we would not be seeking governmental assistance.'⁷⁶

It was a busy time and there was always much to discuss at playgroup meetings. The minute taker at the 1974 AGM, having commenced duties at 7:30pm closed the minutes with: 'Meeting closed at 11:30 after much coffee, waffle + hot air'.⁷⁷



GROWTH AMID UNCERTAINTY

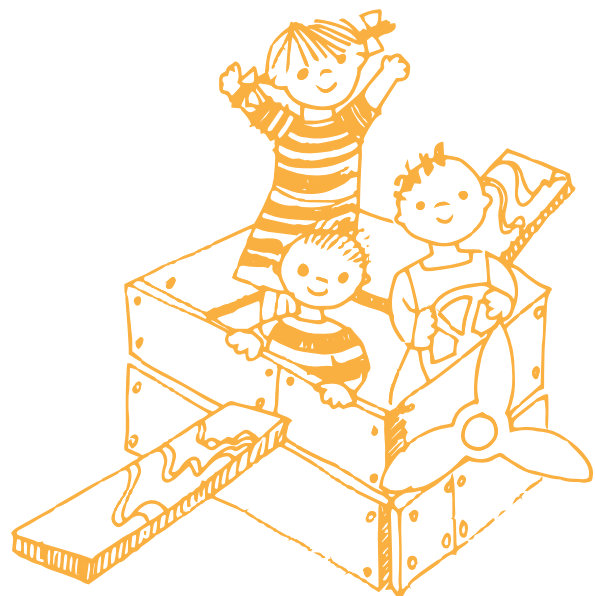
The Pre-School Board recognised the growth of playgroups by appointing a Pre-School Adviser in 1974-1975.⁷⁸ The following year the Pre-School Board reported they had assisted around 300 playgroups through the preparation of guidelines for new groups on issues such as size, formation and finding venues.⁷⁹ Unsurprisingly, this apparent duplication of the work of the PGA led to some confusion for existing, new and prospective playgroup members. Using *Interaction* to broadcast concerns, members were advised to use caution when liaising with the Pre-School Board while the PGA was finding its place within the legislative framework created by the Pre-School Board Act.⁸⁰

President Cynthia Dixon resigned in June 1974 as she was returning to the UK later that year.⁸¹ Committee Member Terry Solomon was also travelling overseas for work. The loss of members was keenly felt prompting Acting President, Margaret Oliver, to tell the audience at the 1975 AGM in March that, 'for a number of reasons the Management Committee has not functioned since September.'⁸²



The machinations of the Pre-School Board and an amendment to the Act continued to occupy Committee Members well into 1976. 'We found our attention and energies concentrated on coming to terms with the implications of our new official relationship with the Pre-School Board. Three of us shared in the extra monthly meetings which this entailed. The principle of guidelines for parents rather than imposed standards has been accepted by the Board and we welcome the growing acceptance of the role of professionals as resource people for the community.'⁸³

The PGA was offered a \$5,000 grant through the Children's Commission, but it would have required changes to the constitution to be made. Clearly the funds would have been helpful as the need to answer a growing number of queries continued unabated.⁸⁴ At this time, around early 1976, much of the work fell to the Membership Secretary. Four Committee members listed their home phone numbers in the telephone directory as contacts for PGA.⁸⁵ It was not unusual for these Committee Members to receive 40 to 50 calls a week.⁸⁶ Publicity and recruitment were not priorities for PGA as the spread of playgroups was happening so organically that promotion was not required.⁸⁷ The insurance scheme commenced in April 1977 was another benefit for existing members and also a good incentive for other groups to become members of PGA.⁸⁸



Problems continued into 1977 with many changes to the Committee. With such a high turnover retiring President Margaret Oliver attended many meetings to provide guidance when required. No nominations for President, Secretary or Treasurer were received so a special meeting was called a month after the AGM to elect new Committee members who were presumably encouraged to nominate after the AGM.⁸⁹ The possibility of PGA folding was real enough that a letter was sent to members in April 1977 and explained that, 'some of you may be wondering why your insurance and/or membership cheques were not cashed. The reason for this was if the association was to have folded up, all cheques would have had to be returned'.⁹⁰

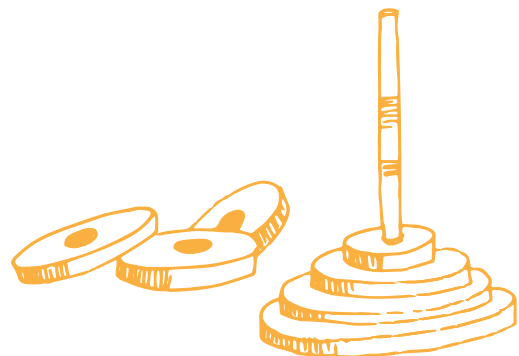
There was some tangible engagement with the Pre-School Board around 1976-1977. Pre-School Board member, Valmai Van Mens, sometimes attended PGA meetings and the Pre-School Board offered \$500 to assist with the cost of posting *Interaction*.⁹¹ Just as a way forward was negotiated, a massive change was put into effect. In a move that would result in 'outrage in the community', particularly amongst the Kindergarten sector, the State Government announced plans to abolish the Pre-School Board in May 1977.⁹² For PGA, the change was perhaps not as significant as it sounded. When the Pre-School Board was abolished all their functions were subsequently vested in the Minister for Education.⁹³ The Education Department's Pre-Primary Branch effectively underwent a name change to incorporate all the previous functions of the Board and was now known as the Early Childhood Branch.⁹⁴

The Education Department had been focusing on the provision of Pre-Primary places within government schools. As such, it was not yet focused on the provision of educational services and programs for children under the age of five.⁹⁵

APPOINTING STAFF

PGA received very welcome news in January 1978 of a \$6,000 grant from the Federal Department of Social Security.⁹⁶ The Federal Government funding allowed PGA to employ its first paid worker. Past-President Margaret Oliver was offered the position of Secretary.⁹⁷ At least four Committee Members must have rejoiced at the news for they would no longer need to provide their home phone numbers as the contact phone numbers for PGA. It also meant that the somewhat onerous position of Membership Secretary was no longer required.⁹⁸

By 1978, PGA was operating from a new location, 'Fleur House', 1167 Hay Street in West Perth and shared an office with the Australian Pre-School Association.⁹⁹ There was sufficient funding for the Secretary to work up to 15 hours per week and to cover the purchase of some office items.¹⁰⁰ An Imperial Golfball electronic typewriter at a likely cost of \$1,160 was the first and most expensive priority. Next in order of priority were books (\$500), answering machine (\$275), shelves (\$200), filing system (\$50) and several spaces further down and last on the list was a fridge (\$160).¹⁰¹





The PGA was fortunate that Penny Davis saw the call for a voluntary Artist in early 1978... Penny's whimsical style of drawing children at play would become a defining and instantly recognisable feature of Interaction for the next twenty-five years.

Interaction continued to provide information to members about all the many changes and challenges that occurred in the mid-1970s. For many years Val Talbot was the Artist for *Interaction* but a new Artist needed to be found when she moved to a different state in late 1977.¹⁰² The PGA was fortunate that Penny Davis saw the call for a voluntary Artist in early 1978.¹⁰³ Penny was a member of the Cottesloe playgroup and attended with her young son. Illustrations were not Penny's usual artistic medium, but she decided to try her hand at producing drawings for *Interaction*.¹⁰⁴

Penny's first edition was a special edition of *Interaction* in April 1978 and her whimsical style of drawing children at play would become a defining and instantly recognisable feature of *Interaction* for the next 25 years. The special edition was based on a conference held in Adelaide to bring all state associations together. Channels of communication between the

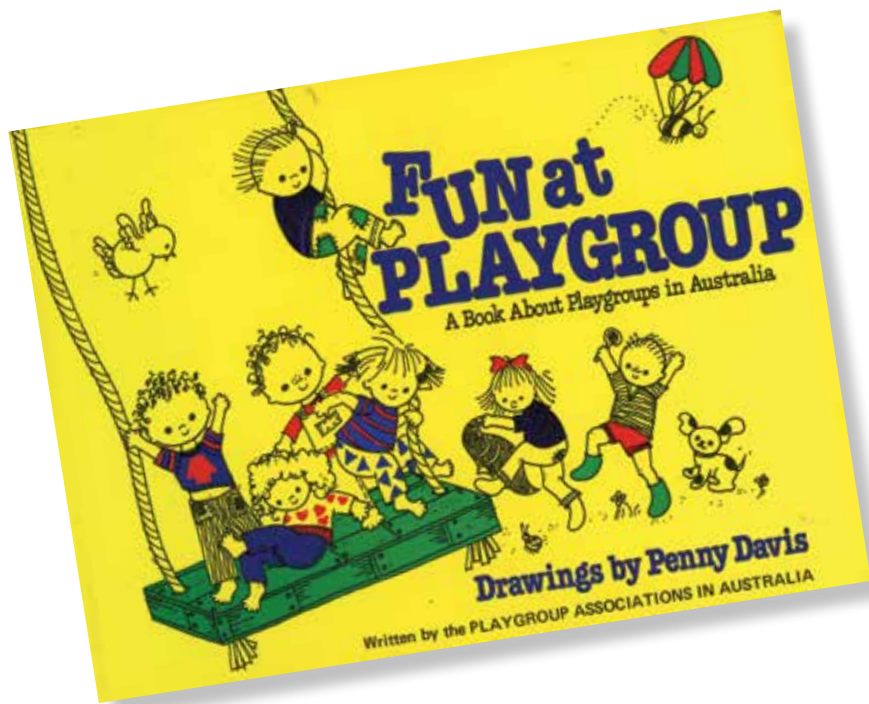
groups were established at the conference and an ambitious first national project agreed upon – a 'Playgroup Book' that would, over the next year or so, become the *Fun at Playgroup* book.¹⁰⁵

While the national groups were busy working on the substantial *Fun at Playgroup* book, the PGA continued to work on their own series of booklets. 'How to form a playgroup' was being revised in 1978 and work was done to translate them into Italian, Greek, Yugoslav, Spanish, Turkish, Portuguese and Vietnamese.¹⁰⁶

A resource centre was operating by the end of 1978 with a lending library containing books, pamphlets and films. 'Starter boxes' were also created for new groups.¹⁰⁷



L-R: Del Sterpini, Penny Hudson (Davis) and Patron Ruth Reid



In late 1978, a meeting with a representative of the Office of Child Care revealed that the Federal Government would make \$45,000 available to all playgroup associations with \$9,000 allocated to Western Australia. After discussion by the Committee, it was decided to request their portion of the funding be used to employ a part-time Development Officer over a two-year period.¹⁰⁸ Federal Government funding was approved in early 1979 and the PGA was granted, '\$4,500 for a Field Worker and \$6,000 for continuing assistance'.¹⁰⁹ Shirley Ayton was offered the role of Development Officer in mid-1979.¹¹⁰

PGA began selling craft paint in August 1979 and soon added a limited supply of other craft items.¹¹¹ Purchasing paint was available to members of associated playgroups. As paint was sold for only five percent above cost, it was more of a community service than a profitable business. Nevertheless, it became a popular item and a valid reason for members to visit headquarters.¹¹² It was around the same time that PGA wrote to the Australian Tax Office seeking a general sales tax exemption for all playgroups to prevent each playgroup having to apply individually.¹¹³

The *Fun at Playgroup* book that came about from the national conference held in 1978 was launched by Senator Margaret Guilfoyle in October 1979. Two of the chapters were prepared by PGA, Penny Davis provided all the illustrations for the book and Val Talbot (the former PGA Artist) had designed the national logo.¹¹⁴ A Perth launch occurred the week after with the Minister for Education, Mr Peter Jones, launching the book. A donation from Town & Country 'enabled purchase of *Fun at Playgroup* for release in WA'.¹¹⁵

Major staffing changes occurred at the end of 1979 when Margaret Oliver requested six months leave of absence to go overseas and Shirley Ayton resigned. As well as losing their staff, PGA also received notice that their new office accommodation at 299 Rokeby Road, Subiaco was to be sold and probably demolished. The Minister for Education was approached for assistance. PGA had been planning to purchase a promotional trailer but obviously this was abandoned in the face of needing to find a new home – again.¹¹⁶ By May 1980 the office had moved to the Lady Gowrie Centre at 250 Gloucester Street, East Victoria Park. Assistance in finding accommodation was provided by the City of Perth rather than State Government.¹¹⁷



As noted previously, the Education Department had an advisory service for playgroups as part of their Early Childhood Branch. The provision of Pre-Primary education was very much the focus for the Education Department so much so that pre-school education was rarely discussed in their Annual Report.¹¹⁸ The PGA aimed to meet with representatives from the Education Department to keep playgroups on the State Government's agenda.¹¹⁹ As noted by the Committee, *'it is hoped that there will be a clarification to the public of the philosophy and value of Playgroups, which should not be confused with Four-year-old Playgroups or Pre-School'*.¹²⁰

