



**Play is Important for Everyone. For Children, It Is Essential.**

- Play is not a luxury or an optional extra. It is a fundamental right and activity for every child that is key to a healthy, happy childhood.
- Play can occur anywhere, at any time, and takes many forms.
- From birth, children are biologically wired to play. This innate urge supports their natural capacity to learn through exploration, curiosity, discovery and engagement with people, places and the world around them.

**Contemporary international research is comprehensive and conclusive: play in children's lives matters!**

- Play is central to children's holistic development – support the whole child in domains such as: social, emotional, cognitive, physical, language, and creativity. Some people include cultural identity and spirituality.

**Additional benefits play affords:**

- It contributes to children's agency and positive sense of being and belonging.
- It strengthens early literacy and mathematical understandings and deepens learning across all school curriculum areas.
- It supports a range of interconnected capabilities, including critical thinking, problem-solving, imagination, empathy, collaboration, self-regulation, and autonomy.
- Active and outdoor play support fundamental movement skills, concentration, physical coordination, resilience and confidence.

Together, these collective outcomes provide strong foundations for lifelong learning, educational success and active participation in society.

**Equally important is the quality of children's play environments.**

- Freely accessible, culturally inclusive and stimulating play spaces and places in local communities help ensure children are not disadvantaged by geography, special needs, or socio-economic circumstance.
- Parents are a child's first and most important educators, and their role in play is critical.

- Equally important is parent/family assurance that early childhood educators provide rich and meaningful opportunities for play-based learning.
- Opportunities for play, whether independently, with peers or alongside supportive adults, **give every** child the **best possible start in life**.

**Extensive research also shows that restricting children's play can have detrimental and potentially lasting consequences. Reduced play is associated with:**

- Increased anxiety, stress and mental health difficulties.
- Poorer social competence.
- Delays in cognitive development and executive functioning.
- Lower resilience and self-efficacy.
- Diminished autonomy.
- Poorer physical health and motor skill development.

**The findings are clear:** protecting children's access to quality play, whether through freely chosen play, guided play, outdoor play or play-based learning, is essential.

**A WA Play Strategy is very timely given the general public's growing concerns about children's wellbeing and the quality of their childhood.**

**Importantly, the Strategy will provide:**

- Assurance on children's right to play and review the equitable access to high-quality play opportunities for all children across Western Australia, regardless of where they live.
- A shared language for discussing play can help unite stakeholders around play matters in Western Australia.
- Opportunities for the voices of children, as experts in their own play experiences, through the Office of Early Childhood *Public Survey on Play*.
- We encourage everyone to take the time to sit with the child or children in your care and assist them to complete the survey. We also invite you to share your own feedback on play in Western Australia so that both children's and adults' perspectives can help inform the future of play across the state.
- It is also our hope that parents, schools, and the wider community will be empowered to support, protect, advocate and provide sufficient time, space, resources and opportunities for WA children to play.

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