

Playgroups

playing to get ready for school



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This booklet is written to assist family members set up playgroups for children in the communities located in the Ngaanyatjarra lands in Western Australia.

It is based on the shared experience of Anne and Beryl working with playgroups in the communities of Blackstone and Warburton from 1995 - 1998 and from many conversations since then about women and children learning at playgroups together.

We hope this booklet helps you enjoy being at playgroups with mothers and children as much as we have.

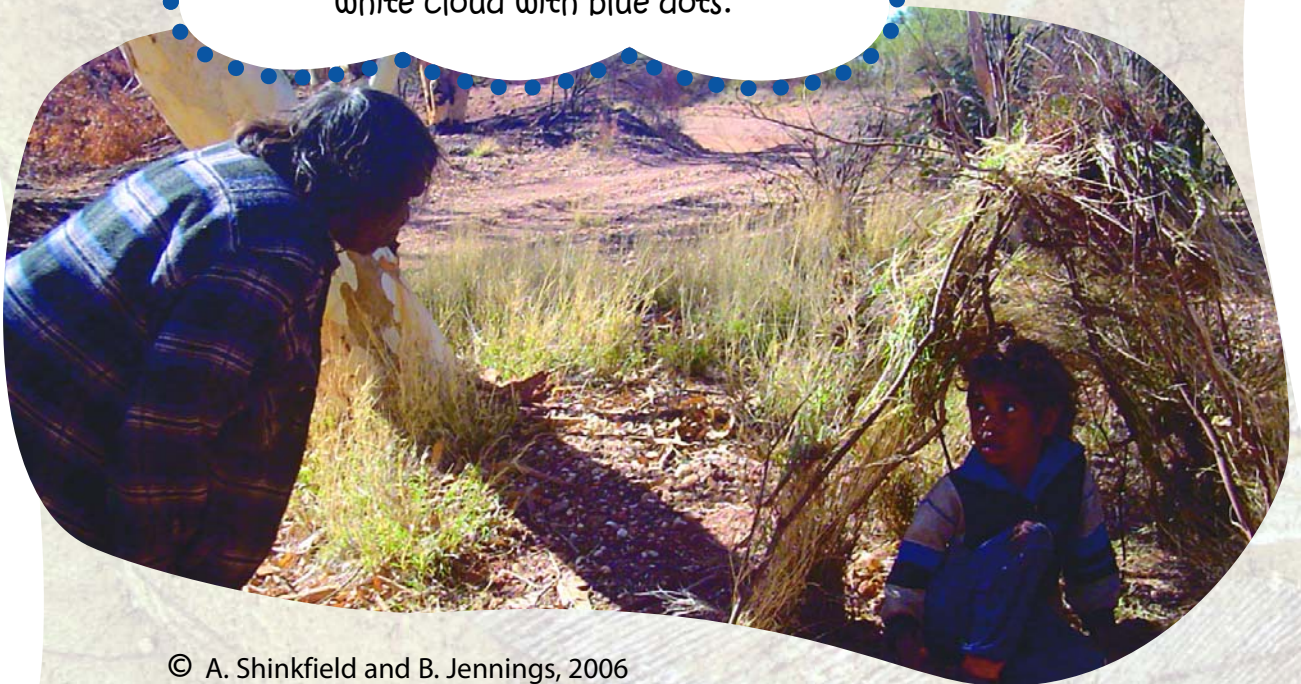
Anne and Beryl have both written for each section of this booklet.

Anne's writing will be as follows:

Anne's writing will be in black plain text - sometimes with an **orange heading**

Beryl's writing will be as follows:

Beryl's writing will be black text inside a white cloud with blue dots.



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What is a playgroup?

Why have a playgroup in the community?

It's good to have a playgroup in the community. It is a special place where children can learn. The mothers and children all know each other and at playgroup they are talking with each other and helping the children, even their grandchildren. It is the best place where we can help them, by reading and speaking to the children and to help them feel confident.

