



Nature Play WA Inc. Annual Report 1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011

Acknowledgments

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Nature Play WA

Annual Report 1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011

Chairman's foreword

It has been only a short time since Nature Play WA was established to promote children's unstructured play outdoors and in nature. That message has resonated strongly in the community, the media and in Government. And the diversity and strength of Nature Play WA's Founding Partner organisations lends weight to the wide support Nature Play WA enjoys.

We have enjoyed an encouraging first 12 months in public relations; however, the Board and management recognise that the foundations of long term viability are not yet in place. We continue to work towards a stable platform from which to conduct our affairs.

The Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) has had the pivotal role in our foundation. The Director General, Ron Alexander, encouraged and supported the proposal formulated and developed by DSR communications manager Charles Hayne. And at a political level the Minister for Sport and Recreation Hon Terry Waldron MLA has been a willing advocate of our organisation and was able to secure us a four-year funding package at Cabinet level.

Thanks goes to the Founding Partner organisations, whose support of the broad concept, unfettered by the pursuit of narrow agenda, has seen Nature Play WA flourish. Thanks too to the Board whose support, wise counsel and personnel efforts have driven our organisation, from start-up, forward under funding and organisational constraints.

I also express my appreciation to the Chief Executive, Griffin Longley, and his staff, for their hard work and dedication. Griffin has taken the organisation from a core belief, a concept, to its current position as a significant emerging influence in Western Australia.

Nature Play WA will consolidate its foundations over the next 12 months, a task achieved in parallel with our advocacy role of promoting unstructured unsupervised play in nature. We look forward to an exciting year ahead, drawing upon the enthusiasm of our Board, management and supporters.

David Roberts

Chairman

Nature Play WA Inc.

Chief Executive Officer's foreword

It has been a dynamic year for Nature Play WA. We started as little more than a glint in the eye of the Department of Sport and Recreation and have grown to be a well recognised organisation with an enormous task ahead of us.

That task is nothing less than driving social change; one of those rare tasks for which there are no manuals and no maps and for which success will hinge on our ability to embrace partnerships and harness public energy.

Looking back over our first year it is important to recognise that it has been a year of organisational development, of partnership building and transition.

The partnerships we have built have been broad and important. We have joined forces with government agencies, outdoors and recreation organisations, not-for-profits, and members of the education and medical fraternities.

It is these partnerships that, if properly managed, will prove to be Nature Play's greatest asset.

Organisationally we have laid the foundations for years to come. We have recruited members, produced and ratified a constitution, elected a Board, a chair and deputy chair, established committees and hired staff.

But it has been a year of transition. We have moved from being an initiative of DSR to an independent organisation - albeit exclusively funded by DSR. We also laid the groundwork for a strategic plan and for securing independent funding thanks to the efforts of the Minister for Sport and Recreation Hon Terry Waldron MLA.

This year we have also organised a large successful event on Rottnest Island, distributed more than 2,000 passports to primary school children, developed a family nature club toolkit and generated significant media coverage.

The coming year will be another big one for Nature Play WA. And we will continue to remind the WA community that every child has a right to unstructured play outdoors because it makes them healthier, happier and leads to the resilience and creativity that are the bedrock of a fulfilling life and that define the Australian character.

Griffin Longley

Chief Executive Officer
Nature Play WA Inc.

Nature Play WA Inc.
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Nature Play WA Inc.
Annual Report 1 September 2010 – 31 August 2011

Part 1 — Nature Play WA Inc.

Nature Play WA Inc is an incorporated not-for-profit association established to increase the time Western Australian children spend in unstructured play outdoors and in nature. It is founded on the understanding that unstructured play outdoors (nature play) is fundamental to a full and healthy childhood. Nature play is, of itself, an intrinsic good and from it flow benefits in health, cognitive, social and emotional development and in the building of resilience and creativity of children. Experience in nature as a child also leads to environmental stewardship later in life.

