



## DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATES DISCUSSION PAPER FOR MEMBERS October 2021

### Where did we come from...

Play Australia is a not-for-profit charitable association whose membership comprises professionals, groups and individuals across Australia, that has been working in the interests of children's play since 1914. The organisation was previously known as The Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV) and has been steadily growing over many years. Play Australia is the only member-based cross-sector play organization in Australia committed to promoting the value of play nationally.

In 2010, PRAV (the Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria Incorporated), formerly changed its name to **Play Australia**. This was the first step in transforming an organisation based in Victoria, to one more reflective of its national membership base. The purpose of Play Australia is to promote the value of play and inspire active healthy play opportunities nationally.

In 2011 a project was undertaken to determine the best way forward for the growth of Play Australia. Amongst the recommendations, the report envisaged that the role of the states and territories should be critical in supporting advocacy for play, and that local branch committees '**will oversee the development of play in their own jurisdiction and will be bound by the objectives of the Play Australia constitution, its statutes and regulations**'.

The report recommended the following roles and responsibilities for State branches.

#### Local branch responsibilities:

*(Note: The role of local branches is to work with a local focus and to undertake those functions that can be more effectively done at state, territory or regional level than at a national level.)*

- *Advocacy locally, including to State Governments.*
- *Networking and coordination: bringing people together for a common purpose within states and territories.*

- *Representing the play community on state and territory bodies.*
- *Provide representatives to national bodies.*
- *Supporting and managing local governance arrangements; establishing policy and strategic direction with appropriate representation.*
- *Establishing partnerships with key stakeholders in the play community.*
- *Access funding resources locally.*
- *Initiating, facilitating and supporting research in consultation with the National Office.*
- *Information gathering and dissemination; providing opportunities to collaborate and share information - ‘cross pollination’ of sectors.*
- *Provision of training, forums and conferences.*
- *Providing sector specific support.*
- *Undertaking projects for clients and partners locally, and*
- *Providing services and programs to members within their jurisdiction.*

In 2015 the organisation adopted a new Constitution to enable the development of state and territory branches to be established by Regulation. i.e. The Board can adopt a Regulation to establish a state branch without having to amend the Constitution.

In developing the Constitution, the Board was emphatic in not wishing to dominate, dictate or control activity at the state & territory level. This has led to a diverse and significant variety of activities across the country, all in support of promoting the value of play, and growing the capacity of Play Australia. Some states have developed models of operation reflecting the Victorian experience of networking sessions across the state, some have focussed on issue-specific gatherings, all with varying degrees of success. Some states have state-based Committees (SA, NSW, WA & VIC) and Networks (QLD & TAS).

## So where are we now.....

In 2021 Play Australia nationally continues to embrace our role as the peak national organisation for play in Australia by improving our benefits to our professional Members and delivering increased play advocacy through our campaigns – see: [Play Australia’s five-year strategy 2021-25](#).

To support improved engagement with our members and networks, we are building our online presence and reach by delivering our Online Learning Series; we are creating Online Training (due for launch in 2022); and our digital engagement across email, social media and website is improving and provides regular communications.

Feedback from our last Member Survey indicated a strong desire from members who want to participate in more local face-to-face network/PD opportunities. This has no doubt been exacerbated due to the continuing lockdowns due to COVID over the last 20 months.

Play Australia National Office wants to recognise the views of our Members, and is committed to supporting more in-person opportunities, particularly as we emerge from the pandemic and seek to re-engage with one another away from our screens.

We know that our State and Territory Branches/Networks are best placed to facilitate these kinds of opportunities whilst the activity of the National Office needs to continue to grow online. However, this leads to a much bigger discussion about defining more clearly the roles and responsibilities of the States & Territories, and the National Office. Who does what? ...and how to work together? ...for greatest impact.

We also want to explore the ideal governance model for the States and Territories, recognizing the significant differences in size, geography, and population, to enable greater engagement with stakeholders and growth of activities across Australia.

In addition, we want a model that is manageable for our volunteers, which provides flexibility and is simple to replicate across all States & Territories if possible.

## So WHAT NEXT, is the question

- *Are the current arrangements working?*
- *What are the strengths and weaknesses of our operation to date?*
- *What do you think we should do to grow the advocacy for play across the country?*
- *What are the issues which affect your participation and that of your colleagues at the state & territory level?*

Our national Board will meet in person in February 2022 (COVID permitting) when this issue will be fully discussed and we would like to receive feedback and input from members, particularly those who have participated in state-based Committees and activities, to inform this discussion.

Please send your thoughts and responses to [barb@playaustralia.org.au](mailto:barb@playaustralia.org.au) (and also discuss with your local Board member and Committee).