In late 1980, a National Playgroup Council was being established. While PGA supported the concept, they refrained from joining at this stage as 'we do not have the resources or personnel to work efficiently within the council'. Support was provided in other ways, such as lobbying politicians across the country to seek a sales tax exemption for all playgroups.¹²¹ In September 1981, 'WA voted against the National Body being formed at the Conference as did two other States'.¹²²

The Zone Coordinators appeared to have reduced in numbers by the late 1970s.¹²³ Essentially this meant that maintaining a list of current playgroup contacts fell back to being the duty of the PGA office staff. Call outs for Zone Coordinator volunteers were made through *Interaction* and the President's report at the AGM.¹²⁴

A STABLE HOME

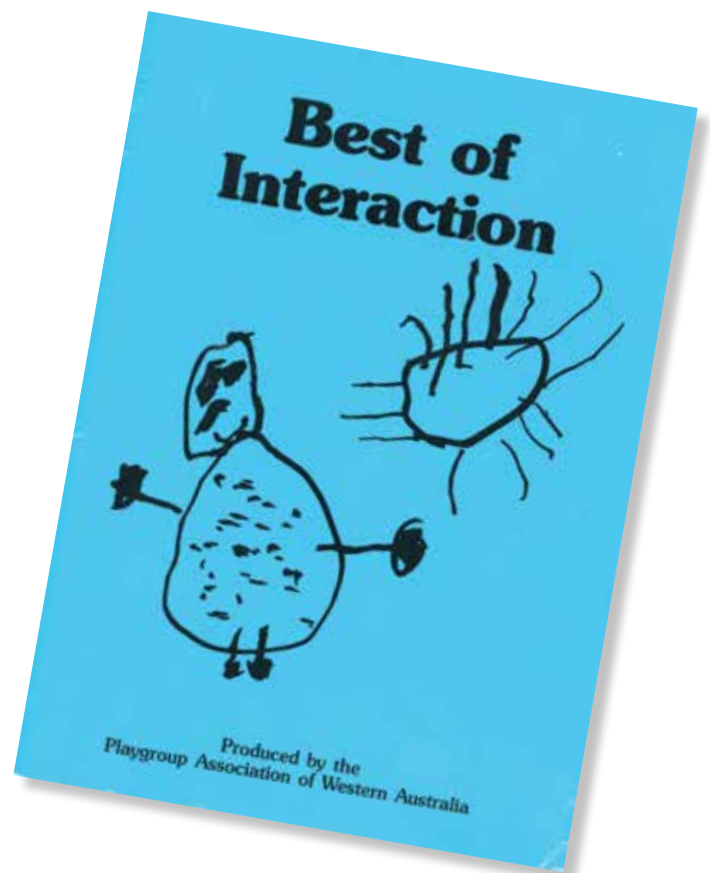
The Playgroup Association moved to Meerilinga, 1186 Hay Street, West Perth in May 1982. The building was shared with other early childhood tenants such as the Australian Early Childhood Association, WA Toy Libraries, Nursing Mothers Association and the Community Kindergarten Association.¹²⁵ Major advantages of office space at Meerilinga were the free rent and networking opportunities with other early childhood groups.¹²⁶ A major disadvantage of Meerilinga was the lack of parking. Parking was so limited and infringements were so common that in 1987 the Committee had to resolve that it would only pay parking fines up to \$50 per staff member.¹²⁷

Fundraising efforts continued throughout the early 1980s – raffles, fashion parades, lamington drives and other similar events.¹²⁸ Quiz Nights were held in 1983 and 1984 with the hope that, 'if successful, perhaps no other fundraising events need to be organised'.¹²⁹



These were all helpful contributions, but further professional staff were required to allow the PGA to develop further. An additional staff member was considered in early 1981 and again in 1982 with sufficient funds to 'employ one person one day per week at \$6 per hour, on a temporary basis averaging 5 hours per week'.¹³⁰ The very specific nature of the terms indicated the very tight budget available. Also, in the absence of an Executive Officer, all administrative decisions relating to wages needed to be considered and approved by the Committee. Del Sterpini, who commenced as a Liaison Officer in mid-1982 had her proposed wage increase discussed at the Committee meeting in February 1984. The vote was close but fortunately for Del the result was five for and three against the wage increase.¹³¹

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the association, an Open Day was held at the Mount Lawley Tennis Club at the end of 1982.¹³² The year after, a 'best of' book was planned to acknowledge ten years of *Interaction*.¹³³ It was intended that the book would be ready to be launched at the 1983 Field Day.¹³⁴ At this time the *Interaction* and Management Committees operated somewhat independently from each other. This resulted in the occasional miscommunications when a change in the launch date was not advertised to all involved. An unintended 'oversight' but it was acknowledged that 'having management committee representatives on the *Interaction* Committee would help to avert problems of communication.'¹³⁵



The workloads of both the Management and *Interaction* Committees were substantial as the number of playgroups seeking advice and support continued to grow unabated. *Interaction* continued to be the main vehicle for communicating with members and the attractively illustrated magazine jam-packed with useful content for busy parents was always well received by members.

Management Committee minutes in the early 1980s suggest that the Zone Coordinators model was not always a well-oiled machine and finding people to support the work of PGA within their local area was highly dependent on volunteers stepping forward.



FIELD DAYS, TOY FAIRS AND ANNUAL FUN DAYS

With playgroups proliferating in the early 1970s, creating opportunities for playgroups to get together was discussed by the Association. A 'Field Day' was discussed by the Zone Coordinators in 1974. The idea was also to promote the work of the Association as well as give an idea of the types of activities that could be done at playgroup. Reporting on the proposed day at the Kings Park Adventure Playground scheduled for 13th October 1974, it was noted that 'we'll be setting up camp away from the main picnic and barbeque area but handy enough for anyone to wander along to meet us.'¹³⁶

The first Field Day was organised by the Zone Coordinators rather than the Committee. The event must have been successful (no accounts have survived) because a second Field Day was organised for September 1975.¹³⁷ Possibly because there were changes in the Committee around 1975 and also because the take-up rate of Zone Coordinators was not as many as anticipated, it seems that no Field Day was organised for 1976.

A Field Day was raised by the new Committee members for September 1977 and as such it was labelled the 'first' Field Day. Subsequent Field Days would be numbered based on the principle that 1977 rather than 1974 was the first Field Day.¹³⁸



Field Days were always a resounding success and attracted a huge number of families. They were often timed to coincide with the Royal Show for country members. Various playgroups were responsible for each area or activity station.¹³⁹ Messy play, such as painting, was always included and calls were put out for various recyclable materials such as ice-cream containers for planned activities.¹⁴⁰ Participants were strongly discouraged from wearing their 'best' clothes to Field Days.

This account from 1978 paints a picture of a typical Field Day:

This year's Field Day proved to be a fantastic success. An estimated 4,000 attended and once again the Dads showed us how to interact in the carpentry section! All day long children were busy dressing up, experimenting with instruments, singing, painting, glueing and playing with playdough – not to mention the pouring, mixing, splashing and bubbles in the water play area. We were featured on both commercial TV news programmes that night and a film was taken for our film library.¹⁴¹

Field Days were held in Kings Park between 1974 and 1981.¹⁴² A change of venue occurred with the Field Days from 1982 onwards being held at Hyde Park.¹⁴³ Crowd numbers continued to be large with more than 2,000 attendants each year.¹⁴⁴ By 1984 the Field Days were so successful that the Committee considered whether a Publicity Officer needed to be appointed.¹⁴⁵



In parallel with the Field Days, PGA also held Toy Fairs from 1988 onwards. Companies could rent a stall to display their products at Toy Fairs. The first Fair in 1988 was judged 'a wonderful hit' and from 1991 onwards the Field Day and Toy Fair were combined and usually held at Perry Lakes.¹⁴⁶

The Field Day/Toy Fair returned to Kings Park from 1998 before it moved to Burswood Park around 2001.¹⁴⁷ Around this time the Field Day/Toy Fair name was simplified to 'Annual Fun Day'. Crowds of 5,000 or more turned up to enjoy the many activities on offer.¹⁴⁸ Where possible, Fun Days were extended to country areas also, such as events held in Kalgoorlie and Karratha.

The World's Biggest Playgroup Day was another large-scale, annual community event that commenced in the early 2000s (more information on page 42).

From 2008 onwards, the Annual Fun Day was held in different locations throughout Perth – Hillarys, Whiteman Park, Melville, Manning Park, Centenary Park, Madely, Beckenham and even returned to Perry Lakes.¹⁴⁹

In November 2019, the Annual Fun Day was held at Britannia Reserve in Mount Hawthorn.¹⁵⁰ The global pandemic placed a necessary pause on Annual Fun Days in 2020 and 2021.

The Field Days, Toy Fairs and Annual Fun Days demonstrated just how prolific playgroups were as thousands of families flocked to them each year from all over Perth and beyond. While *Interaction* and some of the early initiatives have not lasted, the Annual Fun Day remains a constant on PGWA's annual calendar.

THE LOUDEN REPORT

In July 1983, the State Government released a report on 'The Care and Education of Young Children in Western Australia'. It was more commonly known as the Louden report, named after the Chair of the Committee. The Committee had been appointed in 1981 to examine educational programs for children aged zero to four. The Louden report contained many recommendations specific to playgroups.

The report was a significant acknowledgement by the State Government of the contribution playgroups made.

Essentially the report recommended funding programs for four-year-olds but it also presented an alternative view through the appended Scott and Lefroy Report.

In regard to playgroups, the Committee acknowledged that,

...the most difficult issue facing the Committee was to make a recommendation on the relative value of playgroup and sessional pre-school provisions for children two years and more below school age... The Committee recognises the importance of well-run family playgroups.¹⁵¹

More importantly, the Louden report clearly outlined the work being done by the Playgroup Association and the very limited resources on which it operated,

Rapid development of playgroups in the past ten years has caused the Playgroups Association to experience difficulty in maintaining services to the groups. The Association is run by volunteers who are themselves mothers with young children. Funding for salaries of a part-time secretary and liaison officer employed by the Playgroups Association, and administration costs, are provided quarterly through the Commonwealth Government's Office of Child Care. The Committee considers that the part-time position is inadequate for the Association to provide assistance to nearly 300 groups involving 20,000 children.¹⁵²

Presumably the Committee members would have been very excited to read the Louden report recommendations. It vindicated all their hard work as well as acknowledged how much the Playgroup Association's services were needed in the community. When the Louden report was being prepared the Committee was often dedicating time to finding volunteers to be on roster for the paint shop service, library or office duties.¹⁵³ The Louden report made several recommendations for additional funding to provide staff for PGA. It also recommended funding for the preparation of video resources to widen and provide easy access to PGA's valuable advisory service.

The Louden report raised hopes for PGA to receive funding from the State Government. The 1983-1984 budget included \$500,000 for 'a significant move to honour a commitment to pre-schools and education for four-year-olds'. In practice this would involve places for four-year-olds 'in some centres'.¹⁵⁴ It also created a shortfall with many four-year olds attending playgroup sessions. It would take over a decade of lobbying before the Education Department could offer places for all four-year-olds.

SEEKING STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING

PGA met with the Minister for Education in 1985 and was advised 'there was no state funding available for the association in the foreseeable future, however should the Commonwealth stop funding us then we should again approach the State'. The lack of funding placed considerable pressure on the Office staff to service all member requests.¹⁵⁵ It was a disappointing outcome after the promising Loudon report released two years prior.

The Education Department had a Playgroup Advisory Service in the early 1980s with four Advisors. In 1986, the Education Department reduced its number of advisors from four to one. This resulted in increased demand on PGA.¹⁵⁶ From the PGA minutes, it is clear there were some tensions between PGA and the Education Department over roles and responsibilities. For example, this extract from September 1986 hinted at a rising level of frustration: 'Jenny went to "Silver City" to converse with the exalted Playgroup Advisors re their country trips. They were happy to help but gave the impression that they were the 'Professionals' whilst we were ? Jenny was eager to liaise with them so that there would not be any duplication of visits by them and us in the same time period. They were very vague but eventually were prompted to give some useful answers.'¹⁵⁷

By 1986, Federal Government funding had increased to \$60,000 a year. This was also the year PGA got its first computer. The computer purchase was a major investment and cost \$8,600.¹⁵⁸ Unfortunately the computer had a major breakdown the following year and important operational data was almost lost. 'Fortunately Olivetti agreed to fix it and save us lots of money. Our system must include a daily backup of data to ensure that we will not lose our information and programmes again.'¹⁵⁹ It is possible the computer had a name – the office photocopier was named Fred!

