



Pop Up Play

Full Project Report

January to June 2018



PROJECT SUPPORTED BY



INTRODUCTION

THE “POP UP PLAY” PROJECT EXPERIENCE

My name is Amanda Bovingdon, and I have had the honour of pulling together, coordinating and facilitating the PUP Project for the past 6 months, with a wonderful group of volunteer peer workers.

I am a mother of two beautiful daughters, and proud Nannie of two beautiful granddaughters. I am a qualified Social Worker and Perinatal counsellor. I have 30 years’ experience working with parents and children. My philosophy is that parents do the best they can do, with the resources they have, right now. It is my job, to bring more resources to the table, to assist parents be a better parent. I jumped at the chance to work with Gympie Community Place and the parents of Gympie as I hold Gympie close to my heart. I have loved residing in this wonderful region for the past 11 years.

So what do I think PUP has bought to our parents? Where do I start?

I observed with my own eyes, children who could not attend any other child related services due to health reasons, flourish and play, and now be able to go to Kindy. I have seen parents at the end of their tether, not knowing how they would make it through another day, laugh and have hope. I observed isolated women form friendships and make coffee dates. I saw Dads sit and play with their sons. I saw mothers and fathers smile at each other and hug and watch their child have fun and play. I saw parents take off their shoes, sigh and take a big breath… smiling. I saw children share and help each other, read to each other and laugh.

So what did I really see with PUP? I saw parents coming together with their children, in their community and helping to support each other. I saw children learning skills of social interaction and building abilities to become more school ready. I saw children learning from each other and parents learning from each other. I saw a community connect. So what did PUP do for this community? It bought it together.

Thanking the Gympie Community for this opportunity.

Amanda Bovingdon PUP Coordinator.

“My philosophy is that parents do the best they can do, with the resources they have, right now”



PROJECT OVERVIEW

RATIONALE

The Pop up Play Project concept was developed in consultation, collaboration, research & planning with Gympie Local Level Alliance, the Reaching Families Working Group & Gympie Community Place. This project follows on from the work of the Gympie Local Level Alliance who compiled *The State of Children in the Gympie Region 2017* report. This report identified significant differences in the indicators of children's wellness and development for children in the Gympie Region in comparison to Queensland and Australian figures.

Findings include:

- The rate of smoking during pregnancy was 22.5% in the Gympie Region compared to 13.1% for Queensland. We know that Mums need to look after themselves during pregnancy to provide an optimal environment for their growing baby. Smoking is a known and preventable risk.
- The Gympie Region has a significantly higher percentage of young mothers with 32.8% under the age of 25 years compared to 20.6% in Queensland.
- The percentage of children who were vulnerable on one or more domain of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains was 30.4% compared to 26.1% in Queensland and 22% in Australia.
- The percentage of children in the Gympie Region who attend a quality early education program in the year before school was 72.6% compared to 84.1% for Queensland and 91.3% for Australia. Research shows that participating in a quality early education program can significantly increase positive educational and life outcomes for children, especially those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The percentage of children who were read to at home before starting school was 62.2% in the Gympie Region compared to 71.8% for Queensland and 75.1% for Australia. Research supports that reading to children from a young age supports their literacy and has a positive impact on schooling outcomes.
- The percentage of residents who did not finish high school was also high with 51.4% reaching the Year 9/10 level or below. Literature shows that a parent's education is an important determinant of their children's education.

From this data, we know that there are children in the Gympie Region who are facing vulnerabilities and are behind the accepted benchmarks for development and wellbeing before they start school. We recognise that there is still a lot that we don't know about the children and families affected including the levels of engagement with existing support programs, the issues facing parents and children in the different communities across the region and how to best support parents and families.

The Pop up Play project provided us the opportunity to connect with families that aren't accessing traditional support services or those who have had difficult experiences, and find out more to inform and guide future service delivery and community support efforts.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of the project was to connect with families with young children in our regional community. Using an *action learning focus* and a *hospitality framework* we aimed to reach out and connect with families who were geographically or socially isolated, experiencing vulnerability or hardship, disadvantaged or at risk.

