

PROMOTING PLAY IN YOUR LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD:

Enhancing Community Well-being

play
AUSTRALIA

Building
a healthy
Australia
through play



**Neighbours
Every
Day**

Create Belonging
Share Belonging

Introduction:

Creating opportunities for play in your local neighbourhoods can have a profound impact on community well-being and social connection. Play is vital for both children and adults as it supports mental, emotional, and physical health.

This information sheet offers practical tips on how to promote play in your neighbourhoods, along with relevant research and statistics that highlight the importance and benefits of play.



Why is Play Important?

Research and studies have consistently shown that play is crucial for various aspects of human development, promoting:

1. **Physical Health:**

- According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), regular physical activity through play helps prevent obesity and related health issues in children and adults.
- Play enhances motor skills, coordination, and overall physical fitness.

2. **Mental and Emotional Well-being:**

- The American Academy of Paediatrics states that play helps children build resilience, reduce stress, and promote emotional well-being.
- Play provides opportunities for creativity, problem-solving, and imaginative thinking.
- For adults, play can help alleviate stress, improve mood, and enhance overall mental well-being.

3. **Social Connection and Community Engagement:**

- Play fosters social interaction, cooperation, and teamwork among children and adults.
- It strengthens community bonds, encourages positive relationships, and reduces social isolation.
- The Journal of Community Psychology emphasises that play activities in neighbourhoods create opportunities for community members to connect and build a sense of belonging.



How does Play Build Neighbourhood Cohesion?

Here are a few ways...

● Facilitating social interactions

Play cultivates opportunities for people to come together and engage in shared activities. By participating in games, sports, or recreational activities, neighbours can interact with each other, develop relationships, and build a sense of community.

● Fostering trust and understanding

Through play, neighbours can experience moments of collaboration, competition, and cooperation, which can help foster trust and understanding. By working together towards a common goal, individuals can gain deeper insights into each other's strengths and abilities, leading to stronger bonds.

● Creating a sense of belonging

When neighbours engage in play together, it creates a shared experience, making individuals feel like they belong to a larger community. This sense of belonging encourages people to invest more in their neighbourhood, leading to increased social cohesion.

● Breaking down barriers

Play has the power to break down barriers that may exist among neighbour's, such as cultural, social, or generational differences. By engaging in fun activities together, individuals can overcome preconceived notions, stereotypes, and prejudices, fostering a more inclusive and cohesive neighbourhood.

● Encouraging communication

Playful activities provide opportunities for communication to occur naturally. Whether it's during a game, a picnic, or a community event, neighbours can engage in conversations, share stories, and exchange ideas, building stronger connections and a sense of unity.

● Promoting physical and mental well-being

Play can contribute to healthier and happier neighbour's, which in turn, enhances community cohesion. Physical activities like sports or outdoor games can promote fitness, while creative play or hobbies can improve mental well-being. When people feel good, they are more likely to connect with others and contribute positively to their neighbourhood.



Promoting Play in Your Neighbourhood:

1. Organise Community Play Events:

- Plan regular play events such as sports days, community picnics, or game nights in local parks or public spaces. Advertise these events through flyers, local social media groups, or neighbourhoods' newsletters.

2. Establish Play Spaces:

- Advocate for the creation or improvement of play areas within your neighbourhoods. Collaborate with local authorities or community organisations to develop safe and inclusive playgrounds or sports facilities.

3. Encourage Active Transportation:

- Promote walking, biking, or scooting as ways to get around the neighbourhood. Encourage families and neighbour's to be active by organising walking groups or bike tours.

4. Collaborate with Local Schools and Organisations:

- Partner with schools, local clubs, or community centres to host play-based activities and workshops for children and families.
- Support their efforts in organising sports leagues, art classes, or other recreational programs that encourage play.

5. Embrace Informal Play:

- Encourage spontaneous play by providing open and inviting spaces where children and adults can engage in unstructured activities like games, sidewalk chalk art, or impromptu sports matches.
- Play can bring neighbour's together, facilitate social interactions, foster trust, create a sense of belonging, break down barriers, encourage communication, and promote well-being. All these factors contribute to building stronger neighbourhood cohesion.



Neighbour Day - Last Sunday in the Month of March

What are you doing to celebrate?

<https://neighbourseveryday.org/day-of-action/>

www.playaustralia.org.au Building healthy communities through play