



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Playgroup Tasmania

SPEECH

Thursday, 16 November 2023

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner	Responder
Speaker Archer, Bridget MP	Question No.

Mrs ARCHER (Bass) (10:22): It brings me great joy to stand here today to wish Playgroup Tasmania a very happy 50th birthday. Way back in 1973, a handful of mums in the south of the state came together and formed their local playgroups. Three months later, there were over 22 members, and, thanks to funds raised through attendance fees of 30 cents per family and fundraising through raffles, they were able to purchase jigsaw puzzles, coloured pencils and blocks to play with. By the end of 1973, the movement had expanded, with a second playgroup session each week.

Today, there are more than 65 playgroups running in communities around Tasmania, providing play, support and connection for 1,320 children from 880 families, with more than a dozen groups running across northern Tasmania. Half of today's playgroups are led by volunteers who provided more than 41,000 hours of support, while community organisations manage the remainder, catering for specific groups such as new migrants.

Playgroup Tasmania works to support Tasmanian families with young children and babies to flourish physically, emotionally and socially through their connections to Tasmania's playgroup community, providing warm, welcoming and accessible spaces for families of all shapes and sizes. More than just a playgroup, the organisation also provides early support and inclusion work, which encompasses its unique community-led Baby Village model, which was introduced earlier this year and already is benefitting countless families.

Playgroup Tasmania also has programs for families with children who have developmental delay or disability, namely PlayConnect+ and Play and Learn Supported, or PALS Playgroups, as it's known. Both of these national programs provide adaptable environments, with the PALS program featuring music and movement based activities in collaboration with local cultural and sport and recreation providers.

As a mum of five, I've spent countless hours at local playgroups over the years and have incredibly fond memories. It's not only fantastic for kids to engage in play based opportunities but also wonderful for parents to have a social connection at a period of life that can feel quite isolating at times. As a sidenote, as a parent who openly admits to not loving painting, crafts or similar activities, it's a great place for kids to engage in messy play and water play without the stress of having it at your own house.

Over the past 4½ years, I've worked closely with Playgroup Tasmania, advocating for essential funding to ensure the organisation continues to be sustainable for years to come and providing support through various grants and essential equipment and training. I commend the work of CEO Jacinda Armstrong, who has steered the organisation through many challenging circumstances over the past few years and has always had the best interests of families at heart. I'd also like to thank the numerous volunteers who keep their local playgroups growing. Happy 50th birthday, Playgroup Tasmania. What a gift you've provided to families across generations.