A playgroup is a place for mothers and little children to come to learn and play together.

At Blackstone, these are the reasons why the community wanted a playgroup:

- ~ To provide a place for young children to play
- ~ To provide a place for young children to play in the company of their family and in their home language
- ~ To provide activities for children to play with that would help them be more ready for school
- ~ For the mothers to learn to run playgroups for their children



Beginning a playgroup in the community

Mums might sit down and think about how it would be good for their child to have a place like playgroup to go to, to help get their kids ready for school.

At playgroup the children learn to use things like scissors, pencils, paper and also hear about numbers and shapes.

These are some things to talk about in your community before you start a playgroup:

- ~ What is the main reason for the playgroup in your community?
- ~ Where will the playgroup be held? What about toilets? Is there a place for children to play inside and outside? Is it a safe place for little children?
- ~ What equipment do you need - where will you get it from and who pays for it? Is there a place to store equipment?
- ~ How many days a week will there be playgroup - 3 days, 4 days, 5 days a week? What days will the playgroup be on?
- ~ What time will it start and finish each day?
- ~ Who will be the playgroup workers? How many workers will you have - 2 or 3?
- ~ How can the mothers who come with their children help in the playgroup?
- ~ How will people in the community support the playgroup?
 - The Store staff - morning tea items, cleaning items?
 - The office staff - work pay for playgroup workers, mothers if appropriate
 - The School teachers / Principal / AIEOs - sharing playground equipment, resources, ideas for activities?

Parents at playgroups

It is good that parents go to playgroup with their children so that the little children can feel good. The parents can help the children with the activities they do in playgroup. The parents are also there to help with looking after their children, helping the children wash their hands and keep healthy. Parents are also there to help their children learn how to share the toys.

Young children learn best from their parents and families.

At playgroup, parents join in activities with their children and they can help them learn about painting, sharing toys, making things, looking at books and playing with other children.

As parents become more used to playgroups, and as they find out what children need to be able to do to be ready for school, the parents may encourage the children to do some of the activities at home as well as at playgroup.

School is now part of life for Aboriginal students in remote communities. Joining in activities at playgroup with your child is one way parents can help their children to be ready for school.



Language used in playgroups

It is best to speak Ngaanyatjarra at playgroup with the children, because this is the language they use at home.
In the family, when they are playing with sister, or big brother or aunts or grandmothers, they are talking and have someone to ask 'What is this? Who is that?'
When people are all talking in Ngaanyatjarra it makes us feel happy.

Parents are the best teachers for little children so the language used at home is the best language for helping children to learn new things. At playgroups, mothers can more easily help their children with the activities if they can use their own language.

When children go to school there are two main things to learn there that are different to a child's life at home in the Ngaanyatjarra community:

- ~ Different activities
- ~ Different language

At playgroup, when the playgroup is in the child's home language, the children can get used to all the different activities. Then when they go to school, they will know the activities and they will just need to learn the language for school - Standard Australian English.



Planning for Playgroups

Planning for the Week



When I come into the playgroup, I come in thinking 'what will I do for activities for the kids today? Will they like the activities or not?'

Some activities happen every day, some activities happen every week and some may be special activities that happen only once a month, eg:

- ~ every day - art activities
- ~ every day - sand play activities
- ~ every second Wednesday - cooking - children and mothers making morning tea together
- ~ every month - maybe a bush day
- ~ every term - visit the school for playgroup children and their mothers to join with the kindy children to play and have morning tea together

When the playgroup workers have chosen the activities for the week, they could put them on a chart, so that everyone knows what will happen at playgroup that week.