The size of the Gympie region, our socio-economic factors and the sporadic location of our communities presents various dilemmas for our families including accessibility issues, fragmentation and isolation. We hoped to learn more about how we could better connect and support them including asking the question as to why they do or don't, access community supports and services. We aimed to;

- ✓ **Hear and record the voices and views of our families through conversations and a common survey**
- ✓ **Explore how we, as a community, can support families to be aware of and access community resources and supports**
- ✓ **Reflect upon the responsiveness of Pop up Play as a tool for engaging with families**
- ✓ **Learn from the experiences of our local families**

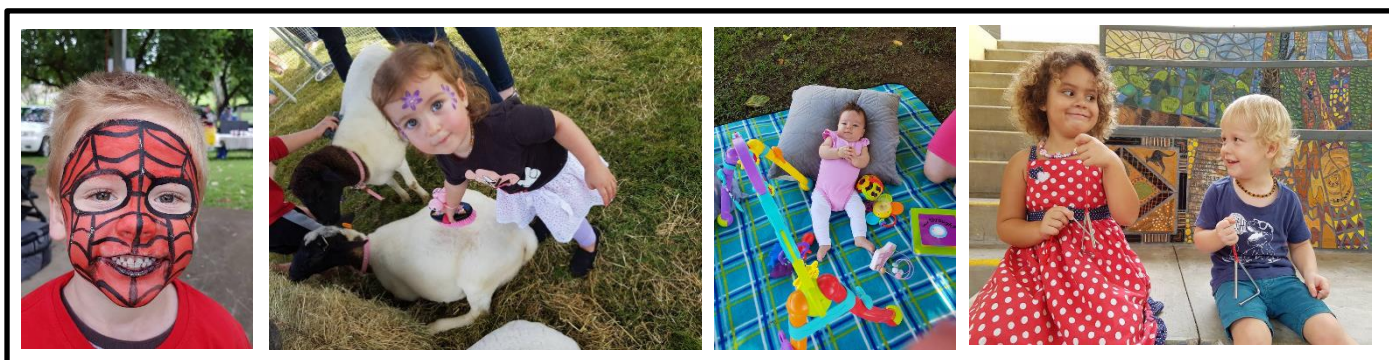
PROJECT DELIVERY

Pop up Play was delivered using mobile play sessions in various locations throughout our region. These sessions were facilitated by a qualified social worker and supported by dedicated volunteer 'parent mentors'. Each play session provided activities and resources for parents and their children to engage in storytelling, activities, play and fun. Activities and sessions were modelled to support school readiness and positive parenting interaction. Each session offered opportunities to connect and engage with parents in genuine conversation.

In Gympie the play sessions were delivered across 6 central locations – Gympie East and Gympie Central State Primary Schools; Gympie Hospital Anti-Natal Clinic; Mary Street Amphitheatre; Nelson Park and One Mile Park. In the broader Gympie region the play sessions were delivered in rural locations Imbil, Kilkivan, Curra, Cooloola Cove and Wolvi.

44 Pop up Play sessions **11** different locations **17** weeks project delivery

Play sessions occurred fortnightly or monthly in most locations and attendance numbers varied. The project delivered some independent sessions targeting families on a larger scale. These occurred with the Family Fun Day held on the Labour Day public holiday, and Cooloola Berries Final Event Party at Wolvi in June.



PROJECT OUTCOMES

329 adults

356 children

1 worker

5 volunteers

685 people attended a Pop up Play session. Sessions were facilitated by the project worker and supported by the engagement and commitment of 5 active volunteer parent mentors.