The idea of a cookbook had first been discussed in 1980.¹⁶⁰ The idea was revived in 1985.¹⁶¹ Many people were involved in compiling the cookbook and it was launched in May 1987.¹⁶² Just as *Interaction* contained many activities for families to do together, the idea of the cookbook was also to share information, in this case recipes, with members. Penny Davis illustrated the cookbook.¹⁶³





PGA's first Integration Officer, Edith Richardson, was employed in August 1987. Edith worked with children with special needs and their families.¹⁶⁴ Integration, later called inclusion, would become a prominent feature of the type of support PGA/PGWA was able to offer the community. It had always been a central principle of the playgroup philosophy that all families should have access to playgroups.

The integration of four-year-olds into the school system was still consuming much staff and Committee time and effort as the implications of government announcements were worked through. PGA was active in arranging meetings with government representatives through the subcommittee created to deal 'with all up coming events to do with the fight for the 4's'.¹⁶⁵

The use of the word 'fight' marked a significant shift in the Committee's way of operating when proactively advocating for state-funded education of four-year-olds and funding for playgroups. No longer content to wait for funding as well as picking up the perceived shortfalls in school places for pre-school aged children, PGA began a campaign to prompt the State Government into action. Media releases and TV appearances followed throughout 1988 and culminated in a march on Parliament House in August. PGA demanded kindergarten places for all four-year-olds and objected to the proposed new Family Centres. In 1973, PGA had remarked they intended 'to give the government the chance to fulfil its own policy'.¹⁶⁶ In 1988, the position appeared to have changed little with PGA demanding 'the State Government honour a promise before the last election to provide places in pre-schools for all four-year-olds'.¹⁶⁷

The State Government committed to funding for PGA soon after the march. It was a victory, but the battle-weary Committee, perhaps exhausted by their efforts, could be forgiven for not reporting the new funding with substantial amounts of enthusiasm. A staff meeting was held in September 1988 to determine that the new funds should be directed towards employing more Development Officers and some additional hours and responsibilities for other office staff.¹⁶⁸ PGA's cautious optimism about funding was warranted when only a week later a meeting with Ministry of Education officials 'didn't tell us anything new. The Government and the Ministry do not accept responsibility for four-year-olds'.¹⁶⁹

Even with the distraction of addressing pre-school places and absence of funding support by the State Government, PGA continued to extend their advisory service through public talks by visiting parenting experts such as Dr Christopher Green and Dr Brenda Crowe, arranging ferry trip excursions for the playgroup families and holding the first Toy Fair, 'a wonderful hit' in 1988.¹⁷⁰



CONCERTS

In 1986, PGA considered the possibility of holding Play School Concerts. Play School, the ABC TV program, was in its twentieth year in 1986 and it would have been very familiar to many playgroup families. Their equivalent association in the ACT had hosted Play School concerts and reported to other associations that they were very successful in attracting new members. The Management Committee quickly decided to go ahead and book concerts for 1987.¹⁷¹

There were minimum conditions that needed to be met – three concerts a day with at least 350 tickets sold for each concert – but these were easily achievable as there was enormous public interest. Twenty concerts were held in September 1987 and over 9,000 tickets were sold. PGA, as host, received ten percent of ticket sales.¹⁷² The concerts were held in North Beach, Leederville, Palmyra, Lynwood and Midland to ensure families did not have to travel too far for the thirty minute concerts.¹⁷³

The model of four concerts each day in different suburbs around Perth continued in the years that followed. Play School concerts were an annual highlight of the PGA calendar throughout the late 1980s through to the early 2000s.¹⁷⁴

Recognising the importance of providing events to country members, the PGA was particularly pleased to offer concerts in Albany, Bunbury, Narrogin, Northam and Mandurah in addition to concerts in Perth suburbs in March 1994. The popularity of Play School was evident with 13,700 tickets sold. In 1994 and 1996 the concerts were described as a 'sellout'.¹⁷⁵



Perhaps PGA staff would have described the concerts as too successful as it took a huge amount of staff time to book venues, process ticket sales and ensure a sufficient number of helpers were available on concert days. These were all substantial tasks for an already under resourced office. The decision was made to contract out tickets sales to BOCS in 1996 much to the relief of Office Secretary, Kim Saunders, who remarked, 'we are forever grateful to BOCS staff who do a wonderful job and have saved our sanity.'¹⁷⁶

PGA also hosted other concerts such as Don Spencer, a popular Play School presenter. Humphrey Bear and Franciscus Henri (Mr Whiskers) were also on the PGA concert program for several years. While Play School was perhaps the concert 'staple' there were many notable concert performers such as the Wiggles and many years of concert series by the Hooley Dooleys.¹⁷⁷

In 1994 and 1995, PGA hosted Wiggles concerts. At this time the Wiggles were well-known but not yet wildly, internationally successful. Melbourne newspaper The Age had recently described the band as 'the Rolling Stones of Pre-School pop!'¹⁷⁸ The concerts were an outstanding success and all tickets sold out.¹⁷⁹ The fifteen concerts held in June-July 1995 were a similar success story.¹⁸⁰

Play School concerts continued in 1996 but the Wiggles' international popularity was growing and PGA noted some 'difficulties with their management and their contracts' but was optimistic that future concerts would be held, possibly featuring Wiggles characters if the Wiggles could not be obtained.¹⁸¹ Wiggles character, Dorothy, was the feature act of a set of concerts in 2001.¹⁸²



In 1996 and 1997, new concert performers included Peter Combe, the Hooley Dooleys and Andy Jones.¹⁸³ Ticket prices were always 'kept within reach of most families.'¹⁸⁴ The number of concert-goers remained high throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s. Hooley Dooleys sets of concerts were being attended by around 5,000 people and Play School concerts were regularly attracting 5,000-7,000 per concert series.¹⁸⁵ The Hooley Dooleys also performed several regional concerts, such as in 2003 when they toured Northam, Moora, Mandurah, Bunbury and Kalgoorlie.¹⁸⁶

Wiggles concerts were held again in 2000. Concert limits were based generally around a 500 person capacity but the growing fame of the Wiggles meant that 1,000-1,500 seat venues were organised. Over five days of concerts there were more than 15,000 attendees. Of course, this also meant that more help was required and presumably all hands were on deck to ensure such a successful series of concerts.¹⁸⁷ Concert organiser Jenny Tomlinson noted, probably semi-seriously, that after the Wiggles concerts, 'the Playschool concerts in June will be a walk in the park after this effort.'¹⁸⁸

By 2003, the event management landscape was changing with many costs increasing. After arrangements for the 2003 Hooley Dooley concerts had been finalised, an additional insurance premium was imposed, reducing the profit to PGWA. Concerts were arranged again for 2004 but an analysis afterwards determined that the profit effectively only covered staff time.¹⁸⁹ In 2003, the ticket price set by the ABC 'threatens the viability to continue hosting these concerts.'¹⁹⁰

PGWA continued to organise many other events after 2003 but concerts were phased out in the face of increasing costs. The concerts had been a significant marketing opportunity, a huge but rewarding amount of work and an affordable activity for playgroup families. It was fun while it lasted.

35 WICKHAM STREET, EAST PERTH

*Each year we declare that the next will be smoother but we simply repeat the best of our programmes and create new challenges to ensure that never happens! As long as members benefit the plot is unlikely to change.*¹⁹¹ – Del Sterpini, Administrator, 1991

The year 1989 began with the very welcome purchase of 35 Wickham Street in East Perth. The PGA had grown enormously while at Meerilinga, and the stable accommodation situation was regarded as a significant contributing factor to PGA's success.¹⁹² This success necessitated a move as PGA had 'grown too large for the premises (our committee had trouble fitting around the meeting table).'¹⁹³

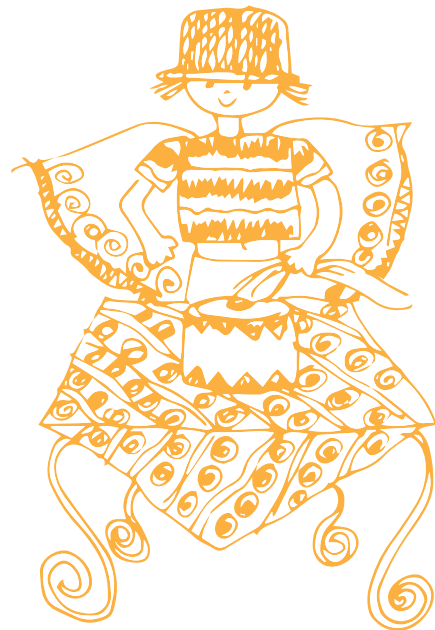
Wickham Street had cost \$179,000 to purchase and a further \$7,000 was spent on alterations. A grant of \$125,000 from Lotteries Commission had enabled the purchase.¹⁹⁴ The building offered sufficient space to accommodate office staff as well as a dedicated shop.



Hazel Hawke at the opening of Wickham Street in 1989. Image courtesy of John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, JCPML01314/178

The significance of owning their property was acknowledged by Mrs Hazel Hawke, wife of serving Prime Minister Bob Hawke, in her speech to officially open the building.

*'As the first Playgroup Association in Australia to purchase its own building, you have, I believe, a great deal to be proud of, and I hope that the new home will provide enough space and stability for the needs of the association for a long time to come. I hope that Playgroup Associations in other States will in time be able to follow this lead.'*¹⁹⁵





Staff with visiting Associate Professor Maurice Balson, back row (L to R): Penny Chellew, Del Sterpini, Jenny Tomlinson, Sally Glass (President). Front row: Gail Walker, Edith Richardson, Sue Duvall.

It was business as usual after settling into their new home, particularly answering phones which could ring more than 100 times a day.¹⁹⁶ Additional staff were employed to take on the work that had previously been done by committee members on a voluntary basis.¹⁹⁷ Without an Executive Officer to deal with administrative issues such as wages and leave, many of these decisions had to be made by the Management Committee. Meetings were often long. Like the minute taker of the 1974 AGM who commented on 'waffle + hot air', the minute taker in 1990 noted, 'Meeting closed at 11.20pm with a resolution to finish earlier in future'.¹⁹⁸ Administrator, Del Sterpini, became a voting member of the Executive Committee in December 1990 as partial acknowledgement of the increasing involvement by staff.¹⁹⁹ One of the changes she instituted was to hold Committee meetings during the day instead of at night. PGA made babysitting arrangements for any Committee member that needed them.²⁰⁰

The number of members being supported by PGA was substantial. By the end of 1989, there were 17,418 attending 1,429 sessions of playgroups each week.²⁰¹

By 1991, the number of families had decreased to around 16,000. Uncertainty over the four-year-old programs was likely responsible for the fall in numbers.²⁰² Commonwealth Government grants remained relatively stable and funded basic staffing costs. At this time State Government funds were allocated to the South-East, North-East, Metro and Country Field Officers.²⁰³ Del Sterpini had noted that, 'efforts to improve our Federal Funding levels were unsuccessful and apart from the annual cost supplementation, we do not anticipate any improvement in the near future'.²⁰⁴

The Playgroup Council of Australia examined the issue of Commonwealth Funding distribution around 1993 which resulted in increased funding for WA. In 1995, the Commonwealth contributed \$142,000 with an additional \$18,500 for the Integration Program. State Government funding had increased to \$50,000 by 1995.²⁰⁵ Some additional program-based funding was received from State Government, such as a seeding grant in 1990 from the Ministry of Education to work with cancer patients in their own home.²⁰⁶

During the 1990s, efforts were made to extend PGA's programs into regional areas. For example, a seminar was held at Dampier with assistance from the Women's Trust Grant.²⁰⁷

PGA received \$7,360 from the Lotteries Commission in 1990 for office equipment and computers.²⁰⁸ Unfortunately, some of these items were stolen in February 1992 when the office was burgled.²⁰⁹ Minor extensions were made to the office in 1991 to extend the shop area and provide extra storage. Shop hours were increased but staff costs were not fully covered by increased sales.²¹⁰

Mrs Ruth Reid became Patron of the association in November 1991.²¹¹



Del Sterpini and Coralie Palmer (President) at PGA's 21st birthday celebration breakfast.



PGWA President Leeane Wolzak and Premier's wife Jo Court launching the Playgroup on the Move van.

TURNING 21

A breakfast was held to celebrate twenty-one years of Playgroup in May 1993. Seven of the fifteen past Presidents attended and former President Cynthia Dixon 'gave an account of the 'old' days and was pleased to see PGA philosophy has essentially remained the same.'²¹² The work of the Association had remained largely unchanged although increased Commonwealth and State Government funding combined with professionally-trained staff meant there were numerous programs in new areas, such as in integration, intergenerational and regional, that the original Committee members could only have dreamt of. Community playgroups, run by parents on a voluntary basis, continued to be the footing of PGA's existence.