Planning for each day

- 9:00 Put out things for health / hands, noses, ears, teeth - bucket of water, tissues, tooth paste, tooth brushes, towel, rubbish bin
- 9:30 Inside - Sitting on the mat for singing, reading a book, Ngaanyatjarra song book. Doing an inside activity - painting, threading noodles etc.
- 10:00 Washing hands. Sitting at tables for morning tea - each child gets a plate of fruit and a drink
- 10:30 Someone reads a Ngaanyatjarra story to the children during morning tea, maybe. That person can talk about the story and the pictures with the children. Outside activities
- 11:00 Pack up and home time.

Monday

Come in and play

Inside activity.....



Health time



Story time.....



Morning tea



Outside activity.....



Pack up, clean up, Home time.

A daily routine at playgroup helps the children get used to what happens each day at playgroup.

Some activities are the same every day - such as morning tea, health time - and some change from day to day so that the children can learn many new things during playgroup. Also they won't get tired of doing the same thing every day.

A daily timetable can be made with photos or drawings. You can talk about the activities with the children and show them the timetable, so the children know what they are going to do each day at playgroup.

Each day at playgroup - Come in and play

Monday

Come in and play

Inside activity.....



Health time



Story time.....



Morning tea



Outside activity.....



Pack up, clean up, Home time.

Come in and play

Get things ready - blocks - many colours
- some puzzles and rattles on the floor.
Then the kids will see how lovely and
pretty the toys are and they'll go in and
start playing.



Come in and play

When the children arrive at playgroup, the playgroup workers will have some activities ready for the children, so that there are interesting things for them to play with while they are waiting for others to come. These activities could be blocks, dolls, cubby, puzzles or activities in a toy kitchen.

During this time the children are learning how to -

- ~ play by themselves
- ~ join in with other children,
- ~ share
- ~ use different equipment and materials



Each day at playgroup

- Inside activity



Monday
Come in and play
Inside activity.....
Health time
Story time.....
Morning tea
Outside activity.....
Pack up, clean up, Home time.



Inside activity
After free play the children will know
- when the people get the activities ready - the children will know that something is ready to happen and they will go over and be ready for doing the activity together

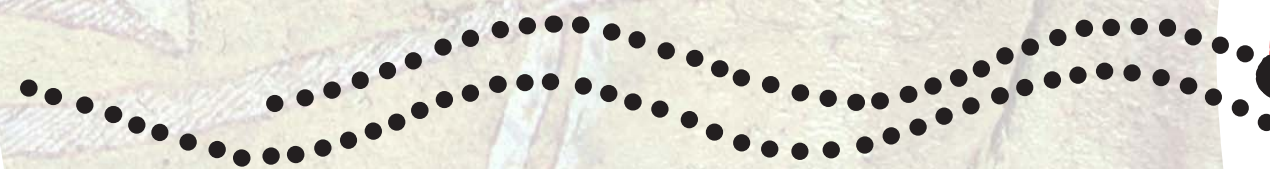
Inside activity :

When most of the children and mothers have arrived at playgroup, it is time to call them all together to show them the special activity they will all be doing for that day. Make sure all the preparations are done - enough materials ready for all the children, places for them to work and the mothers to help them. Children sit in a group and listen while one of the mothers / playgroup workers shows them the activity and talks about how to do it. Each child has a turn at doing the activity, and then the finished activities will be put somewhere safe.



During this time the children are learning how :

- ~ to use equipment
- ~ to do drawing, painting
- ~ to listen to instructions so they can do the activity
- ~ to work in a group and share things
- ~ to start an activity and finish it



Each day at playgroup

- Health time

Monday

Come in and play

Inside activity...

Health time

Story time.....

Morning tea

Outside activity....

Pack up, clean up, Home time.



Health time

It is important to get children to know about health - nose blowing, BBC (Breathe Blow Cough) and washing hands. These activities can be part of the playgroup routines and the mums can help the children and show them what to do every day.