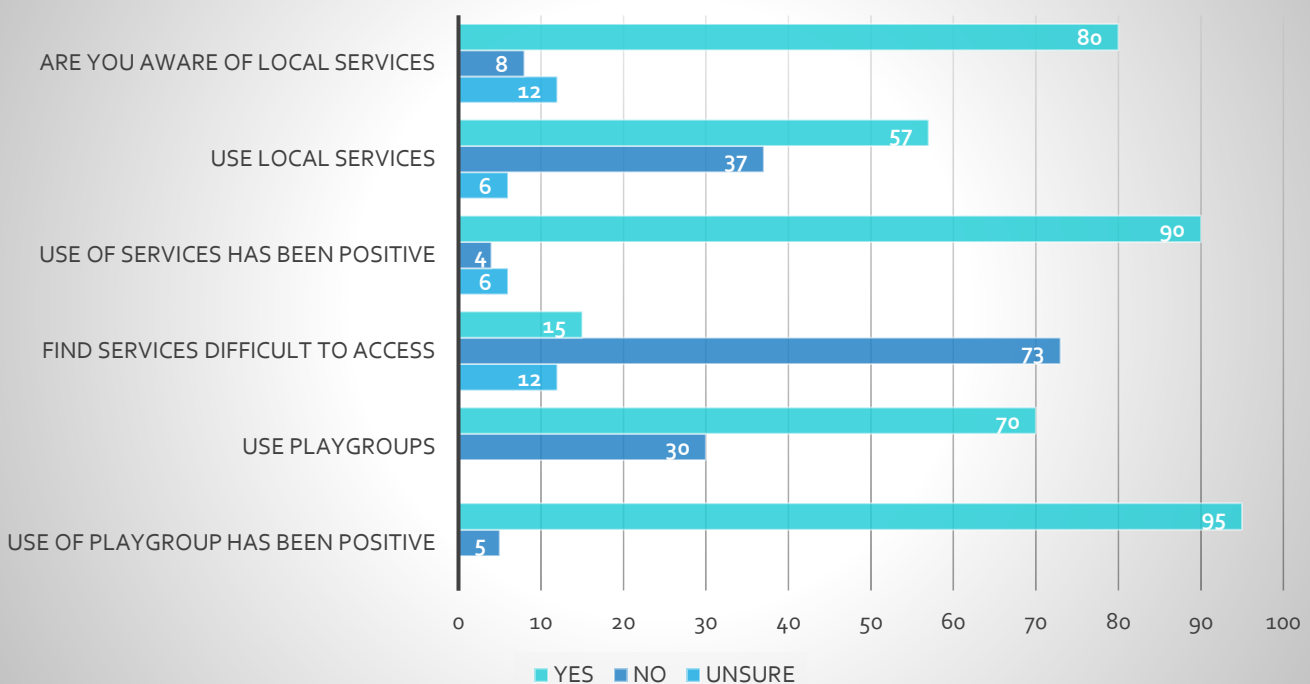


PARENT SURVEY

During each and every Pop up Play session, we invited attending parents and caregivers to complete a brief, simple survey. Over 140 parents completed a survey, representing 42% of the total adults that attended a play session.

The survey asked questions about parents' knowledge and use of local, child related services.

Survey Results



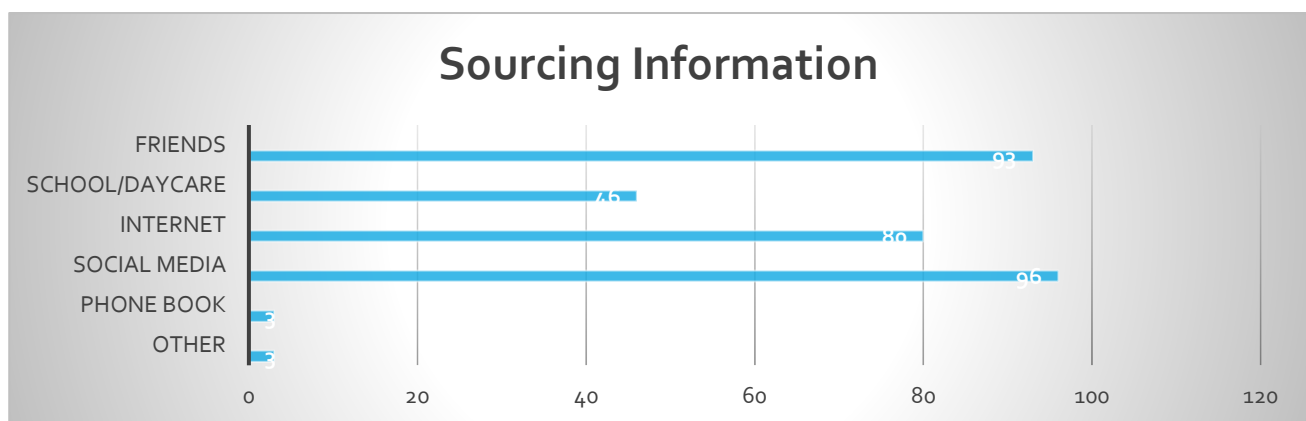
WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE RESULTS

The results of the survey show that there is a high level of awareness for parents around the existence of child related services. And for most this has been a very positive experience.

Of the 15% of responses that indicated difficulties in accessing services, the difficulty for them was transport related.

While 30% of surveyed parents did not use or access a playgroup, of the 70% who did it was a predominately positive experience for them.

We asked parents how they source their information about child related services and playgroups. The results were not surprising but reinforce the need for services to have a social media & internet presence.