By 1993, PGA was representing 17,636 families through a Management Committee of eleven people and ten part-time staff.²¹³ The 'problem' of four-year-olds accounted for some varying numbers in this period. Of greater concern was the State Government's announcement in May 1992 to introduce full-time schooling for five-year-olds. This in turn impacted on many of the member groups that ran Rostered four-year-old groups.²¹⁴

PGA held its first stall at the Parents, Babies and Children's Show at Claremont Showgrounds in April 1994. This was an excellent promotional opportunity for PGA and they held a stall at the

expo in subsequent years.²¹⁵ With *Interaction* turning 21 in 1994, PGA published 'Just a Fraction More *Interaction*', a sequel to 'The Best of *Interaction*'. Shop sales in their new accommodation at Wickham Street continued to be strong.²¹⁶ There were numerous other events for families during these years, such as the Willy Wagtail Picnic at Whiteman Park, Ferry Rides across Perth Water or to Rottnest and the Teddy Bear's Picnic for the City of Perth.²¹⁷

The 'Playgroup on the move' mobile van, introduced with support from Midland Toyota, was launched by Jo Court during National Playgroup Week on 18 May 1995.²¹⁸ The use of mobile vans to reach new playgroups continued to be a priority task in the years that followed.²¹⁹ In its first year of operation, Playgroup on the Move reached out to around 300 families. Support from Midland Toyota continued for several years before Playgroup purchased its own van, again with funding assistance from the Lotteries Commission.²²⁰ The van was also used as a mobile shop for country visits and events such as the Toy Fair and Parents, Babies and Children's Expo each year.²²¹

The Playgroup Plus program began in 1996 after a successful pilot program. The program enabled 'families who would not normally access a local Playgroup to get support in forming and organising their own'.²²² The program was assessed as 'an excellent idea, taking us in a new direction and providing almost a social service.'²²³

ON THE MOVE AGAIN, WOODVILLE LANE, NORTH PERTH

*'The need to find larger office premises will also become a priority as neighbouring building programs commence and access and parking become more difficult for our members' - Annual Report, 1995.*²²⁴

By the mid-1990s, the Wickham Street house was adequate for office and shop requirements, but the popularity of the surrounding area was causing access problems. Alternative accommodation needed to be found. Properties in Bulwer Street and at 44 Barker Street in Subiaco were considered. Architects were engaged to prepare a report on the Subiaco building.²²⁵ An offer for premises in Brown Street did not proceed.²²⁶ The search for new premises took up quite a lot of the office staff and Management Committee's time.²²⁷

There was noticeable relief when Woodville Lane was purchased at the end of 1996:

*We were still searching for a new home for the Association and just as we were about to break for Christmas, Pippa managed to solve our dilemma once and for all. After losing track of the number of premises we had looked through, Woodville Lane, North Perth, was just the Christmas present we'd been hoping for. Santa went under the alias of 'The Lotteries Commission' and through their generous assistance we were languishing in our new abode by the start of business in January 1997.*²²⁸

The new building in Woodville Lane, North Perth was opened on 21st March 1997 by Mrs Ruth Reid, the patron.²²⁹ The previous headquarters in Wickham Street had sold for \$230,000 and Woodville Lane cost \$530,000. Another generous grant from the ever-helpful Lotteries Commission accounted for the additional



Patron Ruth Reid unveils plaque at the opening of Woodville Lane, North Perth.

\$300,000 required. A further \$50,000 was spent fitting out the new office with furniture and some minor building alterations.

Interaction was given a makeover around this time too. Towards the end of 1996, Cathie Kros was appointed as the first paid *Interaction* Editor. A voluntary team effort was still required to put it all together under her direction.²³⁰ *Interaction* editions still contained Penny Hudson's (formerly Davis) instantly recognisable drawings and a child's drawing on the front. Cathie was keen to change the look of the cover and it is from this time that children's drawings mostly disappeared from *Interaction* covers.²³¹ Other changes included reducing the number of magazines from five to four to coincide with school terms and also the introduction of glossy cover pages and increasing use of colour as opposed to black and white.²³²





New PGA programs in the late 1990s included a playgroup course at Bandyup Prison and a Grandparents playgroup.²³³ PGA's definition of family had always included grandparents and ways to include and promote intergenerational activities was regarded as a priority. It was hoped that the grandparents' group would be the basis of many future intergenerational programs. Work on intergenerational opportunities was assisted with a grant from the Office of the Aged in 1996.²³⁴ There may have been other intergenerational programs in the 1990s but it would not be until the early 2000s that intergenerational programs took off.²³⁵

Commonwealth funding continued to be conditional, described by the Director in 1998, 'negotiation of Commonwealth funding has been a slow and frustrating process and it now seems a decision on the projects and a release of funding will not occur this year'.²³⁶ There was never any guarantee that any funding arrangement would prevail for more than two or three years at a time.²³⁷ Most staff were on rolling contracts. The slow funding process may have prompted PGA to become more involved with the Playgroup Council of Australia. Western Australia was represented on their Executive Committee in 1998 and had hosted the national body in Fremantle in 1997.²³⁸

The State Government had primarily supported the work of the Association through funding salaries for Field Liaison Officers and Development Officers, usually employed on a part-time basis. In 1998, it was announced that a further \$80,000 would be available to playgroups through a competitive tendering process. The PGA described this as, 'unfortunately the worst possible scenario for the Association has eventuated'.²³⁹ Things improved slightly the year after, and the State Government committed to a further three years funding.²⁴⁰

Despite funding challenges, new initiatives proceeded in 1999. An Aboriginal Liaison Officer was appointed and bi-lingual workers were recommended, particularly Bosnian and Vietnamese speakers.²⁴¹ Work commenced on the Playgroup Manual – a resource tool for each playgroup.²⁴² The Playgroup Manual was finalised and given to each playgroup in 2000.²⁴³ Funding was required to update the Manual on a regular basis until 2006 when the Manual was added to the website.²⁴⁴

In 1999, PGA answered many calls about the likely impact of the proposed new Goods and Services Tax (GST) on playgroups. Similarly, preparations to ensure a smooth transition into the year 2000 required additional effort to ensure all computer programs would not have the Y2K 'bug'. As a precautionary measure, PGA decided to stock up on shop items.²⁴⁵

PGA must have been surprised when it received funding for rural playgroups in 2000. Funding to the amount of \$80,000 was received for playgroups in the Pilbara/Murchison districts and the Committee could not help but note, perhaps with equal amounts of delight and frustration that 'this amount, incidentally, exceeds our funding from Family and Children's Services for the entire State!'²⁴⁶ The Department of Family and Children's Services also awarded an amount of \$79,443 for a marketing campaign.²⁴⁷

Changes occurred to 'Playgroup on the Move'. In response to feedback from members it became 'Playgroup Association in the Suburbs' and provided greater access to the Association's services.²⁴⁸

NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL

In July 2001, the name changed to Playgroup WA (Inc.).

An official launch party was held at the Loftus Centre in Leederville.²⁴⁹

With a new name and logo and established accommodation at Woodville Lane safely taken care of by 2001, attention turned to a new model of governance. Traditionally the Management Committee had made both strategic and administrative decisions, but with an increasing number of professional staff responsible for operations, there was some crossover between responsibilities. The newly created roles of Director and Administrator from the early 1990s had assisted to differentiate some of the daily responsibilities.

With funding from the Lotteries Commission, a report was commissioned and recommendations for a model of governance made. Essentially operational decisions became the responsibility of the Executive Officer and professional staff. The 'Board', formerly the Management Committee, focused on strategic overview.²⁵⁰ A new constitution reflecting the changes was passed at a Special General Meeting in November 2003.²⁵¹

By 2001, the number of staff had soared to 22.

The increase in national based projects accounted for some of the new staff members. PGWA received almost \$200,000 funding from the Commonwealth Government in 2001-2002. It included programs such as Supported Playgroups for families who would not normally access playgroups, a paid Coordinator project as well as programs related to training, information sharing and those in rural and remote areas.²⁵²

The emergence of a larger number of program-based staff was a shift from the traditional geographical model that had been used for many years. Field Liaison Officers had traditionally organised their work based around a series of regions defined by postcodes. While supporting community playgroups through the provision of workshops and advice continued, many of the Field Liaison Officers were branching out into areas of program development. Increasingly the term Field Liaison Officer was replaced with Development Officer.²⁵³

The State Government's contribution through the Department of Community Development had hovered around \$50,000-\$55,000 for several years. As the Executive Officer noted, 'our resources continue to be stretched to the maximum as a result of increasing costs'.²⁵⁴

Without significant changes to the level of funding, PGWA had to be more resourceful in providing their much-needed services to playgroups across the state. In tandem with a shift from solely region-based to program-based projects as well, collaborations with other organisations became increasingly common from the early 2000s. In the 1970s, Committee members had recognised the importance of a wide network of agencies and organisations connected to early childhood education, health and community services. This had always been an important part of PGWA's work. In the early 2000s, this was demonstrated through the long lists of agencies mentioned in PGWA Annual Reports as collaborative partners.²⁵⁵

PGWA's 30th birthday was celebrated in style with a combined launch of the website and Playgroup Month in Kings Park.²⁵⁶ 'What a wonderful day – fairies, beautiful weather and a fabulous turnout! The queues for the cake and the queues for the balloons were amazing.'²⁵⁷

The 30th birthday also prompted PGWA staff to realise that 30 years of records had created an 'office bulging at the seams.'²⁵⁸ Additional staff resources were allocated to instituting a storage and archive system.

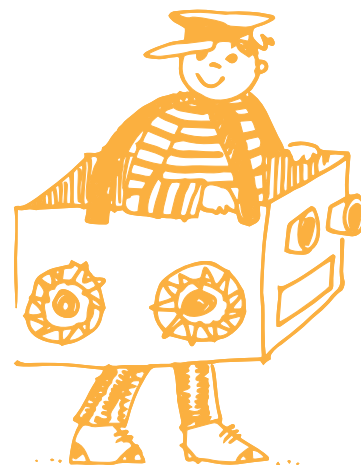
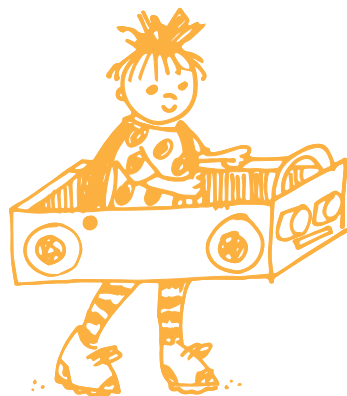
PGWA knew that more could be done to reach rural and remote communities. A project was carried out in 2003, through the Rural and Remote National Project, to develop and implement strategies to reach these families.²⁵⁹ Where possible, events were held in regional areas to promote the work of PGWA. For example, Fun Days were held in Kalgoorlie in November 2002 and Karratha in September 2004.²⁶⁰



PGWA's own van purchased with Lotteries Commission funding

In October 2003, PGWA received funding to establish intergenerational playgroups in aged care facilities. Several aged care facilities had requested PGWA's assistance to establish groups. Developing opportunities for intergenerational interaction had always been a priority for PGWA.²⁶¹

Extensions to the Playgroup on the Move and Playgroup Plus programs continued throughout the early 2000s.²⁶² Other practical ways to assist members included access to Public Liability insurance and sourcing Australian based insurers for other types of insurances groups were required to have.²⁶³ Raffles organised by PGWA and Lotteries Commission/Lotterywest grants to purchase toys and equipment for playgroups were another benefit to members.²⁶⁴





THE SHOP

PGA began selling craft paint from their office in August 1979.²⁶⁵ Other craft items were added for sale soon afterwards. Some of the craft items were dyes and bulk paint poured into smaller containers (often donated ice cream buckets) by volunteers prior to sale.²⁶⁶

The shop began as a community service rather than a fundraising venture. It quickly became a reason for members to visit headquarters.²⁶⁷ Each time the Association moved, which was often in the first two decades, finding accommodation with space for a shop was essential. Wickham Street and Woodville Lane were fitted out to accommodate the shop. Play areas for children were added to the shop for the convenience of parents. The ever-popular Badge Machine was purchased in 1985. Groups could rent the machine as an activity and the take up rate was high.²⁶⁸

From the late 1990s, the 'Playgroup on the Move' van doubled as a mobile shop for events such as Toy Fair, Field Days or the Expo at Claremont showgrounds. It was also a way to take the shop to country members.²⁶⁹

Online shopping became a reality in 2000 although mail orders were still accepted.²⁷⁰ There was a high take-up rate for online shopping from country members.²⁷¹

By 2003, the shop had evolved from a single-page price list to a well-stocked shop complete with a 14-page catalogue.²⁷² While online shopping was a way to provide an important service for country members there were many alternative suppliers they could choose from. Recognising that sales were merely an additional service rather than a core objective, PGWA examined whether the shop was necessary. 'Following much research, we no longer felt the shop was a key priority or a value-add service for the organisation...We negotiated a number of discount opportunities for members through alternative suppliers.'²⁷³

The shop closed on 16 September 2004.