Nature Play WA is a collaborative organisation working with partner groups to encourage the WA community to value nature play and families to prioritise it in children's lives. The organisations primary role is to spread the nature play message and to work to increase access to nature play resources, events and programs. Nature Play WA began as an initiative of the Western Australian Department of Sport and Recreation and was inspired by the ideas of American writer Richard Louv and the Children and Nature Network.

Nature Play WA has a 10-member board and a Chief Executive Officer who together created its Strategic Plan, which sets forth the vision, mission, guiding principles, and strategic priorities of the organisation. This Plan was conceived during the reporting period of this annual report and endorsed by the Board on 27 July 2011.

1. Vision

For unstructured, outdoor play to become a normal part of every WA child's daily life, so they can develop into resilient, healthy and creative members of the community.

2. Mission

To work innovatively and collaboratively to make nature play a normal part of childhood again.

Our primary target group is families of children aged 0-12 years.

3. Guiding Principles

- Collaboration: We will work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders.
- Community based: The primary focus of our efforts will be in working directly with families and community groups.
- Flexibility: We will be flexible, agile and innovative in our approach.
- Respect: Respect for nature and others is fundamental to our mission.
- Equity: We will strive to service WA's diverse community equitably.

4. Strategic Priorities

Priority One

Increase awareness amongst all West Australian parents of the benefits of nature play.

Priority Two

Increase opportunities for families to participate in nature play activities.

Priority Three

Create new resources and promote existing resources that makes taking part in nature play easy.

Priority Four

Establish a broad communication network with partner groups and WA families.

Priority Five

Advocate the importance of nature play to government and private bodies and agencies who work with children.

Priority Six

Develop Nature Play WA's organisational capacity.

Priority Seven

Be financially independent of Government within three years (by July 2013).

Part 2 — Organisational Structure

1. Background

In late 2009, the Department of Sport and Recreation was becoming increasingly concerned that children no longer seemed to be going outside to play. Rarely would you see children roaming around the parks and bushlands, building cubbyhouses or

playing games. Their physical boundaries had shrunk and they had become confined to their own backyards.

A growing body of research was indicating that the lack of unstructured play outdoors was having serious impacts on child health, wellbeing and development, including rising rates of childhood obesity, childhood diabetes, behaviour disorders, depression and a diminished sense of place and community.

At the same time, the research showed that participation in nature play had the ability to enhance children's cognitive flexibility and creativity, boost self-esteem, improve self-discipline, promote higher school achievement and a develop a greater sense of efficacy and reduced stress. Clearly something needed to be done.

They set to work surveying organisational models that could help foster a cultural change that would reconnect Australian children with nature. Led by DSR communications manager Charles Hayne, working in coordination with the Department of Environment and Conservation, they developed a website and DSR's Nature Play WA initiative was conceived.

They were inspired by the perspectives of Richard Louv - an internationally acclaimed author and futurist focused on family, nature and community – who coined the term 'nature deficit disorder' in his 2005 book 'Last Child in the Woods'. Louv believed that due to increased parental fears, restricted access to natural areas, and the lure of the screen, children were spending less time outdoors, resulting in a wide range of behavioral problems.

On 21 April 2010 Louv was brought to Perth by DSR to speak to families at the Perth Concert Hall. With little more than word-of-mouth advertising, the talk attracted 1400 attendees. At the end of Louv's talk, Minister Waldron launched Nature Play WA, a movement to motivate families to experience nature together. Its new website (www.natureplaywa.org.au) was unveiled with resources to help facilitate nature play and encourage the creation of community based Family Nature Clubs.

In May 2010, Griffin Longley was employed as project officer to further develop and grow Nature Play WA.

2. Relationship with Department of Sport and Recreation

Nature Play WA was conceived, created and generously supported by the Department of Sport and Recreation. During the period of this annual report, the activities of Nature Play WA were entirely funded out of the advocacy budget of DSR.

Nature Play WA began as an initiative of DSR, but became an independent, not-for-profit organisation in partnership with DSR when it became incorporated on 12 January 2011.

From the date of incorporation to the end of this annual reporting period on 30 June 2011, Nature Play WA continued to be wholly funded by DSR.

