

NATIONAL PLAYGROUP WEEK

Statement by Minister for Early Childhood Education

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Early Childhood Education) [12.45 pm]: This week is National Playgroup Week, which runs from 18 to 24 March. National Playgroup Week is an opportunity to celebrate and promote the benefits of playgroups for children, families and communities. This morning my colleague and mother-to-be, the member for Rockingham, and I attended Playgroup WA's Waikiki Playgroup in the Park event at Fantasy Park. It was brilliant to see so many families enjoying today's activities. The first playgroups in Western Australia were established in the 1960s by mothers who wanted to connect with other families with young children in their communities. Playgroups offer many benefits to children, parents and carers. They are a safe, inclusive and friendly place to meet and have fun together and develop a sense of community. They provide opportunities to play, share stories and connect with others.

The Cook Labor government proudly supports Playgroups WA. Funding is provided through the Department of Education's enhanced transition to school program. This statewide project allows schools throughout the state to host playgroups on their school site. These playgroups are family and parent led and provide opportunities for families to become familiar with their local school environment and build relationships with school staff. They also provide families, parents and carers with peer support and social networks with other families and their young children. We know that parents and carers play a critical role in their child's life as their first and lifelong teacher. Most importantly, playgroups provide opportunities for children to learn through play and develop their social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills. Playgroups support the diverse needs of families, including specialised support guided playgroups for families of children with special needs, grandparent carer playgroups and intergenerational playgroups for the whole family. Multicultural playgroups and mother and nature playgroups provide postnatal support for mothers and babies from birth to six months. Congratulations to Playgroup WA for putting on today's fantastic event in our southern suburbs, one of three events to be held in Perth to acknowledge the importance of playgroups in our community.