

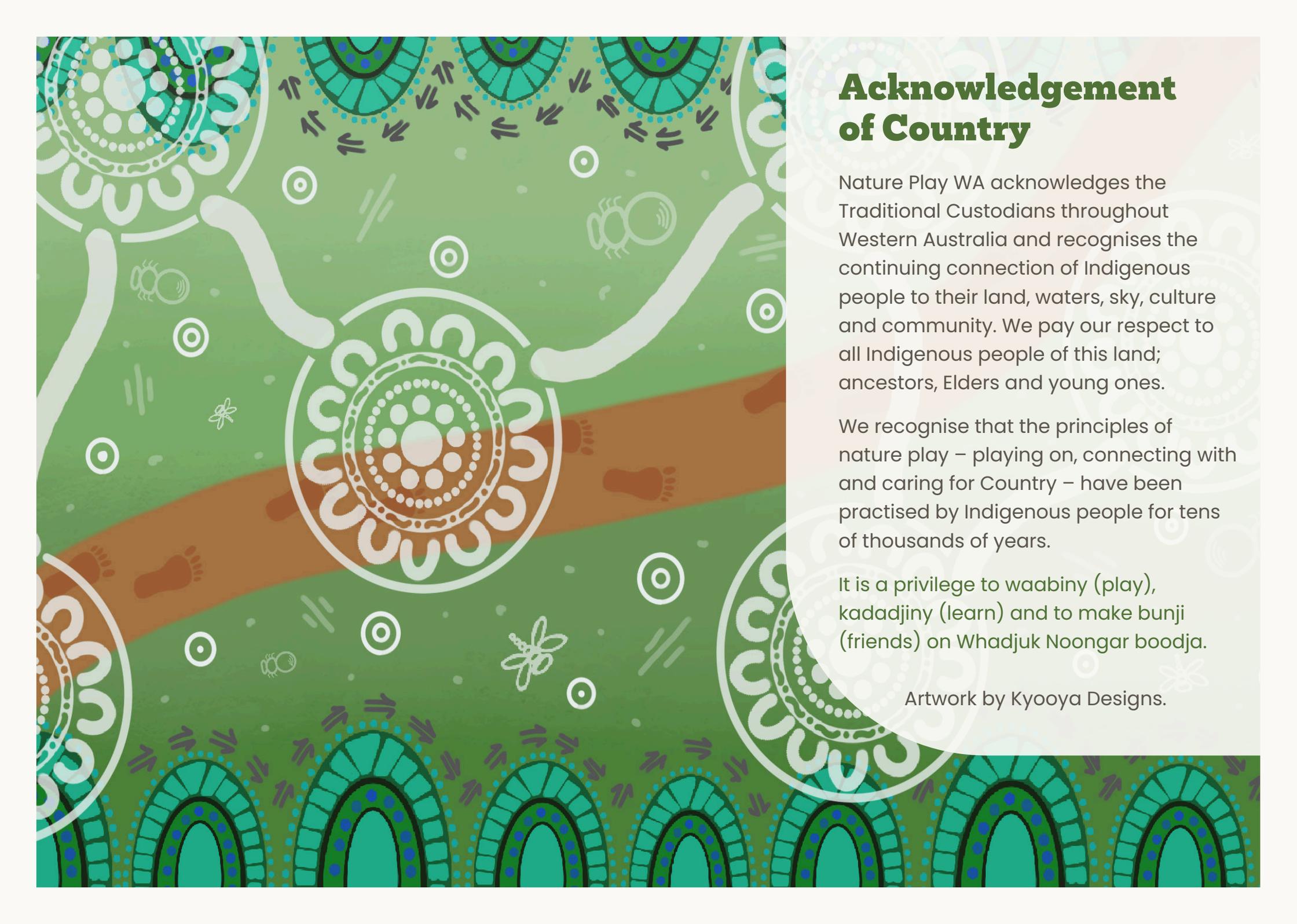


Nature Play<sup>WA</sup>

# Annual Report

2024 - 2025





## Acknowledgement of Country

Nature Play WA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Western Australia and recognises the continuing connection of Indigenous people to their land, waters, sky, culture and community. We pay our respect to all Indigenous people of this land; ancestors, Elders and young ones.

We recognise that the principles of nature play – playing on, connecting with and caring for Country – have been practised by Indigenous people for tens of thousands of years.