3. Founding Partners

Between May and October 2010, DSR began to actively recruit a broad cross-section of organisations with strong commitments to the health and wellbeing of children and/or the environment with a view to growing Nature Play WA from an in-house initiative to an independent not-for-profit organisation.

Support for the concept was very strong and 18 organisations with a strong affinity with Nature Play WA's objective to reinstate unstructured, outdoor play as a normal part of every WA child's daily life committed to becoming Founding Partners. These include:

- Department of Sport and Recreation
- Australian Medical Association Western Australia
- Bibbulmun Track Foundation
- Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority
- Conservation Council of Western Australia
- Creating Communities
- Department of Environment and Conservation
- Healthway
- Heart Foundation
- Mentally Healthy WA
- Outdoors WA
- Parks and Leisure Australia WA
- Physical Activity Taskforce
- Playgroup WA
- Public Health Advocacy Institute of Western Australia
- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Western Australian Primary Principals' Association
- Western Australian Council of State School

Two meetings of the Founding Partners were held during the current reporting period – on 13 October 2010 and 27 October 2010.

Over the reporting period, the Founding Partners provided strategic input into creating the Nature Play WA mission, guided the creation of a constitution, and nominated a board from within their number, which lead to Nature Play WA becoming an incorporated, not-for-profit, organisation.

The Founding Partners have also assisted Nature Play WA to develop and plan for first year's initiatives and spread the message of Nature Play in their sphere of influence.

4. Nature Play WA Board

The inaugural Nature Play WA Board consisted of 10 members appointed from amongst its Founding Partners. Nominations for the inaugural board were called at the first meeting of the Founding Partners on 13 October 2010. Ten nominations were put forward and all were unanimously appointed without need for election at the second meeting of the Founding Partners on 27 October 2010. The inaugural board consisted of:

- Dr David Roberts (Chairman)
Paediatric Chair, The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- David Zarb (Deputy Chairman)
CEO, Playgroup WA
- Greg Allen
Manager Community Education, Department of Environment and Conservation
- Stephen Breen
President, Western Australian Primary Principals' Association
- Charles Hayne
Communications Manager, Department of Sport and Recreation
- Trevor Shilton
Cardiovascular Health Director, Heart Foundation
- Melissa Stoneham
Senior Research Fellow, Public Health Advocacy Institute of Western Australia
- Allan Tranter
Director, Creating Communities
- Piers Verstegen
Director, Conservation Council of WA
- Mike Wood
Chairman, Bibbulmun Track Foundation

Members of the Board are typically appointed for three year terms, with the exception of the inaugural board and the second board appointed at the first annual general meeting. In the case of the second board, a ballot will be held to determine which members will retire after one year, which members will retire after two years, and which members will retire after three years.

The Board is required to meet at least four times each financial year. During the current reporting period, four board meetings were held - on 3 December 2010,

24 February 2011, 8 May 2011 and 9 June 2011. Agenda and minutes held as records of these meetings.

5. Operational Staff

During the reporting period, Nature Play WA had two operational staff:

- Griffin Longley, Chief Executive Officer, part-time 0.6 – 0.8FTE
- Nicole Bailey, Program Facilitator, part-time 0.4 FTE commencing April 2011

DSR also provided generous in-kind staffing support for graphic design, communications and program facilitation on an as-needed basis.

Part 3 — Report on Operations

1. Administrative Matters

During the reporting period, Nature Play WA became incorporated as a not-for-profit organisation with its own constitution and board. Key administrative milestones included:

May – October 2010	Founding Partners recruited
13 October 2010	First meeting of Nature Play WA Founding Partners
27 October 2010	Inaugural Nature Play WA Board appointed, with Dr David Roberts as Chair
12 November 2010	Nature Play WA constitution, entitled Nature Play WA Rules Inc. 2010, approved
1 December 2010	Application for incorporation initiated
3 December 2010	First Nature Play WA Board meeting. Charles Hayne replaced Griffin Longley on Board, with Griffin appointed to position of CEO.
12 January 2011	Nature Play WA became incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1987 (WA)
24 February 2011	Draft Strategic Plan tabled at second board meeting
8 May 2011	Draft grant agreement between Nature Play WA and DSR tabled at third board meeting. WA State Government budget bid discussed.
21 May 2011	WA State Government allocated Nature Play WA \$2 million over four years through DSR's Sport 4 All program.
9 June 2011	Fourth board meeting. Included discussion of staff hiring process, budget and delegations register for the CEO.