98% of survey responses indicated that Pop up Play was a positive experience

The survey results also showed that:

- **15%** of attendees were men
(Although this increased to 28% attendance at the larger scale events)
- **85%** of attendees were women
- Attending parents and caregivers ranged in age from 16 to 68 years
- **90%** of attendees identified as parents
- **6%** of attendees identified as grandparents

PARENT FEEDBACK

"Pop up Play has been a transforming experience for our 3 year old son and our family as a whole. Through the loving, caring, nurturing and most of all FUN environment these amazing girls create - we have seen our son thrive. PUP is more than a playgroup, it's a warm cuppa and a welcome hug, a strong shoulder, it's a place to unwind and breathe, it's real, and it's a family. "I Love Pop Up Play!"

- Wonderful, easy, a perfect morning! Excellent service and so needed in our region.
- Great sensory play, perfect for my ASD children
- Lots of choices, great activities, so suitable for all kids – loved it!
- PUP is fun, accessible learning activities for kids to interact and socialize
- I can learn stuff then teach my kids
- As a grandparent raising an autistic grandchild, this support is so welcome.
- Good, informal – not like having to join a group, but able to drop in!
- I think it is amazing, this is a great opportunity for families, and kids love it!
- Would like to see more of things like this, and something more permanent.
- A great range of activities, good interactions for kids and parents

"My little girl and I have really enjoyed the Pop-Up Play Concept and I believe these events are integral to the parents and carers of young children in our community. In our regional community. There are only a small number of free or low cost activities for families. Pop-up Play enables families a safe, positive, engaging way to connect and play with their children in a fun, non-judgemental, inclusive environment. I hope Pop up Play is here to stay as I believe it is beneficial".

FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK

The project involved the use of focus groups for project development and review. At the conclusion of the project a focus group consisting of volunteers and parents undertook a SWOT analysis and identified the following strengths:

- A welcoming, non-judgemental, safe place for families
- Parenting support, peer support and positive role modelling
- Parents helping parents, connecting people and reducing isolation
- Educational, well-resourced and structured play activities
- Good sensory stimulation, good for autistic children
- Easy to access with various locations, flexible and mobile delivery
- Approachable, attentive and compassionate staff parent mentors'. Connecting in a real way with parents and families, providing mentorship through lived experiences and positive role modelling.

KEY LEARNINGS

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Pop up Play has proven to be a really valuable community engagement tool in our rural location. The mobility of the project has allowed us to connect with many families that we would not have been able to engage in a service setting. The survey results show that 1 in 4 parents do not use services.

It has provided very positive connections for our families, both with each other, with services and with the broader community. It has enabled us as a community service to build trust, show respect and genuine care. To be available and visible – to provide assistance if needed.

We know that this interaction with vulnerable and isolated people can be both life changing and lifesaving.

It gives our families a voice. As they are our reason for being in service – this is a voice that should be used to guide and inform future service delivery across the whole community sector.

The strength and success of Pop up Play has been a project delivery that is:

- Inclusive and safe
- Supporting individuals wellbeing and sense of belonging
- Vibrant, fun and welcoming
- Providing positive and real connections for people
- Linking people and community
- Service facilitated and engaged – but without an eligibility criteria

The project was also a positive and productive experience for the 5 volunteer parent mentors who supported it. And it would not have been as successful as it was without the 470 hours of their time, that they donated to the project.

'I've been working with Pop up Play since the planning stages. I have been able to see the need, recognise the benefits of early intervention and to reaching parents from a lived experience point. It has been the most rewarding experience for me and it has lead me to study a Peer Work skills set offered at our local TAFE. I'm so honoured to have been part of this project, it is so amazing. PUP Volunteer "Korina"

CONNECTING COMMUNITY

Having the project connected with the Community Centre has been a very positive relationship.

Parents have expressed being apprehensive of engaging with services – especially where there may be concerns or challenges around children and/or parenting. However the community centre is not viewed as threatening to parents. It is a service that provides universal support and locally informed access for additional support.

Through the Pop up Play engagement the community centre became aware that additional support was needed for local grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren. We were able to provide support by hosting and facilitating a grandparent's focus group session. This enabled us to connect with these grandparents, to hear their stories and gain a better understanding of their challenges, and how we might better support them. But most importantly this engagement created links for them, supportive and powerful connections with each other.

IS THERE A FUTURE FOR POP UP PLAY?

This project was very well supported and gained wonderful momentum in a short time frame. We had many requests to extend the project and bring the play sessions into other places. Local primary schools asked for the project to support the schools to better connect with their disengaged families. Established regional playgroups requested interaction with the project. They felt that it could really help them to better connect with and support the more vulnerable families in their local regions.

