

Expanding the Supported Playgroups Program

We are seeking:

1. Ongoing State Government funding to expand the Supported Playgroups Program to respond to growing demands of vulnerable families.



Background

Long waiting lists to access Banyule's supported playgroup program means that some families in the vulnerable community of Heidelberg West and Bellfield are not getting the support communities need.

Local demand for the program is projected to increase due to population growth and new social housing projects.

Supported Playgroups support parents to spend more time actively playing with their children, promoting children's speech and cognitive development, social skills, emotional resilience and general behaviour.

There is a strong connection between positive early parenting experiences and beneficial outcomes for children.

Why does Banyule need more supported playgroup funding?

Supported playgroups contribute to better outcomes for children and their families but the current level of funding in Banyule is not enough to provide adequate levels of service based on current and projected future demand.

- Heidelberg West/Bellfield has nationally significant levels of generational socio-economic disadvantage.¹
- By 2041, Heidelberg West/Bellfield is expected to experience population growth of 20%. The 0-14-year age group will experience 18% growth by 2031. These statistics indicate the need for support will amplify over the next 20 years.
- The Australian Early Development Index identifies that children in Heidelberg West /Bellfield experience substantial levels of multiple developmental vulnerabilities upon entry to school.²
- There is a projected influx of families with young children after the Big Build Social Housing projects are completed in Heidelberg West/Bellfield.

Banyule has no surge capacity or available resources to manage increased demand for Supported Playgroups, exacerbating the gaps in service delivery.

Current funding does not meet needs

- The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) provide Supported Playgroup funding based on Banyule's SEIFA (Socio Economic Index for Areas) index. Banyule's current funding supports the delivery of five Supported Playgroups, providing a service to up to fifty families.



Banyule Supported Playgroup

CASE STUDY

In 2022 a young vulnerable parent, referred by the Universal MCH nurse, attended Supported Playgroup with her young son. The mother was extremely anxious and had past history of trauma. She described struggling in social situations and expressed doubt in her parenting abilities.

Through regular attendance in the safe environment of the Supported Playgroup she established positive connections with other group participants. The mother also grew in confidence in her parenting abilities learning to read her son's cues and respond with enthusiasm and patience.

The mother is now exploring employment options with her new found confidence and skills and both she and her child are thriving.

- The Supported Playgroups remained at capacity throughout the COVID 19 pandemic and currently have waiting lists for all groups.
- Because of the high level of demand for Supported Playgroup places and the requirement to provide the service for extended periods due to the lower baseline of parenting capacity, Banyule Council is not able to service the needs of many families referred to the program.



Banyule
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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¹ <https://profile.id.com.au/banyule/seifa-disadvantage-small-area>, AIFS 2017

² <https://www.aedc.gov.au/ata-explorer/>