LAST OF THE FOURS

In the early 2000s the four-year-old programs continued to occupy a lot of staff and Board time. As some of these groups were led by educators rather than parents, they had never quite fully slotted into the definition of a playgroup, but they had never quite fit the definition of a kindergarten either. These groups had been members of PGA for many years. Access to the insurance scheme would have been one of the reasons groups wished to be associated with PGA.

Having made up for the 'shortfall' created by changes in cut-off ages for kindergarten, these groups could be PGWA members once they signed a 'Standard of Operation Agreement', but this category of membership was stopped. From 2004, the Rostered four-year-old programs were no longer eligible for membership. It was decided that it was inconsistent with PGWA's objectives as care was provided by other parents or teachers with a structured learning program.²⁷⁴

Removing the four-year-old program providers as members did not prevent PGWA from considering other options relating to school-based learning. Around 2004, the idea of holding playgroups in underutilised school buildings was considered. Some schools were exploring ways to be a 'hub' within their local community and 'the concept of school based playgroups is gaining popularity.'²⁷⁵





INCLUSION, COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The early 2000s saw increased policy interest in the importance of supporting children in the early years before school with playgroups increasingly being viewed by funding bodies and service agencies as a way of reaching vulnerable families. PGWA was an active contributor to raising this awareness and became directly involved in addressing the impact of early disadvantage through supported playgroup services.

During the same period, while large numbers of community playgroups run by volunteers continued to meet across the state, the landscape of the traditional parent-run playgroup was beginning to change. Increasing numbers of parents in the workforce, the growing provision of early childhood education, care services and school-based programs, difficulty accessing appropriate playgroup venues, and steady national declines in rates of general volunteering, all contributed to a gradual decline in the number of families participating in the traditional community-led playgroup model.

Generally, programs fell into categories of collaboration, inclusion and support and were often a combination of all three. The development of a program-based way of working supplemented the existing regional approach rather than replacing it. Development Officers, just as the Field Liaison Officers had done for many years, continued to provide support to playgroups based on an allocation of areas and regions.

PGWA has developed and been part of so many different programs it is not possible to discuss all of them. Generally speaking, many of the programs fall under variations of the Supported Playgroups, Aboriginal Playgroups, Intergenerational Playgroups and the Enhanced Transition to School project.

Mother-Baby Nurture is a unique post-natal support program for new mothers requiring parenting and/or mental health support, sub-contracted to Playgroup WA in 2016.

In 2022, PGWA employs 55 staff to provide services across a broad range of programs and support to community playgroups.



SUPPORTED PLAYGROUPS AND PROGRAMS

Supported Playgroups emerged in 2001 to assist families who did not have access to playgroups. They differ from community playgroups in that they are facilitated by a paid coordinator. Funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, participants were commonly from culturally diverse linguistic backgrounds and Indigenous families.²⁷⁶

Similarly, the Parental and Community Engagement (PACE) program worked to promote positive relationships between Indigenous parents/carers and their local primary school.²⁷⁷

Several other programs assisting families with specific requirements, such as PlayConnect for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, emerged as part of PGWA's focus on specific programs.²⁷⁸ Many of these supported programs have been very successful and have run for many years.



ABORIGINAL PLAYGROUPS

Providing support for Aboriginal families has been a continual priority throughout PGA/PGWA's existence. As well as running supported playgroups, PGWA also collaborated with other organisations to provide resources and assistance. A Play Book specifically designed as a resource for Aboriginal playgroups was launched in April 2005. Funding assistance was through the Save the Children Fund.²⁷⁹

PGWA was involved in many other First Nations programs and had considerable experience working with remote communities. This experience was acknowledged by other organisations involved in early years education who sought PGWA's involvement in collaborative forums, like the 'Aboriginal Play and Learning Forum' that ran for many years with organisations such as the Department of Education, Department of Communities, Ngala, Mission Australia, Yorganop Indigenous Professional Support Unit and the Smith Family.²⁸⁰

In 2022, Aboriginal playgroups are supported by Playgroup Coordinators based in North Perth and Warburton. In addition to this, 11 local community women are employed to support playgroups in Albany, Pingelly, Laverton, Quairading and Warburton. Funding assistance for regional and remote playgroups is received from the National Indigenous Australians Agency as part of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.²⁸¹

INTERGENERATIONAL PLAYGROUPS

The intergenerational playgroups that had commenced with funding received in 2003 developed further with 19 intergenerational playgroups by 2005-2006.²⁸² The intergenerational playgroups continued to grow with 30 groups by 2007.²⁸³ These groups were usually held in residential aged care facilities and several groups were based in the regions.²⁸⁴

A book specifically aimed at intergenerational groups was launched at the Royal Perth Yacht Club in August 2007.²⁸⁵ As these groups have continued to flourish over the years, PGWA has continued to provide and update resources, such as in 2021 when a new Intergenerational Guidebook was produced.²⁸⁶

As with many of PGWA's programs, COVID restrictions forced many intergenerational groups to stop meeting during 2020 and 2021. In 2022, funding assistance continues to be received through the Department of Communities as PGWA supports many aged care service providers and several intergenerational playgroups and other intergenerational activities in the community.²⁸⁷



ENHANCED TRANSITION TO SCHOOLS PROJECT

In 2014, a formal partnership with the Education Department was entered into regarding the 'Enhanced Transition to Schools' (ETTS) project. Holding playgroup sessions in under-utilised schools had begun in 2004 and the new project was an extension of this.²⁸⁸ It was a significant development for PGWA to enter into the ETTS partnership. As demonstrated previously, PGA's relationship with the Pre-School Board/Education Department in the 1970s was tenuous at best. Relations were cordial, but somewhat strained, throughout the 1980s.

The ETTS Project was funded with federal Universal Access to Early Education and Care funds through a grant with the State Government departments of Education and Local Government and Communities. The partnership extended across all school sectors including state, Independent and Catholic schools. The project was to strengthen relationships between playgroups and schools, where possible establishing community playgroups on school sites and enhancing home learning environments.²⁸⁹ In the first year of operation, around 50 school-based playgroups were operating.²⁹⁰ The program was very successful with the number of groups increasing to 82 around two years later.²⁹¹ By 2019, the Enhanced Transition to School project was in its fifth year with nearly 140 community-led playgroups operating from school premises.²⁹² Supported playgroups were also operating at 21 Child and Parent Centres on school sites, which were funded by the State Government through other non-government organisations. While COVID lockdowns impacted upon the program, it has continued to be successful in meeting its aims of connecting families with young children to their local schools.²⁹³



WORLD'S BIGGEST PLAYGROUP DAY

PGA/PGWA had always planned big events. Bringing communities together and promoting the work of the Association through events such as the concerts and Annual Fun Days (Field Days/Toy Fairs) were staples on the annual calendar.

'Playgroup Month' throughout the 1990s, usually held every May, was organised by PGA but mostly as a means of encouraging groups to hold their own activities to promote their playgroups. PGA usually issued suggestions for activities such as holding an open day, culture day or visiting an aged care home.²⁹⁴

From the early 2000s, the 'World's Biggest Playgroup Morning Tea' and particularly the 'World's Biggest Playgroup Day' emerged as events arising from Playgroup Month activities. By 2007, Playgroup Month switched from May to March. The World's Biggest Playgroup Days were similar to the Annual Fun Days but promoted more to the general public and often in collaboration with event partners.

It was often held at Whiteman Park around the 2010s and attracted anywhere between 5,000 and 8,000 families.²⁹⁵

A massive World's Biggest Playgroup Day was organised at Elizabeth Quay in 2016. It was estimated that around 15,000 visitors attended, including several characters from Play School.²⁹⁶

It returned to Whiteman Park in 2017 with a dinosaur theme.²⁹⁷ It has continued to be a fun activity day for families.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the World's Biggest Playgroup Day did not take place in March 2020, nor the following two years. However, playgroups were encouraged and supported to hold their own, smaller events in their local community to celebrate National Playgroup Week in late March.



Playgroup session held at Parliament House to highlight the importance of playgroups in the community

GROWTH OF A PROGRAM-BASED APPROACH

As noted previously, 2001 marked a turning point with the new governance model. Other changes around this time included a national review of playgroups with the view to centralising some services. A free hotline – 1800 171 882 – was introduced in 2004-2005 and the thousands of calls made to it indicated the strong need for people to be able to access information about playgroups.²⁹⁸ Other work addressing areas of national interest included involvement in NIFTeY - National Investment for the Early Years. Several PGWA staff and Board members were involved in various NIFTeY projects in the early 2000s and included contributions to the 'A Vision for Children in Western Australia' report.

There were 'worrying' levels of staff turnover during 2006. CEO Debbie Terelinck noted, 'unfortunately, Playgroup WA (Inc.) has not been immune to WA's hot employment market and 2007 saw further staff changes.'²⁹⁹ The mining boom was regarded as a contributing factor to the employment conditions that resulted in high staff turnover. At this time, PGWA was working on the West Pilbara Literacy contract and had a Project Officer based in Tom Price who travelled regularly to other mining towns such as Paraburdoo, Onslow, Pannawonica, Karratha, Dampier, Roebourne, Wickham and remote communities.³⁰⁰ A year later, David Zarb commenced as CEO in September 2008.³⁰¹

PGWA received funding from Lotterywest for a Marketing and Communication Strategy in 2007. Commonwealth funding continued to be on a rolling basis, usually for two years.³⁰²

Technological advances meant that PGWA took advantage of the new benefits these brought about. Website bookings for Playgroup events meant that the days of posting out tickets were long gone. The 'How to Start a Playgroup' booklet still existed but a DVD version replaced it from 2008.³⁰³ Hard copies of the Playgroup Manual were no longer required when Lotterywest supported a project to put the information online.³⁰⁴ A major update and revision of the Playgroup Manual was undertaken in 2020 and launched as the 'Playgroup WA Resource Kit' mini-website in 2021.³⁰⁵

In recent years more resources have been made available through PGWA's website to meet community expectations that the material should be easily and freely accessible.

PGWA's website contains numerous activity ideas for parents to do at home or at playgroup. As well as play and craft ideas, there are also physical activities through the 'Building Active Bodies and Brains' project in collaboration with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.³⁰⁶

A playgroup session was held at Parliament House in May 2008 to highlight the importance of playgroups in the community. It was so successful that plans were made to hold one the following year.³⁰⁷

'Forty years is a magnificent testament to the hard work of hundreds of thousands of playgroup families and the enduring appeal of getting together with local families to play and make friends. Playgroups across WA have long been the bedrock upon which support for local families is built.' (David Zarb, CEO, 2012)

Other collaborative opportunities to work with other agencies continued to be part of PGWA's work. There were partnerships such as that with SDERA (School Drug Education and Road Aware) through the Parents Smart Steps Program, a road safety awareness program.³⁰⁸

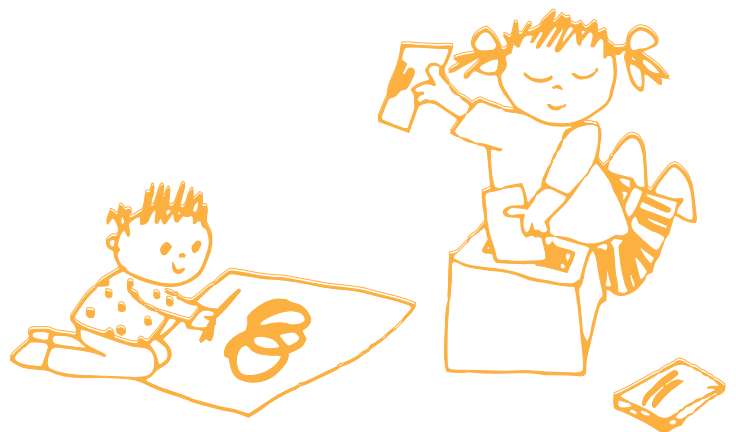
In 2009, Nature Play WA was formed to encourage children to play outside. It was a response to research that indicated children were spending an increasing amount of time either indoors and/or on screens. Their objectives closely aligned to those of PGWA and several PGWA staff were involved in the initial development of Nature Play WA. PGWA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Nature Play, through the Department of Sport and Recreation, 'Promoting Nature Play to Playgroup WA Families'.³⁰⁹