2. Website and social media development

Nature Play WA began building a social media presence during 2010/2011. This included establishing a Facebook Group, using Twitter and the establishment of a blog network (Ning site) developed for us by the Children in Nature Network in the US.

3. Anzac Day Event

To raise awareness of our organisation and the importance of unstructured outdoor play for children, Nature Play WA organised an Anzac Day event for families on Rottnest Island on 25 April 2010. Two ferries were chartered, bringing 720 participants (424 children) to the event, with the first arriving in time for the RSL's Anzac Day Dawn Service, followed by a barbecue breakfast. Children on both ferries were given maps leading to ten outdoor activities, termed "missions" around the island – including reading maps, riding to the gun emplacements, snorkelling. Children were also given a passport, which was stamped on completion of each mission by volunteers. A post event competition was run with prizes for the top three entries describing their Nature Play Anzac Day adventures to help generate case study examples of nature play experiences.

Participants included families from a diverse cross-section of the WA community, including foster families and those with disabilities and families of FESA volunteers. Feedback from a post-event survey (30% response rate) was very positive and indicated it had raised participants' awareness of unstructured play and had some lasting positive effects on behaviour:

- 91% said the event increased their awareness of the importance of unstructured play outdoors.
- 54% said the event increased their kids' participation in unstructured outdoor play.
- "Lack of time" (58%) and "Stranger danger" (43%) were identified as the key barriers limiting families from engaging in nature play.
- 57% felt passports would be an effective tool to get kids involved in nature play.
- 44% said the event changed their family's attitude towards leisure time TV and computer usage. Where attitude was not changed, many commented that it was because their family already has strict limits on screen time.
- 67% said they told 6+ friends and family about the day and what Nature Play WA is about.
- All general comment about the day were positive and mirrored the following sentiments:
 - "Very well planned and managed event. Well done."
 - "Really enjoyable day, great mix of activities, easily able to include the whole family..."
 - "Very well organised and the volunteers were cheerful and very helpful."
 - "I absolutely loved the day, it was such an adventure and so well organised, so lovely to be able to take the whole family as we

ordinarily would not be able to afford this. The staff and organisers were fabulous and I would like to say a huge thank you to all involved.”

In addition, the event served as a springboard to develop a number of strategic relationships:

- The West Australian signed as media partner.
 - Relationship strengthened with editor and developed with journalists Phoebe Wearne and Kate Bastians.
 - Editorial awareness of Nature Play WA increased across organisation.
- Rottnest Island Authority and Oceanic Cruises on board as strategic partners.
- Increased organisational awareness of Nature Play WA at the Department of Child Protection, Therapy Focus and the Fire and Emergency Services Authority.

The event generated significant media coverage that served to increase awareness of nature play in the community, including:

Monday 14 March 2011	Advertisement ran in The West Australian newspaper launching photo contest to win a family pass to the Rottnest event.
Tuesday 15 March 2011	Editorial story ran in The West Australian launching event and photo competition. Editorial pointers to the story appeared in 'Ed' and 'Mind and Body' sections.
Friday 18 March 2011	Editorial story ran in The West Australian with a picture from the photo contest entries received to date.
Wednesday 23 March 2011	Promotional advertisement ran again with editorial pointer in Seven Days.
Wednesday 23 March 2011	Editorial story ran in The West Australian with picture chosen from photo competition entries already received.
Thursday 24 March 2011	Editorial story with picture and editorial pointer in Health & Medicine.
Saturday 26 March 2011	10 x 3 – promotional advertisement in The West Australian (last chance to enter).
Saturday 26 March 2011	Editorial story ran in The West Australian.
Monday 25 April 2011	Minister for Sport and Recreation Hon Terry Waldron MLA, interviewed from Rottnest by Geoff Hutchinson on 720 ABC radio.
Tuesday 26 April 2011	Follow up editorial story ran in The West Australian newspaper.