It is a privilege to waabiny (play), kadadjiny (learn) and to make bunji (friends) on Whadjuk Noongar boodja.

Artwork by Kyoooya Designs.

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Our mission is to support the mental  
and physical health of Western  
Australian children by growing their  
**connection to nature and community**  
through outdoor play.

## About Nature Play WA

We're a not-for-profit dedicated to supporting the mental and physical health of Western Australian kids by growing their connection to nature and community through play.

We support nature play (unstructured, child-led, outdoor play) through advocacy, programs, research, resources and more.

In an increasingly digital world, playing in nature is vital to helping kids feel happier, healthier, and more connected to the natural world.





# Our Strategic Structure

Strategy statement

By 2027, Nature Play WA will positively impact the lives of Western Australian children by influencing and supporting families, communities and policy makers to deep children’s connection to nature and community through outdoor play.

**Build Nature Play WA’s position of trust in the community.**

**Work in partnership with government to increase outdoor play and nature connected opportunities.**

**Develop a well-being focus in projects and campaigns.**

**Serve the whole community, especially families with diverse experiences.**

**Influence policy making to improve outcomes for children.**

Actions

Be a positive voice for families in the news media.

Design projects and campaigns to be delivered in partnerships with government.

Apply a mental health focus to projects and campaigns.

Apply a ‘whole of community’ focus to all projects and campaigns.

Build the Nature Play WA constituency through campaigns, news and social media.

Adopt a ‘people-first’ approach in projects and campaigns.

Leverage existing projects and relationships into new opportunities.

Develop projects and campaigns that specifically target well-being.

Develop projects and campaigns that specifically serve diverse communities.

Position Nature Play WA as conduit across government.

Consider impact on community trust in all projects and partnerships.

Build on fee-for-service and consultancy offerings.

Collaborate with well-being focused organisations.

Collaborate with organisations that serve diverse communities.

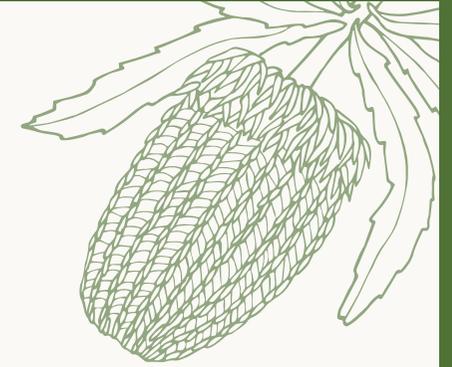
Engage with State and Federal politicians and departmental leadership.

Foundation strategy

Build research and evaluation into everything we do.

Concise financial strategy

Establish a diverse and sustainable income stream with a focus on deep partnerships with strong ‘community-first’ partners (government, corporate and philanthropic), resulting in multi-year agreements.



## A Word from our CEO

### Dr Kelsie Prabawa-Sear, CEO

I am very excited to share this report, which highlights the impactful work of the Nature Play WA team supported by our Board of Directors, partners, funders, and the WA community.

I am proud of the meaningful outcomes the team has achieved this year, built on a strong foundation of research, consultation, and experience. I can't thank the Nature Play WA team enough for their endless enthusiasm, willingness to lean into challenges, and commitment to improving the childhood experience for WA kids.

These outcomes have been made possible through strong partnerships with the WA community, other NFPs, research institutions, Telethon, and local and state government. I sincerely thank these partners for their support and look forward to the year ahead with excitement for what more we can achieve together.

I extend a warm thank you to our volunteer Board of Directors, chaired by Nick Sloan, whose strategic guidance and encouragement keeps me moving forward with purpose, ensuring that kids of all abilities, backgrounds, and interests experience the joy and benefits of unstructured time in nature.

This report is a celebration the achievements of the past year which was filled with connection, growth and positive impact for our community.



## A Word from our Chair

### Nick Sloan, Chair

This year Nature Play WA has continued to explore new ways to achieve our mission of growing the connection of children in Western Australia to nature and community through outdoor play.

This exploration has been underpinned by building on enduring relationships with the Western Australian Government and developing new and exciting partnerships with other industry bodies. The ongoing support from the State Government demonstrates a shared commitment to supporting the mental and physical health of children across Western Australia.

I am grateful for the support and wisdom of our passionate and committed Board who bring a curiosity and diversity of thought that have contributed to the growth and maturity of the organisation. The governance and strategic oversight provided by the Board ensures we keep our sight firmly on momentum and sustainability. I'd like to acknowledge the wonderful contributions made by outgoing Board member Jane McEvoy. Jane leaves the Board to pursue new challenges interstate but leaves a defining legacy from her time with Nature Play.