Health time :

Playgroup workers choose what activities they want the children to have as part of the playgroup routines every day, such as -

- ~ Teeth cleaning
- ~ Hand washing
- ~ Nose blowing

Sometimes, the clinic staff / Aboriginal health worker may visit the playgroup -

- ~ to meet and talk with the mothers
- ~ to show mothers how to look after children's ears and skin
- ~ to talk about keeping children healthy

By having 'health' activities every day at playgroup, the children are learning about keeping themselves clean and healthy.



Each day at playgroup

- Story telling using Ngaanyatjarra stories

Monday

Come in and play

Inside activity.....



Health time



Story time.....



Morning tea



Outside activity.....



Pack up, clean up, Home time.

Story telling using Ngaanyatjarra stories

Why tell stories and read story books in Ngaanyatjarra? Because Ngaanyatjarra is important and the children are listening to a story in their home language. Children use Ngaanyatjarra at home, at play, and at playgroup, learning their language well while they are young. While they are listening to the story in their own language, they learn good ways of speaking. When they go to school they will get another language - English at school. And then they will have two languages.

For 3 and 4 year old Children (who are nearly ready for kindy) there may be a special activity for them to follow the Ngaanyatjarra story time.



How to do the Ngaanyatjarra story time activity:

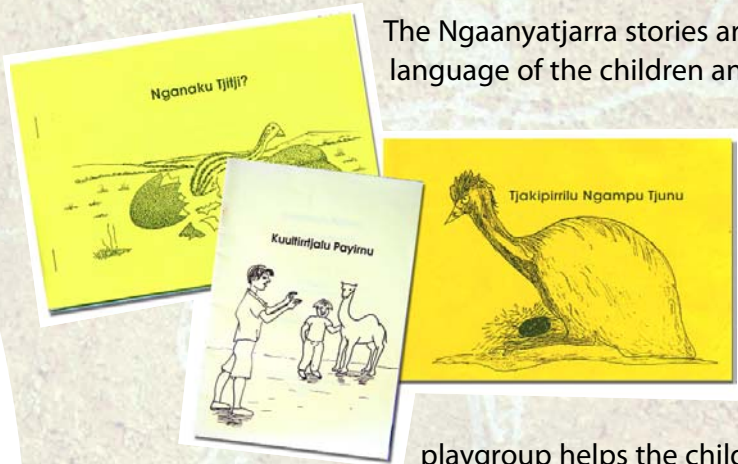
- ~ Children sit down with their parents
- ~ At some communities, morning tea may be given at the same time as reading the story
- ~ Playgroup worker / mother selects a Ngaanyatjarra story - a big book
- ~ They read one page of the story and then they talk about the picture with the children, encouraging the children to talk about the pictures too
- ~ They do this for every page until the book is finished

Sometimes at playgroup everyone sings children's songs in Ngaanyatjarra. Sometimes the children have made drums or shakers to use as instruments while they are singing.



Story telling using Ngaanyatjarra stories -

During Ngaanyatjarra story time, the children are learning about stories, books, reading and writing in their own language.



The Ngaanyatjarra stories are written in the home language of the children and are about things that they know, such as hunting, animals, counting emu eggs, playing with children in the bush, or going for a ride in the truck.

Reading Ngaanyatjarra stories to the children at playgroup helps the children to learn about the story time routines that happen every day in schools and it also shows them what reading is all about - in their own language.

Very young children in other places often have lots of books at home, so they are ready for reading and stories at school. For children in these communities looking and listening to the Ngaanyatjarra stories at playgroup will make it easier for them join in story time activities and learn to read at school.



Each day at playgroup - Morning tea

Monday

Come in and play

Inside activity.....



Health time



Story time.....



Morning tea



Outside activity.....



Pack up, clean up, Home time.

Morning tea

Sometimes the Ngaanyatjarra story is read to the children when they are sitting having morning tea.

Sometimes very little children might need to have morning tea as an activity all by itself -so they can concentrate on their fruit and holding their cup properly.



Morning tea :

Once a week food for morning tea is bought / collected from the store and then one of the mothers gets it ready for each playgroup session.

