The PLAY Program
Families learning, growing and belonging through PLAY

Presented by:
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“Every dollar spent on disadvantaged children in the preschool years generates a 17% annual return to the child and society”

James Heckman (Nobel prize winning economist)
• Evidence based practices are informed by research and literature

• The research is clear of the impact of family functioning, parenting and early intervention on early brain development

• The earlier the intervention, the more significant the long term gains and improvements in a child’s life chances
Early Years Researchers and Theorists

John Bowlby – Children’s early relationships with caregivers
Donald Winnicott – Play is a vehicle for children to learn and adapt to the real world
Jack Shonkoff – Nurturing relationships and rich learning experiences → positive outcomes for children
Bruce Perry – Impact of exposure to trauma on an infant
**2009** – The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the National Early Childhood Development Strategy (NECD) – Investing in the Early Years

**Vision** – “That by 2020 all children can have the best possible start to life to create a better future for them and for the nation”
National Early Childhood Development Strategy (NECD)

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The National Quality Framework
- Quality Standards
- National Legislation

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
Given the strong evidence base of the effectiveness of early intervention, Glastonbury Community Services decided to develop and implement an evidence based early intervention program.

In 2010, Glastonbury decided to invest $1.5 million of internal income over 3 years to Early Years service provision for vulnerable families.

In 2014, Glastonbury committed to a further 5 years of funding for the PLAY program.
• Independent not-for-profit organisation
• Trusted community partner delivering care and support to vulnerable children, young people and families throughout the Barwon area of the Western Division of Victoria
• Family and Community Services
  Out of Home Care Program
• Early Years Program
Key focus areas for Early Years

- Enhancing child development
- Strengthening the parent child relationship
- Creating sustainable community linkages for families
The Early Years program consists of a suite of service interventions:

- PLAY - Parents Learning Actively with Youngsters
- HIPPY - Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters
- small talk - groups for parents of infants 12 months to 3 years, 11 months
- Kindergarten Cluster Management
- ECIS program
What is the PLAY program?

• Early Childhood program developed by Glastonbury in 2000, reviewed and redeveloped in 2010
• Overall aim is to enrich the home learning environment
• Family focused, child centered and strengths based
• Delivered by early years workers with a diverse range of qualifications and experience
Who is eligible for the PLAY program?

- Families with children aged 0-6 years who may need support in enhancing their child’s development
- Support may be required due to environmental or parent/child issues where parental capacity is impacted by one or more factors
Who can refer to the PLAY program?

- Any parent, carer, service provider or professional with parental permission
- Intake worker will contact the family and/or referrer to obtain more information on the needs of the family. Eligibility is confirmed at this time
What does the PLAY program offer?

- Individual home visiting programs
- Groups/playgroups
- Parent education
- Secondary consultation to other services and agencies
Individual Home Visiting

- After intake a PLAY practitioner is allocated to the family
- Regular visits/contact made with the family over the required time period
- Program goals are established in collaboration with the parents in relation to the child within the context of the family
- Parents are encouraged to view themselves as their child’s first educator
The benefits of home visiting

- Understanding of the child’s environment
- Utilise skills learnt in the natural home environment
- Enhance the parent/child relationship
- Minimise disruption to family life
Groups

- Open community playgroups within a primary school, neighborhood house and a Salvation Army facility in highly vulnerable communities
- Pre birth and young parents group, linked to the young adolescents program at the hospital
- Bush playgroups
The Benefits of Groups

- Children learn to socialise with other children
- Parents form friendships and support networks
- Ideas learnt that families can use within the home
- Parents feel a part of the community and may take part in other community activities
What is the role of the PLAY practitioner?

- Devise (with the parent) achievable and measurable family goals
- Establish routines
- Advocate for the child and family
- Complete developmental assessment
- Model play

- Promote positive parent/child relationship
- Provide relevant information
- Acknowledge parent’s strengths
- Listen
- Offer encouragement
- Refer to other agencies
Evaluation

• At the beginning of the intervention, each child has a baseline developmental assessment completed. The assessment is done pre, post and at 6 monthly intervals

• An assessment is also carried out on the parent/child relationship at the beginning of intervention and upon discharge
Research Evaluations

• Glastonbury has commissioned two independent research evaluations of the PLAY program from Deakin University that involved the collection of qualitative and quantitative data

• Deakin University are currently undertaking a research study of the Bumps to Bubs group
Evaluation Findings

• Increased parent’s knowledge of activities to do with their children
• Parents were more willing to allow activities to be child centered
• General positive trend for all areas of parent-child relationship
Evaluation Findings

- Improvement in fine motor skills, communication and personal social development of children
- Increased confidence in parenting
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