We were asked to support regional events with a family focus, being held by local council and/or local businesses. More wonderful opportunities to make a connection with our families. This level of engagement was beyond the scope of this project but maybe worth considering for the future.

This has been an exciting little project that exceeded our expectations. With only 17 weeks on the ground delivery it did engage a lot of people. And it engaged with people who we could not have connected with through services.

There is certainly capacity with this hospitality framework to both collect and provide, valuable information. Information that can support positive outcomes across all levels, from families and communities, to local services and Government Departments.

We are happy to answer any questions or provide more project information. We would definitely welcome any interest, opportunity or investment to expand and further trial this concept in our community.

Vikki Cousins – Coordinator

Gympie Community Place

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Pop Up Play

Pop Up Play is trying to hear the voices of parents and families in our community. We are hoping to find out how and why people access community services and support, what works and what doesn't? Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions for us. THANK YOU ☺

Date of Survey: _____ Place of survey: _____

PARTICIPANT DATA

Do You live in the Gympie Region? ☐ Yes ☐ No / What is your postcode: _____

Gender: Male Female Other ATSI: Yes No Your Age: _____

Children in your care: _____ Childrens ages: _____

Relationship to Children: ☐ Parent ☐ Grandparetn ☐ Guardian ☐ Carer ☐ Other: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION (not required – you can leave this blank if you like)

Name _____ Contact details: Mobile _____

Email: _____

COMMUNITY SERVICES – Survey Questions

1. Are you aware that there are child related types of services in your local community?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

2. Do you use any of these services? Or have you used them in the past?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

3. If you have used services, was it a positive experience for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

4. Would you use a child related type of service in the future?

☐ Yes if I needed to ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐ Not sure

5. Have you ever attended a play group with your children?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

6. If you have attended a playgroup, was it a positive experience for you?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

7. How would you try to find information about child related services or playgroups?

☐ Friends ☐ School/day care ☐ Internet/Google ☐ Social media ☐ Phone book ☐ Other: _____

8. Do you or would you, find it difficult to access child related services and/or playgroups in Gympie?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure If yes, Why? (cost, transport, anxiety etc.)

9. Have you attended a Pop Up Play session?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

10. Was your Pop Up Play experience a positive one for you? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

11. Feedback on Pop Up Play - What was good or bad about it? What would you like to see in the future?

We would welcome any additional comments you would like to make about child related community services, playgroups or Pop Up Play. Please see over page:

Additional comments:

Would you like more information on our community child related services, play groups or Pop Up Play? ☐

Yes ☐ No

If yes please provide your contact information so we can touch base with you.

POP UP PLAY

COOLOOLA BERRIES
17th April, 15th May and
12th June (Final Party)
9.30 am to 11 am

KILKIVAN
LIONS PARK – BLIGH ST
Thursday, May 10th, 24th and
June 7th final day
9.30 am to 11 am

GYMPIE EAST STATE SCHOOL
1st May & 5th June
9.30 am to 11 am

7th MAYDAY FAMILY
9.30 am to 11 am
Nelsen Reserve
Petting zoo, face
painting, jumping castle

COOLOOLA COVE
BILLABONG PARK
2nd & 4th Wednesday of
each month
(Last day 13th June)
9.30 am to 11 am

IMBIL
YABBA CREEK
PARKLANDS
2nd & 4th Monday of
Each Month
(Last day 11th June)
9.30 am to 11 am

ANTENATAL CLINIC
GYMPIE HOSPITAL
1st & 3rd Wednesday of
Each Month
(Final day 6th June)
9.30 am to 11 am

MARY STREET
AMPITHEATRE STAGE
Tuesday, 8th May
9.30 am to 11 am

CURRA
COMMUNITY HALL
1st & 3rd Wednesday of
Each Month
(Final day 6th June)
9.30 am to 11 am
May 16th African drumming

UNDER 25'S PARENT focus GROUP
ONE MILE OVAL - GYMPIE
27th March, 24th April & 22nd May
10.30 am to 12 pm
All ages welcome to attend

Free refreshments on site!

Pop Up Play is a fun program for families with young children (0-5yrs).
Pop Up Play will provide free play activities where parents can join their child in music, storytelling,
imaginary play and fun activities like bubbles and playdough.

To Learn More - Contact Gympie Community place on 5482 1147 or Amanda Bovingdon on 0497 159 254
Email: pup@gcp.org.au Facebook: PUP - Pop Up Play