4. Passports

The Nature Play 'Passport to an Amazing Childhood' initiative was originally developed as part of Nature Play WA's Anzac Day event on Rottnest Island. Children were encouraged to complete outdoor activities, termed "missions" and would earn a stamp in their passport on completion of each. The idea was for kids to then take the passports home and register them online where they could access an additional ten missions that they could complete whenever they had some free time.

The do-at-home 'missions' were all simple, fun, low (or no) cost, age-appropriate outdoor activities like 'climb a tree', 'build a cubby' or 'ride your bike'. The passports contained stickers, which could be placed in the passport once a mission was completed. The passports also contained a checklist of 15 things every kid should do before they're twelve, which included simple things like, 'camp out under the stars', 'learn to swim' or 'play in the bush'.

In addition, region-specific passport missions were developed for Geraldton as part of the Department of Sport and Recreation's 'ActiveSmart Geraldton' program - a free service providing local information and personalised advice on ways people could start to enjoy a more healthy, active lifestyle. So far, 4,000 households have been recruited by phone to join the program and of these, 1618 households requested (and received) Nature Play WA information and passports.

Work also began on a second phase of the passport initiative to include additional pages with suggestions for family activities in the outdoors and a higher level of design input and printing sophistication.

5. Family Nature Clubs

Family Nature Clubs are at the heart of the Nature Play WA movement. They are about families getting together and enjoying nature, each other's company and letting their kids enjoy the benefits unstructured play outdoors can bring.

In conjunction with the Children and Nature Network, the Department of Sport and Recreation and the Department of Environment and Conservation teamed up to develop a Family Nature Club Tool Kit.

This kit was intended to provide inspiration, information, tips and resources for people interested in creating a Family Nature Club.

Hard copies were produced and an electronic version was made available on the Nature Play WA website (www.natureplaywa.org.au) for download.

During the reporting period, Nature Play WA was aware of the initiation of two Family Nature Clubs and facilitating and promoting the creation of others will become a focus in coming years.

6. Partnerships

Nature Play WA has built its organisation on strong working relationships, not only with its Founding Partners, but also with organisations like the Rottnest Island Authority, Fire and Emergency Services Authority, Therapy Focus and the West Australian Newspaper via its Rottnest Island Anzac Day Event.

At the end of this reporting period, a contractual arrangement was formalised between Playgroup WA and the Department of Sport and Recreation to promote nature play to Playgroup WA's 17,000 strong register of WA families during the period 28 June 2011 to 27 June 2012.

7. Greenscripts

A "Green Script" is a health professional's written advice to a patient to be physically active outdoors as part of the patient's overall health management.

Green Script programs are currently in use in New Zealand, as well as parts of the United States and Sweden as a means to combat obesity and mental health disorders including depression and ADHD.

Nature Play WA recognised the potential of the Green Script concept as a possible tool to get more children – especially those at risk of mental health issues or obesity-related disease – playing outdoors.

During the reporting period Nature Play WA wrote a briefing paper investigating the existing global Green Script models and conceptualised several options for delivery of a similar program in Western Australia.

The idea has been championed by Dr David Roberts, who is both Nature Play WA's Chairman and the Paediatric Chair of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP). He and Nature Play WA CEO Griffin Longley presented the concept to the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) in a meeting on 8 June 2011. Both organisations expressed an interest in the idea and development of the concept will continue during the upcoming financial year.

Interest was also strong in media quarters, with The Weekend West running the article, "Go Out and Play: doctor's order" on 14 – 15 May 2011, as well as Medicus (Journal of the Australian Medical Association of WA) running an article titled, 'Green Scripts' in its June 2011 issue.

8. Geocaching

Geocaching is a high-tech treasure hunting game that is played worldwide by adventure seekers equipped with a GPS or Smartphone. Played by all types of

people, the basic idea is to use a GPS or Smartphone to locate a hidden container – called a geocache – then share experiences online at www.geocaching.com.au.