In 2011, PGWA opened its first regional office – in Bunbury (South West Office).³¹⁰ PGWA had worked in the regions since it was first established and Committee minutes contain many details of early regional trips by the Field Liaison Officers. Having a regional based office was an extension to the work PGWA had always undertaken. In the same year, PGWA received funding through Regional Development Australia to travel to many Pilbara towns such as Dampier, Roebourne, Karratha, Wickham and Pannawonica.³¹¹ A new office opened in Albany in January 2015.³¹²

The 40th anniversary in 2012 was again a time to celebrate PGWA's many achievements. As David Zarb, CEO reflected, 'forty years is a magnificent testament to the hard work of hundreds of thousands of playgroup families and the enduring appeal of getting together with local families to play and make friends. Playgroups across WA have long been the bedrock upon which support for local families is built.'³¹³ Events were held in Perth and Bunbury to celebrate.³¹⁴



Playgroup WA CEO David Zarb cutting the 40th birthday cake at Annual Fun Day 2012





Playgroup WA staff relax after the massive World's Biggest Playgroup Day event at Elizabeth Quay, 2016

Funding continued to be largely subject to a two or three year cycle. Both the Federal and State Governments continued to commit to short-term programs and project-based assistance. In 2011-2012, 14 of PGWA's 16 contracts were due to expire. Board President Leanne Gordon referred to the year being one of 'high uncertainty for Playgroup WA'. CEO David Zarb elaborated, 'every now and then in the world of a not for profit agency, the combination of political and contract cycles converge to create conditions for a perfect storm of uncertainty'.³¹⁵ This 'uncertainty' continued into 2014-2015 as short term extensions were granted for several contracts.³¹⁶

The new Incorporations Act resulted in many playgroups required to make changes to align to the new model.³¹⁷ Around 170 incorporated playgroups were impacted by the new legislation.³¹⁸ By 2019, a majority of playgroups had transitioned to the new Act and had new Constitutions in place.³¹⁹

In March 2020, all playgroups were suspended in accordance with public health advice to limit the potential spread of COVID-19. In Western Australia, the first lockdown meant that it was not until 18 May 2020 that playgroups were allowed to meet in person. Social distancing requirements placed by the State Government meant that not all playgroup venues re-opened in May.³²⁰

Despite limitations on meeting together, PGWA continued to develop new programs. A new disabilities inclusion project was launched at Mount Hawthorn Playgroup in November 2020. The 'First 1000 Days at Playgroup Project' was launched in 2021 with funding from Lotterywest. The 'First 1000 Days' idea came about before the pandemic. It represents the critical development window for children in the first two years of their life by supporting families from pregnancy through to the early years. The project focused on connecting families with local playgroups and communities to reduce the social isolation some people experience. With enforced lockdowns and social restrictions, the aims of the project became increasingly important. As President Leanne Gordon noted, 'we could never have foreseen the added need for family and social support post-COVID'.³²¹ It is anticipated that the 'First 1000 Days' project will become a growth area for PGWA.

PGWA continues to receive funding from the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Social Services Family and Communities Program, as well as the WA Government Departments of Communities and Education.³²²

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

For 50 years PGWA has been the conduit through which playgroups meet and families have connected with others in their local community. Through hundreds of playgroups around Western Australia, thousands upon thousands of families have attended weekly sessions, enjoyed playgroup events and built community connections. Through numerous community programs, PGWA has assisted many people who required advice and support.

PGA commenced in 1972 as a small community organisation representing a few dozen of the playgroups that were mushrooming all over Perth and the regions. Through an extremely resourceful Committee and active community networks, particularly Child Health Nurses, word spread quickly and playgroups sprang up everywhere.

PGA was always clear that its role was to guide and assist rather than regulate. PGA was also very clear that playgroups were beneficial to children and their parents for a variety of reasons. Early submissions to government emphasised that playgroups fostered community connections, had positive health benefits and provided important educational benefits for parents and children learning through play together.

It is difficult to discuss the history of PGWA without acknowledging the many 'distractions' that have taken up considerable time and effort. The place of playgroups within the education sector has been particularly problematic. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Pre-School Board and then the Early Childhood Branch of the Department of Education perhaps viewed PGA as more of an education provider rather than a support group. When PGA began in 1972, school places for Kindergarten and Pre-Primary students did not exist. Negotiating a space for playgroups within the education landscape occupied much Committee and staff time and resources for the first 20 years.

The Commonwealth Government provided funding to PGA from 1978 onwards through community service avenues rather than through education allocations. Local Governments often provided crucial support for individual playgroups through access to venues and facilities. Funding from State Government did not eventuate until after 1988. Much of the delay in receiving State Government funding was linked to the issue of the '4s' and these four-year-old programs were central to the 'distractions' that form part of this history. Many people involved in the first decades of PGA and interviewed for this book conveyed levels of annoyance and/or mild regret that the issue of the '4s' took up so much of their time. Funding from State Government was received shortly after the march on Parliament House in 1988.

The salient point about government assistance for PGA/PGWA is that playgroups never quite fit neatly into either the 'education' bucket or the 'community services' bucket.

Additional financial assistance from the State Government through the Lotteries Commission (now Lotterywest) meant that PGA/PGWA often received grants for program or purpose-based funding. In particular, generous Lotteries Commission grants enabled the purchase of both the Wickham Street and Woodville Lane properties.

PGWA has always worked collaboratively with a host of organisations and like-minded groups to develop programs across a broad range of fields. For most of the 1970s, PGA established a series of 'zones' (later referred to as regions) to provide support for playgroups. In the 1980s, there were significant developments in the area of integration to assist all families to have access to playgroups. In the 1990s, there were several intergenerational programs and the purchase of the 'Playgroup on the Move' van facilitated access to playgroups. By the early 2000s, PGWA developed and successfully implemented many new programs in addition to offering support for existing playgroups. In the 2010s, significant developments included a program with the Education Department to strengthen connections between playgroups and schools.

These are my hands
So tiny and small,
cherish them carefully
until I am tall.
Sharing, caring as years
go by
Watch how we grow, my
hands and I.



The early Committee members had clear intentions and aspirations for playgroups. They envisaged inclusive and holistic groups that were central within local communities. They hoped for collaborative assistance from similar groups to share information with and provide support for families. In this regard their intentions were wildly successful and the range of programs expanded considerably over the next five decades.

PGA began as a way of encouraging community playgroups to grow. By 1997, PGA represented more than 20,000 families. Supporting community playgroups continues to be an important core objective for PGWA. Just as the definition of playgroup has diversified to include many types of settings and participants, the work of PGWA has expanded significantly over the last two decades or so.

There has been an increasing need to provide Supported Playgroups in response to community needs and expectations. Families are increasingly looking to PGWA to run playgroup programs and events. It is anticipated this will be an area of great growth for PGWA. Additional support programs across areas addressing mental health,

connections to schools, the importance of child development in the early years, physical activity and even road safety have all been developed and flourished under PGWA's direction and guidance.

Through decades of public events, PGWA has generated an enormous amount of goodwill and public awareness in the community. Field Days, Toy Fairs, Annual Fun Days, Concerts and World's Biggest Playgroup Days are all extremely well-known to generations of families. The many large public events and the plethora of public talks and workshops have all endeared PGA/PGWA to the Western Australian community.

For five decades, PGA/PGWA has worked across areas of advocacy, integration, inclusion and support to provide a valuable and valued service across Perth and the regions. With hard-earned recognition and financial assistance from Local, State and Federal Governments, PGWA has flourished. This has all been achieved through a passionate Committee/Board, professional expertise, involved members and many different office settings all powered by resourcefulness.

Basic Recipe

- 1 cup salt
- 2 cups plain flour
- 3 tablespoons cooking oil
- 3 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 2 cups boiling water
- colour if required (use Edicol Dye or other foodcolouring or a drop of poster paint).

Combine all ingredients except water in a bowl. Pour on water and stir. Knead on a table top. This will store in an airtight container in the fridge for months.



Playdough has always been a great stick pretty much to using it with would like to add some variety of these simple ideas.



Playdough



Popstick Sculptures

Add a pile of popsticks to the playdough table. (Young children in particular find sticking things in to playdough easier than cutting shapes out.) Great for making animals, people, trees and vehicles.



Spaghetti Hair

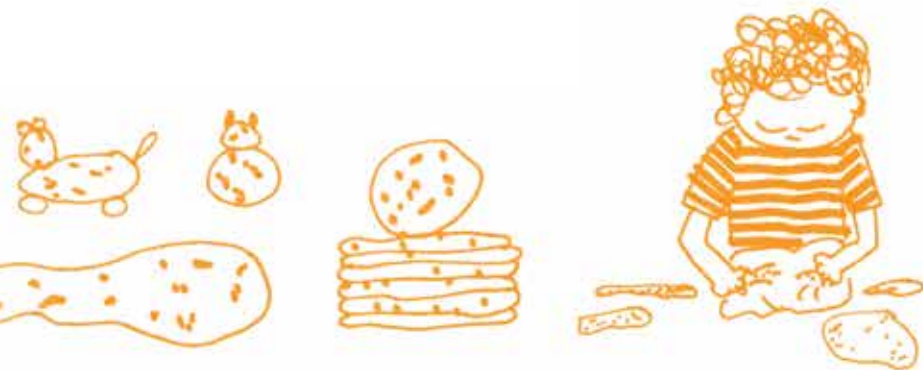
Children can enjoy some marvellous special effects by squeezing playdough through a garlic press.



Luxury Playdough

Create a special occasion playdough by using baby oil instead of cooking oil. It makes it really smooth and smells lovely. Add a couple of drops of essential oils to make it a "smelly" experience.

Playdough has always been a great favourite but some groups tend to stick pretty much to using it with rolling pins and cookie cutters. If you would like to add some variety to the playdough table, why not try some of these simple ideas.



Miniature Gardens.

Flatten playdough onto a small paper plate or push some into the bottom of a paper or plastic cup. Push in flowers, leaves, gumnuts, twigs with seed pods, shells and small rocks etc. (Choose nature "bits" that have reasonably firm stems.)



A small shake of glitter brings a magic sparkle to the playdough



Playdough Plus



Fabric Fun

Adding scraps of different fabrics to playdough play adds a new dimension. The children can wrap up the playdough or use the material as clothing, fur, skin and so on. Lengths of string and wool are also fun.

Playdough Birthday Cakes

Using paper patty pans, children can make little "cakes" for each paper case and can push in coloured match-stick candles. Sing Happy Birthday.



Add a handful of uncooked rice to the mixture to add an interesting texture.

Cutting and Chopping

Special bladeless scissors (available from the Playgroup WA shop) are great for practicing cutting skills on playdough. Also fun are plastic picnic knives but better quality ones are less likely to snap. Children can safely manage metal bread and butter knives if well supervised.