Morning tea is a good activity - lots of talking between the children while they are eating and drinking. Or it can be an activity to keep the children peaceful while a story is read to them.

At morning tea the children are learning about routines -inside activity / morning tea / outside activity, like having morning recess at school. The children are also learning about sharing, taking turns, healthy eating and putting rubbish in bins.

Sometimes there might be a cooking activity at playgroup - perhaps every second week - where the mothers and children make their own morning tea and eat it together.



Each day at playgroup

- Outside activities

Monday

Come in and play

Inside activity....



Health time



Story time



Morning tea



Outside activity....



Pack up, clean up, Home time.

Outside activities

The children are inside and then they come outside and it's in the open - more room, more space - a change - and a change in activity.

Outside activities can be:

- ~ Giving children a bucket and sponge - pretending to wash walls or toys
- ~ Sand play - shovel, sponge, bucket, containers of cars, sand truck, loaders
 - ~ Ball games - ball, bat
 - ~ Slides - big and little slides
 - ~ Pushing prams with dolls
 - ~ Bikes
- ~ Setting up the outside activities - little tables and chairs for activities.



Outside activities :

Some activities the children would play with every day, such as the sand pit, slide, cubby house

Special outside activities could be prepared each day as well, eg

- ~ Monday - bikes and trikes
- ~ Tuesday - balls, basketball hoop
- ~ Wednesday - water play

While they are playing outside, the children are learning how to use equipment, how to play games, how to listen to instructions and also about sharing, taking turns and waiting for others.

Before beginning outdoor activities the playgroup workers need to check:

- ~ Safety - is the equipment in safe places for the children to use? Are there any pieces of equipment that are broken that could hurt the children?
- ~ Outside activities - is all the equipment ready for the day's special activities?
- ~ Which mothers are going to be outside watching the children playing?



Each day at playgroup

Monday

Come in and play
Inside activity.....



Health time



Story time.....



Morning tea



Outside activity.....



Pack up, clean up, Home time.

- Packing up, cleaning up and home time

Packing up, cleaning up and home time

At the end of playgroup every day, I hear the mums say in language "Help pack up, put it away, it is for you, when you come the next day you will play with it and use it again".

Packing up, cleaning up and home time

After the activities, it is time for the routines of packing up, cleaning and then going home.

During this time the children can help put things away in the correct places and learn to work together to keep the playgroup room tidy and clean.

This can often be turned into games or activities - all the children finding something to bring to a cupboard, some children being given a crate to collect all the sand toys, some children being given a bucket of water and a cloth to wash the outside tables.



Each day at playgroup

Monday

Come in and play

Inside activity.....



Health time



Story time.....



Morning tea



Outside activity.....



Pack up, clean up, Home time.

- Social learning, learning to play together and work together

Social learning

Mums are showing the little ones about all the activities - they are learning together. The children are learning the activities and at the same time they are learning how to play together.

Social learning - learning to play and work together.

At playgroup, and at school, there are lots of children, and they have to learn to play and work together.

Sometimes, there may not be enough toys or bikes for everyone to have one at the same time - so the children have to learn to share and to wait for their turn.

Sometimes the children have to learn to be careful of other children and to help them, or learn to work in a group to make something together.

Learning these things while they are young, with their mothers to help them, will make it easier for the children later at school.



What about when children are upset at playgroup?

What do you do when kids are cross?

- Always at all times, mums or some carers watch, giving things to children, telling them to share, not fighting, making sure that each child has a toy.
- When they are cross the mum picks up her child and hugs and quietens them, giving them a bike or a doll.
- Mums may sit down with the child, watch TV, or go for a little walk talking to other mums with the child.
- Mums may give the child a cheese, or a bit of an apple or orange or go for a walk to the shop, and come back when he or she has finished and is settled down and over it.



Playgroup workers and the mothers need to talk with each other so that they all agree what is the best thing to do when a child is cross at playgroup.