Nature Play WA recognised that geocaching is an excellent way to bridge the gap between technology and active, unstructured, outdoor play. In the lead up to the July 2011 school holidays, Nature Play WA hid three kid-friendly geocaches in the Perth metropolitan area at Kings Park, North Perth and Woodman Point. The placement of these caches was promoted via our online Nature Play WA newsletter, on our Facebook page and in a newspaper article called, ‘Everybody’s going out a’ hunting’, that appeared in the Weekend West Magazine on 2 – 3 July 2011.

Over 130 geocachers have found these caches and the feedback from the online logs have been very positive, with many families noting their kids really enjoyed the experience.

Additional geocaches are expected to be placed in the upcoming financial year prior to school holiday periods.

9. Research

In April 2010, the Department of Sport and Recreation commissioned a literature review to assess the value of nature play activities for children. The research paper, titled ‘Putting Nature back into Nurture – The Benefits of Nature for Children’ was completed by Dr Karen Martin at the University of Western Australia in February 2011.

This report reviewed original research studies and found that increased contact with nature is associated with positive attributes of children’s health, behaviour and learning.

Specifically, the evidence to date indicated that:

- There is a decreased risk of children being overweight when more nature is present in their neighbourhood.
- Playing in natural environments assists with building children’s motor skills.
- Nature contact enhances children’s learning and development. Programs increasing nature contact have identified beneficial effects on children’s personality development, cognitive functioning, attitude and school behaviour.
- Contact with nature, especially during middle childhood, has been indicated as having an important role to play in children’s mental health
- Children’s manage stress better when they have more contact with nature.
- Time in nature assists the performance of children with ADHD.
- Children displaying delinquent behaviour benefit from nature-based programs such as wilderness camps.

The literature review concluded that sufficient evidence is available now to indicate that there is an imperative to promote the substantial reestablishment of nature into children’s lives.

10. Media Highlights

Key media coverage in the reporting period focusing on Nature Play WA included:

7 July 2010	The West Australian	'Nature Deficit Disorder: A generation lost'
8 October 2010	The West Australian	'The hefty price to pay for cotton wool kids'
21 October 2010	The West Australian	'Go on you lot, it's time to go and play outside'
15 March 2011	The West Australian	'Families to play free-range on Anzac Day'
Issue 1, 2011	Totline National Playgroup Magazine	'Riches of Rottnest'
18 March 2011	The West Australian	'Outdoor play easy as one, two three'
23 March 2011	The West Australian	'Simplest things can be the most fun'
26 March 2011	The West Australian	'On the trail of outdoors'
25 April 2011	720 ABC radio (Geoff Hutchinson)	Minister Waldron interviewed about the Nature Play WA Rottnest Island Anzac Day event
26 April 2011	The West Australian	'Boost for playtime in the great outdoors gets a Rotto workout'
24 May 2011	ABC 720am Breakfast (Eoin Cameron)	'Bringing up Free Range Kids'
14 – 15 May 2011	The Weekend West	'Go out and play: doctor's order'
June 2011	Medicus Journal of the Australian Medical Association of WA	'Green Scripts'

11. Speaking Engagement Highlights

During the course of the reporting period CEO Griffin Longley has regularly been engaged by agencies, organisations and groups to speak about nature Play, highlights of those engagements are listed below:

19 November	PHAIWA Conference
26 November 2010	Active 10, Sport and Recreation Industry Conference, 'Nature Play for Parents'
14 December 2010	WAFC workshop
4 April 2011	Bunbury talk
27 May 2011	Physical Activity and healthy weight professional development event at Perth Zoo

Part 4 — Financial Matters

Nature Play WA Inc.'s financial year began on 1 July 2010 and ended on 30 June 2011.

During the 2010/2011 financial year Nature Play WA Inc was entirely without funding. All operations of Nature Play WA, including the contracting of staff has been exclusively funded by the Department of Sport and Recreation. Accordingly Nature Play WA Inc had no income and incurred no debts or liabilities.

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