

PlayConnect Playgroups

Supporting families with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders



"When I first started going I didn't know anyone else with a child with ASD, so meeting other parents was great for me - a relief in a way. This has opened up new doors for me and my family that I didn't know of before". - Monique, Cairns PlayConnect.

"Seeing him enjoy playing, and his social skills improving. Meeting other children, learning, sharing and having fun". - Diane, Cairns PlayConnect.

The Australian Government has committed \$190 million over 4 years to deliver the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package. As part of the education and support initiative for families and carers of children with ASD the PlayConnect Playgroups program has been established. Playgroup Australia is the national provider for the PlayConnect Playgroups and works in partnership with State and Territory Playgroup Associations.

The PlayConnect Playgroups are facilitated playgroups specifically for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or ASD like symptoms aged 0-6 years. The playgroups adopt a framework that fosters best practice while responding to the specific needs of children with ASD and their families. PlayConnect Playgroups provide parents with a soft entry point to support services and families who might not normally access formal support services may be willing to attend a playgroup. PlayConnect Playgroups also provide support to parents who are not able to access other ASD specific services as they are waiting on a diagnosis, or do not fully meet the criteria for diagnosis. Siblings of children with ASD are also welcome to attend PlayConnect Playgroups.

The PlayConnect Playgroups usually meet weekly for 2 hours and are facilitated by a PlayConnect Development Worker who has experience and/ qualifications in working with families and children in community development, early childhood education and/or playgroups. Each playgroup has access to an ASD professional. During the session, parents, carers and children participate in a variety of play activities and experiences. The funding from the Australian Government enables the families to attend a PlayConnect Playgroup at minimal cost.

It is important to note that PlayConnect is NOT a specialist therapeutic provider. However PlayConnect Development Workers can provide families with information about specialist services for children with ASD in their local area.

There is no need for referral and families with children with ASD or ASD-like symptoms can join a PlayConnect Playgroup by phoning Playgroup Queensland toll free on 1800 171 882, emailing info@playgroupqld.com.au

There are currently nine PlayConnect Playgroups operating in Queensland. Locations are listed below:

- Rockhampton
- Narangba
- Ipswich
- Nerang
- Townsville
- Mackay
- Cairns
- Redlands

For more information on PlayConnect Playgroups, contact Playgroup Queensland on 1800 171 882.

For more information about the early intervention available through the Australian Government Helping Children With Autism Package, visit www.fahcsia.gov.au/autism or call the Helping Children With Autism Information Line: 1800 289 177.