ENDNOTES

- ¹ Minutes, 16th February and AGM, November 1972. Margaret was very familiar with New Zealand Play Centres as she had been living in New Zealand before she moved to Perth.
- ² Minutes, 16th February 1972.
- ³ *Interaction*, August 1973.
- ⁴ Interviews with Glenda Parks and Cynthia Dixon, June 2022.
- ⁵ 'The Playgroup Movement' brochure prepared by Cynthia Dixon, Tricia Valdman and Eversley Davies, October 1973, SLWA PR 9677, Item 2.
- ⁶ Playgroup Associations in Australia, illustrated by Penny Davis, *Fun at Playgroup: a book about Playgroups in Australia*, Playgroup Council of Australia, (1979), 1988, p. 91. *Interaction*, April 1978.
- ⁷ Minutes, AGM, 16th March 1985. Professor McDonald remained Patron until 1983. Interview with Cynthia Dixon, 16 June 2022.
- ⁸ Interview with Cynthia Dixon, 16 June 2022.
- ⁹ Minutes, AGM 28th March 1974.
- ¹⁰ Interview with Cynthia Dixon, 16 June 2022.
- ¹¹ 'The Playgroup Movement' brochure prepared by Cynthia Dixon, Tricia Valdman and Eversley Davies, October 1973, SLWA PR 9677, Item 2.
- ¹² Minutes, 13th April 1972.
- ¹³ 'The Playgroup Movement' brochure, October 1973.
- ¹⁴ Minutes, 6th July 1972.
- ¹⁵ Minutes, 24th October 1972.
- ¹⁶ 'The Playgroup Movement' brochure, October 1973.
- ¹⁷ Press, Frances and Wong, Sandie, 'A Voice for Young Children: 75 years of Early Childhood Australia', *Early Childhood Australia*, Canberra, 2013.
- ¹⁸ 'Report of Royal Commission on Kindergartens', 13th August 1952, presented to both Houses of Parliament, 1953, 64653/4/53. See also Kerr, Rosemary, *A History of the Kindergarten Union of Western Australia, 1911-1973*, Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation, Perth, 1994.
- ¹⁹ 'Pre-School Education Act', No. 18 of 1973. Refer also to the Nott report, 1972 that acknowledged the demand for pre-school services 'is relentlessly expanding and continues unabated'.
- ²⁰ Kerr, *A History of the Kindergarten Union*, pp. 180-186.
- ²¹ PSB AR 1974, pp. 9 and 15.
- ²² Minutes, 1st February 1973.
- ²³ PSB AR 1974, p. 15.
- ²⁴ 'Early History of PGWA' PGWA Archives, Box 20. *Interaction*, December 1975.
- ²⁵ Minutes, 1st February 1973.
- ²⁶ *Interaction*, vol 1, March 1973.
- ²⁷ Minutes, 1st and 19th February 1973. *Interaction*, May 1973.
- ²⁸ Notes in the 'History' file, PGWA Archives, Box 21. Minutes, 26th June 1973.
- ²⁹ Interview with Cynthia Dixon, June 2022. Cynthia recalled that there were two or three librarians who attended the first course who could recommend books for other members.
- ³⁰ *Interaction*, May 1973, vols. 1 and 2.
- ³¹ Minutes, 27th February 1973.
- ³² *Interaction*, 2004. Interviews with Eversley Ruth (Davies) and Penny Hudson.
- ³³ Interview with Eversley Ruth (Davies), June 2022.
- ³⁴ PGWA AR 2003.
- ³⁵ PGWA AR 2005.
- ³⁶ *Interaction*, 2004.
- ³⁷ PGWA AR 2007.
- ³⁸ PGWA AR 2009-2010, 2012-2013 and 2014-2015.
- ³⁹ *Interaction*, June 1974.
- ⁴⁰ Interview with Cynthia Dixon, 16 June 2022.
- ⁴¹ Notes in the 'History' file, PGWA Archives, Box 21.
- ⁴² Minutes, 9th April 1973.
- ⁴³ Townley, Cris, 'Playgroups: moving in from the margins of history, policy and feminism', *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, vol. 43, no. 2, June 2018, p. 65. NSW also closely followed Grey's work and used New Zealand Playcentres as their model for playgroups.
- ⁴⁴ Minutes, 23rd October 1973.
- ⁴⁵ *Interaction*, December 1973. Interview with Cynthia Dixon, 16 June 2022 confirmed that little progress was made at these meetings.
- ⁴⁶ Minutes, 19th November 1973.
- ⁴⁷ *Interaction*, February 1974. For example, it was believed that over thirty groups had formed in the first two months of 1974. By March 1974 there were 160 playgroups. Minutes, AGM 28th March 1974.
- ⁴⁸ *Interaction*, August 1973.
- ⁴⁹ Minutes, 9th October 1973 and *Interaction*, December 1973.
- ⁵⁰ Interview with Cynthia Dixon, 16 June 2022.
- ⁵¹ *Interaction*, December 1973.
- ⁵² Minutes, 7th August 1974.
- ⁵³ Minutes, AGM, 18th March 1975. The Management Committee resolved to quit the Melting Pot at their meeting, 7th August 1974. Interview with Cynthia Dixon, 16 June 2022 described the Melting Pot as 'very 1970s'.
- ⁵⁴ Minutes, 11th November 1975.
- ⁵⁵ Minutes, 5th April 1976.
- ⁵⁶ Minutes, 17th May 1977.

- ⁵⁷ 'President's Report' in *Interaction*, March 1978. Minutes, 20th December 1977.
- ⁵⁸ Minutes, 20th November 1978.
- ⁵⁹ Minutes, 15th January 1979 and 14th January 1980. 'President's Report 1979-1980', SLWA collection.
- ⁶⁰ Minutes, April 1981.
- ⁶¹ Minutes, 5th May 1980.
- ⁶² Minutes, Letter to Members dated 21st May 1980.
- ⁶³ *Interaction*, June 1981.
- ⁶⁴ 'Interview with Barbara Scott in 2014-2015', interviewed by Anne Yardley, 2014-2015, SLWA Oral History Collection, OH 4209, p. 54.
- ⁶⁵ PGA AR 1988/89.
- ⁶⁶ PGA AR 1988/89.
- ⁶⁷ PGA AR 1997.
- ⁶⁸ *Interaction*, December 1973.
- ⁶⁹ Minutes, 30th April 1974, Zone Coordinators meeting.
- ⁷⁰ *Interaction*, June 1974.
- ⁷¹ Townley, 'Playgroups: moving in from the margins of history, policy and feminism', p. 65.
- ⁷² Education Department AR, 1974, p. 40.
- ⁷³ Minutes, 15th January 1974.
- ⁷⁴ *Interaction*, June 1974, submission to Pre-School Board.
- ⁷⁵ Minutes, 5th June 1974. It was around this time that the Community Recreation Council assisted PGA with printing costs associated with *Interaction*, refer to AGM Minutes, 18th March 1975 and 9th March 1976.
- ⁷⁶ Minutes, 5th June 1974.
- ⁷⁷ Minutes, 11th February 1974.
- ⁷⁸ PSB AR 1975, p. 7.
- ⁷⁹ PSB AR 1975, p. 8.
- ⁸⁰ *Interaction*, September 1974, report by Terry Solomon.
- ⁸¹ *Interaction*, June and September 1974.
- ⁸² Minutes, AGM, 18th March 1975.
- ⁸³ Minutes, AGM, 9th March 1976.
- ⁸⁴ Minutes, AGM, 9th March 1976.
- ⁸⁵ Minutes, 5th April 1976.
- ⁸⁶ Minutes, AGM, 21st February 1977.
- ⁸⁷ Minutes, AGM, 9th March 1976.
- ⁸⁸ Undated History paper, c. March 1980, PGWA Archives, Box 20.
- ⁸⁹ Minutes, AGM, 21st February 1977.
- ⁹⁰ Minutes, Letter to members, 6th April 1977.
- ⁹¹ Minutes, 19th April and 17th May 1977.
- ⁹² 'Interview with Barbara Scott in 2014-2015', interviewed by Anne Yardley, 2014-2015, SLWA Oral History Collection, OH 4209, p. 45. 'President's Report' in *Interaction*, March 1978.
- ⁹³ *Education Act Amendment Act*, 1977, No. 27 of 1977. See also *West Australian*, 24 May 1977.
- ⁹⁴ 'President's Report' in *Interaction*, March 1978.
- ⁹⁵ Education Department AR, 1978, p. 14. Minutes, 21st June 1977.
- ⁹⁶ Minutes, 17th January 1978. 'Early History of PGWA' PGWA Archives, Box 20.
- ⁹⁷ Minutes, 23rd October 1978. Unfortunately, the grant did not extend to cover holiday pay and the Treasurer had to develop an agreement with Margaret.
- ⁹⁸ Minutes, 20th February 1978.
- ⁹⁹ 'President's Report' in *Interaction*, March 1978. Minutes, 20th December 1977.
- ¹⁰⁰ Minutes, 19th April 1978.
- ¹⁰¹ Minutes, 1st May 1978.
- ¹⁰² *Interaction*, December 1977. It is believed Jim Balmer was the Artist for at least one edition of *Interaction*.
- ¹⁰³ *Interaction*, March and April 1978.
- ¹⁰⁴ Interview with Penny Hudson (Davis), 13 May 2022.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Interaction*, April 1978.
- ¹⁰⁶ Minutes, 18th September 1978. *Interaction*, March 1979.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Interaction*, March 1979.
- ¹⁰⁸ Minutes, 23rd October and 6th November 1978.
- ¹⁰⁹ Minutes, 15th January 1979.
- ¹¹⁰ *Interaction*, June 1979.
- ¹¹¹ *Interaction*, October/November 1979 and February 1980.
- ¹¹² Minutes, 6th August 1979.
- ¹¹³ Minutes, 2nd July 1979.
- ¹¹⁴ *Interaction*, June 1979.
- ¹¹⁵ *Interaction*, December 1979. Minutes, 1st November 1979. See also Minutes, 16th May and 2nd June 1980, working out financial contributions to the project continued well after the book was launched. Interview with Pam Harris, June 2022.
- ¹¹⁶ Minutes, 3rd December 1979 and 14th January. 'President's Report 1979-1980', SLWA collection.
- ¹¹⁷ Minutes, 5th May 1980.
- ¹¹⁸ Education Department AR, 1981, p. 17 mentioned that pre-school education was considered important by the Department. Annual Reports (after dissolution of the Pre-School Board) from 1977 rarely mention pre-school except within the context of places for pre-primary education.
- ¹¹⁹ Minutes, 9th March 1981.
- ¹²⁰ President's Report for 1981, SLWA collection.
- ¹²¹ President's Report for 1981, SLWA collection.
- ¹²² *Interaction*, June 1981.
- ¹²³ *Interaction*, June 1977.
- ¹²⁴ *Interaction*, June 1980. 'President's Report 1979-1980' and 'Presidents Report 1981', SLWA collection. Minutes, 23rd March (AGM) and April 1981.

- ¹²⁵ Minutes, 22nd November 1983. Meerilinga has a long association with various kindergarten and child care groups.
- ¹²⁶ Minutes, 26th July 1983.
- ¹²⁷ Minutes, 16th February 1987.
- ¹²⁸ Minutes, 9th August, 7th September 1981 and 14th June 1982.
- ¹²⁹ Minutes, 20th June and 24th August 1983, 2nd July, 7th August and 15th October 1984.
- ¹³⁰ Minutes, 9th March 1981 and 2nd February 1982.
- ¹³¹ Minutes, 14th June 1982 and 20th February 1984.
- ¹³² Minutes, 9th August and 15th November 1982. Interview with Del Sterpini, 16 June 2022.
- ¹³³ Minutes, 2nd June 1983.
- ¹³⁴ Minutes, 29th September 1983. The 'Best of' book was not completed in time for the Field Day and was launched in November 1983.
- ¹³⁵ Minutes, 22nd November 1983.
- ¹³⁶ *Interaction*, September 1974. Minutes, 30th July and 17th September 1974, Zone Coordinators meeting.
- ¹³⁷ *Interaction*, September 1975.
- ¹³⁸ Minutes, 17th September 1974, Zone Coordinators meeting. The Field Day was organised by the Zone Coordinators and not the Management Committee. This may account for the fact that later numbering of Field Days was 'out' by a few years.
- ¹³⁹ Minutes, 16th August 1977.
- ¹⁴⁰ Minutes, 19th July 1977.
- ¹⁴¹ *Interaction*, December 1978. See also Minutes, 23rd October 1978.
- ¹⁴² Minutes, 7th May 1979 and 6th October 1980. *Interaction*, August/September 1979.
- ¹⁴³ Minutes, 14th June 1982, 15th November 1982, 24th August 1983 and 7th August 1984.
- ¹⁴⁴ PGA AR 1988/89.
- ¹⁴⁵ Minutes, 13th May to 18th November 1985.
- ¹⁴⁶ PGA AR 1988/89 and 1991. The Field Day/Toy Fair was held at Perry Lakes from 1992 to 1997, see Annual Reports for these years.
- ¹⁴⁷ PGA/PGWA AR 1999 and 2003.
- ¹⁴⁸ Minutes, 25th September 2001.
- ¹⁴⁹ PGWA AR 2008 to 2019-2020.
- ¹⁵⁰ PGWA AR 2019-2020.
- ¹⁵¹ 'Report of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee, appointed by the Minister for Education in Western Australia, under the Chairmanship of Mr H.W. Loudon', July 1983.
- ¹⁵² 'Report of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee', July 1983, p. 41.
- ¹⁵³ Minutes, 12th April 1983.
- ¹⁵⁴ Education Department AR, 1983, p. 16.
- ¹⁵⁵ Minutes, 16th September 1985 and AGM, 10th March 1986.
- ¹⁵⁶ 'Early History Notes', PGWA Archives, Box 20. See also Education Department AR 1986, p. 22. In 1987, the only Education Department Playgroup Advisor was Valmai Van Mens 'in control of all 4 year old groups statewide'. Minutes, 24th November 1986. Mrs Van Mens had attended early PGA meetings in the 1970s as a government representative.
- ¹⁵⁷ Minutes, 15th September 1986. 'Silver City' was the common name for the Education Department's headquarters in East Perth. Interview with Del Sterpini, 16 June 2022 confirmed that perhaps some within the Education Department did not value the work of PGA.
- ¹⁵⁸ Minutes, 22nd April 1986. Interview with Del Sterpini, 16 June 2022.
- ¹⁵⁹ Minutes, 13th April 1987.
- ¹⁶⁰ Minutes, 1st September and 6th October 1980.
- ¹⁶¹ Minutes, 6th August 1985 and AGM 16th March 1987. Limited available resources meant this was not produced until 1987.
- ¹⁶² Minutes, 11th May 1987 and President's report 1988 AGM.
- ¹⁶³ Beveridge, Jill and Dunstan, Maureen (eds), *Playgroup's Yummy Cookbook*, produced by the Playgroup Association of Western Australia, 1987.
- ¹⁶⁴ Minutes, 3rd August 1987. 'Early History Notes' file, PGWA Archives, Box 20. PGA AR 1994.
- ¹⁶⁵ Minutes, 16th March 1987 and 14th June and 1st August 1988. The Sub-Committee consisted of Alyson McIntyre, Sue Thompson, Louise Spearing and Louise Kerry.
- ¹⁶⁶ Minutes. 1st February 1973.
- ¹⁶⁷ *West Australian*, 25th August 1988, p. 1.
- ¹⁶⁸ Minutes, 12th September 1988.
- ¹⁶⁹ Minutes, 19th September 1988.
- ¹⁷⁰ Minutes, 9th November 1987. PGA AR 1988/89.
- ¹⁷¹ Minutes, 18th August and 15th September 1986.
- ¹⁷² Minutes, 6th July and 3rd August 1987.
- ¹⁷³ 'Concerts' File, PGWA Archives, Box 92.
- ¹⁷⁴ 'Concerts' File, PGWA Archives, Box 92 and Box 165.
- ¹⁷⁵ PGA AR 1994 and 1996.
- ¹⁷⁶ PGA AR 1996. See also Minutes, 14th May 1990.
- ¹⁷⁷ 'Concerts' File, PGWA Archives, Box 92. Don Spencer concerts were held in 1990, 1992 and 1993.
- ¹⁷⁸ 'Concerts' File, PGWA Archives, Box 92, flyer for 1995 concerts.
- ¹⁷⁹ PGA AR 1994.
- ¹⁸⁰ PGA AR 1995.
- ¹⁸¹ Minutes, 17th October 1997.
- ¹⁸² 'Concerts' File, PGWA Archives, Box 92.