Playgroups - Moving from playgroup to kindy

Sometimes the playgroup children and their mothers visit the kindy / pre-primary and join in activities there. It's like showing the way to a bigger step.

Showing them this is where you are going to be when you are 4, joining with bigger kids, doing the activities, sharing, learning together, listening to the teacher at school.

When children are 3 years old, the activities they do at playgroup can help them get ready for kindy the next year.

One mother may prepare special activities for the 3 year olds, such as drawing, cutting and pasting, and activities to learn about numbers, colours and shapes.

During term four, after talking with the school Principal, one mother may take the 3 year olds to join in with some activities at the kindy class so that the children are more ready for school after the holidays.

If the children are used to school and know about the activities that happen in school then they will be ready to start 'school learning' as soon as they begin kindy.



Little children playing and learning

How do children learn Ngaanyajtarra way? They learn when grandpop talks to them. Also they learn by watching - looking at nanna making wirra (tapping stick,) or making damper. When they go out bush mum is digging witchety grubs, bardi, honey ants, and showing them, giving them a taste of things that are good for them. Sometimes the children get frightened, but at the end they have a good feed.

At playgroup when the children are playing together on slides and talking together they are learning. Sometimes they are playing alone, using outside equipment, learning to use it.

They talk about the activities in Ngaanyatjarra, they copy each other, they play with the same things every day - they are learning.

At playgroups children learn while they are playing.

Children learn -

- ~ By watching others do things
- ~ By talking with others who can do things
- ~ By trying out things for themselves
- ~ By doing things over and over until the activity is easy for them



At playgroups, while they are playing, children are:

- ~ learning how to 'do' things
- ~ learning how to share with other children
- ~ learning how to listen to others
- ~ learning how to try things by themselves until they can do it
- ~ learning how to ask for help from adults
- ~ learning how to work in groups

Playgroup activities for children- different activities for different ages

Children learn different things at different ages.

At playgroup, there needs to be activities for children of all ages from 0 - 4 - activities that babies can use and activities for 1, 2 and 3 year old children.

Sometimes children of different ages use the same equipment but they use it in different ways.



What can babies do?

- ~ looking, tasting, listening and touching things, picking things up, holding things in their hands...

Rattles, soft toys

What can 1 and 2 year old children do?

- ~ learning to walk and run, to sit on bikes, to use balls and bats, to try out activities by themselves, to talk, to use their hands with blocks, books, puzzles..



Little cars, sand play, water play, riding bikes, pushing prams, building blocks

What can 3 year old children do?

- ~ learning to use pens, pencils, brushes, learning to follow instructions, to make things,
- ~ getting ready for kindy activities



Activities - cutting and pasting, gluing, sitting listening, sitting down with their little brother or sister while they are learning

Preparing for playgroup - What do the mothers and the playgroup workers do?

Planning for activities -

- 1 Talking with the Early Years Playgroup Coordinator at Warburton and other mothers to work out what activities to plan for the week
- 2 Getting resources so that you can do what you have planned
- 3 Going to the store to get morning tea and other things you need for the start of each week

Every week, one of the playgroup workers can visit the store to get enough apples, oranges, cheese for the week for the children and perhaps biscuits and milk for morning tea for the ladies at playgroup. Each day, one of the mothers can prepare the morning tea - giving every child some fruit and a drink.

Setting up the room for playgroup -

- 1 Keys for each day
- 2 Making sure there are no dangerous areas or things in the room where children could be hurt
- 3 Preparing the inside and outside activities ready for the children each day
- 4 Having space for mothers as well as space for the children

Some ladies get everything ready -

- ~ putting tissues out for health, for noses, ears, eyes and hands
- ~ setting up painting - easel, paint, pots, brushes
- ~ preparing a story for reading to the children at morning tea
- ~ putting blocks and puzzles out on the floor ready for the children to use after morning tea



Helping each session run smoothly -

- ~ Have a routine that you follow - maybe pictures so everyone knows what is happening
- ~ Talk with the mothers, so they know how they can be involved



When mums are at the playgroup, they help with morning tea, getting things organised, putting tables in other places. Mums watch the children - some mothers at each group of children. Some mums sit outside watching the children who are playing there. The mums come with their children, so they can help them. They might read a book to a child, and watch them so that they don't fall from things. The mums can sit next to the children while they are doing activities.

