



## Conversation with the Collective International Day of Play – 11 June 2025

The Play Matters Collective is an affiliation of organisations and individuals with a shared vision: **to ensure children's right to play is supported across all levels of the WA community.**

Wednesday 11 June 2025 marks the second [United Nations International Day of Play](#) (IDOP). The day was introduced by the United Nations to raise the global profile of the power of play.

*“Beyond mere recreation, play is a universal language spoken by people of all ages, transcending national, cultural, and socio-economic boundaries. This shared passion fosters a sense of community and national pride.*

*Moreover, play is considered to have a positive impact on promoting tolerance, resilience, and facilitating social inclusion, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding. In recognition of this, the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) has enshrined play as a fundamental right of every child under [Article 31](#).*

*The international day creates a unifying moment at global, national, and local levels to elevate the importance of play. It signals a call for policies, training, and funding to get play integrated into education and community settings worldwide.”<sup>1</sup>*

IDOP's mantra is that “Play Makes a Better World”. The theme for the International Day of Play in 2025 was “[Choose Play – Every Day](#)”.

63 people from early childhood education and care settings, schools, school systems, Playgroup WA, TAFEs, universities, healthcare, Educated by Nature, Toy Library Association, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Child Australia, Kids Research Institute Australia, Valuing Children’s Initiative, Minderoo Foundation and Healthway, gathered at The Boulevard Conference Centre to continue our Conversations about Play in Western Australia.



Participants networked prior to the presentations

Informal networking provided time for participants to reconnect and discuss risky play, nature play, universal access to play and the perspectives of children about play.



Cath Fitzhardinge spoke about universal access to play



Participants looked at the drawings and quotes from 3- and 4-year-old children



Some participants took part in risky play

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-play>

# PLAY MATTERS COLLECTIVE

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Dr Sandra Hesterman, Chair of PMC

Dr Sandra Hesterman, as Master of Ceremonies and Chair of the Play Matters Collective, welcomed everyone to the formal proceedings for the afternoon.

After an Acknowledgement of Country presented by Cath Fitzhardinge, a member of the Play Matters Collective Committee, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, and the Minister for Early Childhood, Education, Preventative Health and the Wheatbelt, Sabine Winton, spoke of their own childhoods and the importance of play. Minister Winton announced that the new Office of Early Childhood would be responsible for the creation of a WA Play Strategy. This has been the goal of the Play Matters Collective for over ten years, and the announcement was met with enthusiastic applause and great hope.



Cath Fitzhardinge – Acknowledgement of Country



Jacqueline McGowan-Jones –  
Commissioner for Children and Young People



Hon. Sabine Winton – Minister for Early Childhood, Education, Preventative Health and the Wheatbelt

The voices of children and young people matter.

*“All over the world and throughout history, young people have – and are maintaining – important relationships, fighting wars, raising familiars, managing money, working effectively and leading people.”<sup>2</sup>*

Yet, a meta-analysis of research in 2024 found that 96.6% of studies about children positioned them as objects rather than participants with a voice.

In recognition of this, four young people, Arlo, John, Molly and Rahni, together with Daniel Burton and Jayne Kaiko (members of the Play Matters Collective Committee), discussed the State of Play in WA Report that was prepared after last year’s Play Summit (at which event they also spoke). While appreciating the content of the



Keynote Speakers, Molly, Rahni, Arlo and John, with Daniel Burton and Jayne Kaiko

<sup>2</sup> Office for Children and Young People’s Policy, (2002), *Telling the Emperor: A Guide to Youth Participation in Decision Making*, p.6.



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report, they commented that “play shouldn’t be intellectualized”, that “play stands out for itself” and while the “topic is serious, play shouldn’t be serious”.

A shorter, more focused report with more pictures and direct quotes from children and young people would make it more accessible.

The young people had some advice for adults:

- Play is for everyone. Everyone can have fun.
- Adults need to play again.
- Adults have the right to play.
- Play should be judgement free – so adults can play like children.
- Play doesn’t stop at an age. We don’t want to hog the play.
- Adults need play breaks.
- Adults should be examples, having fun and continuing to play.
- Digital play is still play. It allows an escape from reality. Balanced and in moderation, it can be a part of the playscape.

They had advice for teachers and schools:

- Play can’t be structured. Allow space for play.
- Allow time for play – and not just in recess and lunch times.
- Plant more trees. Allow different kinds of games in different spaces.
- Integrate curriculum to give more time for play.

They also had requests for decision makers:

- Make play more accessible. Plan playgrounds. Plant more trees. Use laneways.
- Design for play. A painted circle on the ground is an invitation to play.
- Allow risk. Kids get hurt and get back up. Kids get wet and get dry again.

Dr Marie Martin (member of the Play Matters Collective committee) gave an overview of the Play Matters Collective’s *Gathering the Voices of Children and Young People* research project. A short trial with early childhood education and care settings and schools in April and May 2025 has led to an invitation for educators, teachers and people in communities to participate in a research project to gather the voices of children and young people in regard to the question “How does play make my world better?”



Dr Marie Martin



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Two levels of engagement in the project are possible:

1. Postcards: modelled on the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People's Student Voice Postcard Initiative<sup>3</sup>, children and young people draw and write about how play makes their world better on a 'postcard'. A kit of resources has been prepared that includes:
  - Conversation starters
  - Curriculum links
  - Templates
  - Consent forms
2. Action Learning Groups: supported by a Play Matters Collective mentor, educators and teachers will form research groups and, beginning with the broad research question, offer children and young people a range of ways to investigate how play makes their world better, collecting their perspectives over four to six months. Findings will be collated to create a Play Statement to be shared with policy and decision makers across the community.

The Play Matters Collective invites you to be involved!

- a. What suggestions do you have about the Gathering the Voices of Children and Young People project?
- b. Would you like to be involved in the Gathering the Voices of Children and Young People project? Level 1 or Level 2?
- c. What do you think needs to be included in a WA Play Strategy?



Front: Marcelle Saratsis, Dr Sandra Hesterman, Minister Sabine Winton, John, Rahni, Jayne Kaiko  
Back: Dr Marie Martin, Cath Fitzhardinge, Seb Della, Molly, Daniel Burton

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ccyp.com.au/studentvoicepostcards/>