- ¹⁸³ Minutes, 26th November 1996. PGA AR 1997.
- ¹⁸⁴ PGA AR 1998.
- ¹⁸⁵ PGA/PGWA AR 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2003. 'Governing Committee Meetings 2002' file, PGWA Archives, Box 49.
- ¹⁸⁶ 'Concerts' File, PGWA Archives, Box 92.
- ¹⁸⁷ PGA AR 2000.
- ¹⁸⁸ 'Concerts' File, PGWA Archives, Box 92. Recording of Jenny Tomlinson, 2008.
- ¹⁸⁹ Minutes, 28th November 1997. A similar observation was made about the 1997 Play School Concerts.
- ¹⁹⁰ 'Concerts' File, PGWA Archives, Box 92.
- ¹⁹¹ PGA AR 1991.
- ¹⁹² 'Interview with Barbara Scott in 2014-2015', interviewed by Anne Yardley, 2014-2015, SLWA Oral History Collection, OH 4209, p. 54. 'Early History of PGWA' PGWA Archives, Box 20.
- ¹⁹³ PGA AR 1988/89.
- ¹⁹⁴ PGA AR 1988/89. The building plaque is held in PGWA Archives, Box 112.
- ¹⁹⁵ 'Speech given by Hazel Hawke', John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library Collection, 28 May 1989. http://link.library.curtin.edu.au/p?pid=CUR_ALMA11191561700001951
- ¹⁹⁶ PGA AR 1988/89. One day it was reported that 126 phonecalls were received.
- ¹⁹⁷ The exact date State Government funding for staff costs was introduced has been difficult to determine but thought to be around late 1988-early 1989.
- ¹⁹⁸ Minutes, 14th May 1990. The meeting had commenced at 7:45pm.
- ¹⁹⁹ Minutes and staff reports throughout 1988-1989, PGWA Archives, Box 53.
- ²⁰⁰ Interview with Del Sterpini, 16 June 2022.
- ²⁰¹ PGA AR 1990.
- ²⁰² Minutes, 12th February 1990. In 1997, it was predicted PGA would lose around 1,200 families because of changes to the Fours program, Minutes, 7th March 1997.
- ²⁰³ PGA AR 1990 and 1991.
- ²⁰⁴ PGA AR 1990.
- ²⁰⁵ PGA AR 1992/1993 and 1995.
- ²⁰⁶ PGA AR 1990.
- ²⁰⁷ PGA AR 1991. A grant of \$4,800 was awarded for the regional seminar.
- ²⁰⁸ PGA AR 1990.
- ²⁰⁹ PGA AR 1991/1992.
- ²¹⁰ PGA AR 1991.
- ²¹¹ Minutes, 11th November 1991. PGA AR 1991/1992.
- ²¹² Minutes, 12th May 1993. Invitation, PGWA Archives, Box 53.
- ²¹³ *Interaction*, 1993, 21st anniversary edition. Part-time staff equated to seven full-time employees.
- ²¹⁴ PGA AR 1992/1993. See also the response to the Scott Task Force, Minutes, April 1994 report.
- ²¹⁵ PGA/PGWA AR 2000 and 2002.
- ²¹⁶ PGA AR 1994.
- ²¹⁷ PGA AR 1995.
- ²¹⁸ PGA AR 1995. Flyer at SLWA Collection, PR 9677, Item 21.
- ²¹⁹ '1999-2000 Annual Plan', PGWA Archives, Box 1.
- ²²⁰ PGA AR 1999.
- ²²¹ PGA AR 1998.
- ²²² PGA AR 1996.
- ²²³ Minutes, 26th July 1996.
- ²²⁴ PGA AR 1995.
- ²²⁵ Minutes, 21st March, 26th April 27th June 1996.
- ²²⁶ 'Office Relocation' notes in PGWA Archives, Box 54.
- ²²⁷ PGA AR 1996.
- ²²⁸ PGA AR 1997. See also flyer stating new office and shop to open 28 January 1997, SLWA, PR 9677, Item 23.
- ²²⁹ Invitation to opening of Woodville Lane, PGWA Archives, Box 54.
- ²³⁰ *Interaction*, 2004.
- ²³¹ Minutes, 7th February and 7th March 1997.
- ²³² Minutes, Planning Day report, November 1997.
- ²³³ Minutes, 25th July and 19th September 1997.
- ²³⁴ PGA AR 1996. See also Minutes, 13th February 1989, a \$2,000 grant from the Department for the Aged for 'intergenerational activities'.
- ²³⁵ Interview with Penny Chellew, 27 June 2022.
- ²³⁶ Minutes, 27th November 1998.
- ²³⁷ PGA AR 1998.
- ²³⁸ PGA AR 1998 and 2000. Minutes, 16th May 1997.
- ²³⁹ Minutes, 29th May 1998.
- ²⁴⁰ PGA AR 1999.
- ²⁴¹ Minutes, 18th June 1999.
- ²⁴² PGA AR 1999. Minutes, 18th June 1999.
- ²⁴³ *Interaction*, Term 1, 2000.
- ²⁴⁴ PGWA AR 2004 and 2005.
- ²⁴⁵ Minutes, 22nd October 1999 and 25th February 2000.
- ²⁴⁶ Minutes, 25th February 2000.
- ²⁴⁷ 'Playgroups Marketing Campaign', report dated September 2001, PGWA Archives, Box 31. Media Campaign 2001' envelope in PGWA Archives, Box 31. Minutes, 10th April 2001.
- ²⁴⁸ PGA AR 2000.
- ²⁴⁹ Launch invitation, PGWA Archives, Box 54.
- ²⁵⁰ PGWA AR 2003. *Interaction*, 2003, report from Donna O'Shannessy, President. 'Governing Committee Meetings 2002' file, PGWA Archives, Box 49.
- ²⁵¹ PGWA AR 2004.
- ²⁵² PGWA AR 2002.

²⁵³ Interview with Penny Chellew, 27 June 2022. PGWA Annual Reports in the 2000s.

²⁵⁴ PGWA AR 2002.

²⁵⁵ PGWA AR 2004.

²⁵⁶ SLWA, PR 14798, Item 16. *Interaction*, Term 2, 2002.

²⁵⁷ 'Governing Committee Meetings 2002' file, PGWA Archives, Box 49.

²⁵⁸ Minutes, 30th October 2001.

²⁵⁹ PGWA AR 2004.

²⁶⁰ Kalgoorlie Fun Day, Events 2002' file, PGWA Archives, Box 92. 'Events 2004' file, PGWA Archives, Box 93.

²⁶¹ PGWA AR 2004.

²⁶² PGWA AR 2004.

²⁶³ PGWA AR 2004.

²⁶⁴ Annual Reports throughout the 2000s mention raffles and Lotterywest grants.

²⁶⁵ *Interaction*, October/November 1979 and February 1980.

²⁶⁶ Jenny Tomlinson interview, 2008, PGWA Archives.

²⁶⁷ Minutes, 6th August 1979.

²⁶⁸ Minutes, 7th June and 1st July 1985. Brochure at SLWA, PR 9677, Item 19.

²⁶⁹ PGA AR 1998, 1999 and 2000.

²⁷⁰ PGWA AR 2002.

²⁷¹ 'Governing Committee Meetings 2002' file, PGWA Archives, Box 49.

²⁷² PGWA AR 2003.

²⁷³ PGWA AR 2005. SLWA Ephemera Collection, Flyer at PR 14798, Item 3.

²⁷⁴ *Interaction*, 2003.

²⁷⁵ PGWA AR 2004 and 2005.

²⁷⁶ PGWA AR 2009-2010.

²⁷⁷ PGWA AR 2009-2010.

²⁷⁸ *West Australian*, 28 July 2021, p.3.

²⁷⁹ PGWA AR 2003 and 2005. Launch flyer at PGWA Archives, Box 166.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Penny Chellew, 27 June 2022.

²⁸¹ PGWA AR 2020-2021.

²⁸² PGWA AR 2005.

²⁸³ PGWA AR 2007.

²⁸⁴ PGWA AR 2009-2010.

²⁸⁵ Launch flyer in PGWA Archives, Box 193.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Penny Chellew, 27 June 2022.

²⁸⁷ PGWA AR 2021-2021.

²⁸⁸ PGWA AR 2004 and 2005.

²⁸⁹ PGWA AR 2012-2013.

²⁹⁰ PGWA AR 2014-2015.

²⁹¹ PGWA AR 2017-2018.

²⁹² PGWA AR 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

²⁹³ PGWA AR 2020-2021.

²⁹⁴ SLWA collection, PR 9677/14.

²⁹⁵ *Interaction*, Issue 2, 2007. It was held at Whiteman Park in 2007-2009, 2010-2015 and

possibly other years.

²⁹⁶ PGWA AR 2015-2016.

²⁹⁷ PGWA AR 2016-2017.

²⁹⁸ PGWA AR 2005. 'National Marketing Campaign' file, PGWA Archives, Box 159.

²⁹⁹ PGWA AR 2007.

³⁰⁰ PGWA AR 2007 and 2008.

³⁰¹ PGWA AR 2008.

³⁰² PGWA AR 2007.

³⁰³ PGWA AR 2007.

³⁰⁴ PGWA AR 2012-2013.

³⁰⁵ PGWA website.

³⁰⁶ PGWA website.

³⁰⁷ PGWA AR 2008.

³⁰⁸ PGWA AR 2012-2013 and subsequent years.

³⁰⁹ Natureplay file in PGWA Archives Box 189.

³¹⁰ PGWA AR 2012-2013.

³¹¹ PGWA AR 2011-2012.

³¹² PGWA AR 2014-2015.

³¹³ PGWA AR 2011-2012.

³¹⁴ PGWA AR 2012-2013.

³¹⁵ PGWA AR 2013-2014.

³¹⁶ PGWA AR 2014-2015.

³¹⁷ PGWA AR 2017-2018.

³¹⁸ PGWA AR 2015-2016.

³¹⁹ PGWA AR 2018-2019.

³²⁰ PGWA AR 2019-2020.

³²¹ PGWA AR 2020-2021.

³²² PGWA AR 2018-2019.

Abbreviations used in Endnotes:

| | |
|------|---|
| AR | Annual Report |
| PGA | Playgroup Association of WA Inc. (1972-2001) |
| PGWA | Playgroup WA (from 2001) |
| PSB | Western Australian Pre-School Education Board |
| SLWA | State Library of WA |

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