Cleaning up -

Everyone can help - packing away, floors, sinks, toilets, rubbish etc.

At the end of the session, the playgroup workers make sure windows, doors, cupboards are all shut. Every day wash the dishes, clean the floor, leaving the room clean for the next day. The playgroup workers then check out what they need for activities for the next day - papers, pens, pencils, paint, Ngaanyatjarra story book and activities.

Keeping lists -

- ~ Having a place to keep lists, forms, store receipts, letters, notes
- ~ Attendance lists - fill out every day
- ~ Planning sheets - fill out each week
- ~ Faxing the attendance / activity lists to the Playgroup Coordinator at Warburton each week

Planning for playgroup - Routines

Children can join in the routines at playgroup -

- ~ Putting out the chairs
- ~ Giving out paper, brushes, paint pots, pencils, crayons, coloured pencils
- ~ Putting away chairs
- ~ Listening Carefully for the next activity

At playgroup, children not only learn about activities and about how to do things, but they also learn how one activity moves into the next activity, and that each time the activity is done, the same activities happen in the same order.



For children to learn these 'routines' while they are young is very helpful, because school is full of routines, and it is easier if the children know the routines before they go to school.

At home there are routines - getting up, eating breakfast, going to the store, having lunch...

At school there are routines - come in the gate, play outside till the siren, line up, go into class...

At playgroup children learn routines too -

1 Coming and going routines :

They learn to come each day to playgroup, do the activities and then go home, and come back the next day.

The children get used to going somewhere every day while they are young, and this might make it easier for them to go to school every day when they are older.

2 The routine for each day at playgroup.

The daily timetable shows the routine for each day. With the activities in the same order every day, the children get used to this routine and know what will happen next.



More Routines...

3 Routines for each different activity.

If the children learn the way activities are organised while they are at playgroup, they will be more confident with these activities and routines when they go to school.



Each activity has its own routine, or way of being organised, eg

~ **Routines for art and craft activities** - someone shows what to do, you get the materials, you try to do the activity, you leave the finished activity somewhere, you clean up.

~ **Routines for story telling time** - children sit on the floor, mothers with them, someone reads an Ngaanyatjarra book - one page, then everyone talks about what is on the page, then the next page - everyone talks again, sometimes the children are asked questions (can you see the dog?), then the next page is read until the book is finished.



~ **Routines for outside activities** - after morning tea, the children are shown what they can play with outside for the day. Maybe they will have to wait for a turn of a bike or bucket. Maybe they will play with other children or maybe they will play by themselves.



~ **Routines for packing up** - one of the mothers calls out that it is time to pack up. Everyone brings things to put away. Buckets and spades are put in a box, bikes in the shed, tables are wiped, floors are swept and then it is home time.

Playgroups - Equipment & Resources

Playgroups can have lots of equipment - to get, to look after and to store. The playgroup workers may need to think about...

1 Getting the equipment and looking after it

Where will the equipment come from? Who pays for it and how do you order new things?

2 What do you need for a playgroup?

Activity materials -

- ~ Some things you use over and over, such as puzzles, dolls, slides, bikes
- ~ Some things are used up and you need to buy more every few months, such as art and craft materials, paper, paint.

Morning tea materials - food, cups and plates..

3 Where will you store the equipment and resources for the playgroup?

- ~ inside toys, outside toys, art and craft materials, morning tea things
- ~ Is it in the playgroup room? Is there a storage area at the school or community that you can use?

4 Keeping equipment and resources safe, clean and in the play group room

~ Keeping things safe -

Broken toys or equipment are put away or fixed so children don't get hurt

Making sure children are safe while they are using equipment - scissors, slides, cooking utensils..

~ Keeping things clean -

Making sure toys are kept clean - especially toys that young children may put in their mouth

~ Keeping things in the playgroup room-

Making sure the playgroup toys and equipment stay in the playgroup, and don't end up in the community.

Puzzles, pen, pencils, paint, papers, books are to stay in the playgroup - not to leave. But store in one room, in different cupboards.

Cleaning things need to be stored high away from low benches.

Outside equipment like bikes, cubby houses, balls, prams, slides can all be locked in a room so they won't get thrown around.

Make sure everything is safe, then lock up with keys, and make sure the doors are locked

Playgroups - Planning times

Pick a day for a planning day, and a time - maybe in the afternoon or before the shop opens, and a place - maybe at the playgroup centre.

Good playgroups don't just happen - they need to be planned!

To have successful playgroups - you need planning times.

Why do you need to plan?

- ~ So that the children can play with and learn a range of activities
- ~ So that the children get used to many activities to help them be ready for school
- ~ So that mothers and playgroup workers can prepare for activities, cooking, bush days
- ~ So that playgroup activities are always good fun and interesting

Who joins in at planning times?

- ~ Playgroup workers
- ~ Mothers / carers
- ~ Other community support people

What do you do at planning times?

- ~ Talk about what has been good over the last week at playgroup
- ~ Talk about what needs to change
- ~ Talk about any special activity coming up during the following week - bush day, cultural day, cooking, visitor, school visit..
- ~ Choose the activities for the following week - 3 or 4 inside activities, and 3 or 4 outside activities,
- ~ Choose the Ngaanyatjarra story for the week
- ~ Write a plan for the week - or put pictures on the planning chart for the week.
- ~ Make a list of things you need for each activity, and talk about who will get each activity ready.



Playgroups - Getting organised and keeping records

For the playgroup workers, there are some things that need to be written each day and each week.

Your 'office in a box' could be a good way of keeping all this information together.

1 Daily attendance lists:

At the end of the week, these lists can be faxed to the playgroup coordinator at Warburton then put in your file / or 'office in a box'. You may be able to use the fax at the office or the school.

There is a copy of an attendance list on page 33 to photocopy and use.

2 Planning for the week:

At the end of each week, the weekly planning sheet could be filled in.

This can also be faxed to the Playgroup coordinator at Warburton, and then filed in your playgroup file.

There is a copy of a 'weekly planning' sheet to photocopy and use on page 34.

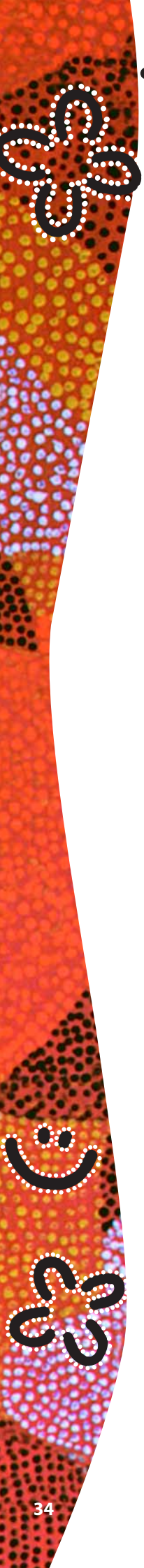
3 Equipment lists:

About June and December each year, it is helpful to write a list of all the equipment, toys, furniture, books etc that is in your playgroup.

You may want to get rid of broken things.

It would also be a good time to write a list of things you need - new things to replace broken things or just new things.





_____ PLAYGROUP

WEEKLY PLANNING

Dates : _____

Playgroup workers : _____

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Inside activity			
Ngaanyatjarra story			
Outside activity			