What continues to amaze me is the dedication and selflessness of our CEO Kelsie Prabawa-Sear and her extraordinary team, who use the limited resources at their disposal to deliver outstanding achievements across our strategic pillars. The extent of the impact this dynamic group has on the health and wellbeing of children and young people across our State isn't easily measured but is highly impactful and they should be incredibly proud of their achievements this year.

I encourage you to read and enjoy the content of this year's annual report which highlights the achievements of this small but mighty organisation.



## Our Projects



### Nature Play in the Park

Nature Play in the Park is a family-based healthy lifestyle intervention program to promote emotional and mental wellbeing, healthy eating, food exploration, and connectedness to nature and community for preschool-aged children and their families.

The nature-based outdoor group sessions and accompanying online content aim to provide families with ideas for how they can spend time together outdoors.

This year we:

- Partnered with six local governments to deliver the program.
- Had 250 families participate in the program.
- Received funding from Telethon to start adapting the program to provide an option - *Nature Play in the Park: Supported and Celebrated* - exclusively for neurodivergent children and their families.



### Every Kid in a Park

Every Kid in a Park is a partnership project with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to support families of children of all abilities and backgrounds in accessing and enjoying the outdoors (local parks, nature reserves, beaches and national parks) around Western Australia.

This year we:

- Signed a new four-year funding agreement with DBCA.
- Reviewed and revised our digital tools to support more engagement.
- Conducted eight community events to facilitate nature connection and inclusion for all kids.



# Our Projects



## Talk N Walk

Talk N Walk is our award-winning wellbeing program, facilitated through an app and supporting resources, that focuses on the mental and physical health benefits of talking and walking outdoors with friends and family.

This year we:

- Developed and implemented the *Talk N Walk Trails Leadership Program* for teen and tween girls, collaborating with Ignite Award, Bibbulmun Track Foundation, Hike West and Trails WA.
- Continued our partnership with the Department of Transport's Your Move by delivering a Talk N Walk to School campaign and workshops at the Your Move Leadership Labs.
- Updated the app to better support partnership opportunities through the ability to customise conversation prompts and collect de-identified data for specific campaigns.



## Nature & Me

In 2024, Nature Play WA received Telethon funding to expand the Talk N Walk program into the early years, supporting disabled, disadvantaged and vulnerable children aged 5–14 to build social connections, boost physical activity and improve mental wellbeing.

Now called Nature & Me, the program encourages children to explore nature to feel calm and connected, while building a personal toolkit of strategies to support their wellbeing.

This year we:

- Consulted with children, early years teachers and specialists, nature-based occupational therapists, speech therapists and neuro-affirming advocates to develop the resource.
- Trialled the Nature & Me cards with nine educators and five families around Western Australia.
- Made the Nature & Me cards available to purchase for educators and families around Australia.





## Our Projects



### Girls' Recreational Spaces

There is very little research on how teen and tween girls use recreational spaces in WA, despite evidence that most aren't getting enough physical activity.

Recognising this gap, we set out to develop a project to understand how and why girls use – or avoid – these spaces and what would make them feel welcome and safe. The findings will help guide the design of more equitable and engaging recreational spaces across WA.

This year we:

- Received funding for the project from the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport.
- Conducted a literature review of research currently available.
- Ran a workshop at the Parks and Leisure Australia Conference with local government officers, landscape architects and play space builders to uncover some barriers to consulting with tween and teen girls.



### Education

Working with schools is vital because they play a central role in shaping children's daily experiences.

We collaborate with educators and school communities across WA to create opportunities for students to connect with nature, support their wellbeing and build a sense of belonging through play.

This year we:

- Engaged with 40 schools providing resources, workshops and Play Space Audits.
- Delivered 53 webinars and courses to educators through our online learning portal.
- Saw the Educators section of our website viewed over 10,000 times, with more than 2,000 resource downloads.



# Our Projects



## Play Trails

Our Play Trails app takes traditional scavenger hunt games to a whole new level, motivating families to be active, have fun, and learn together in community nature spaces.

Play Trails are developed in partnership with local governments, state government departments and community organisations.

This year we:

- Created four new Play Trails.
- Helped 2,502 families play on WA trails.



## Nature Passports

Nature Passport activity booklets highlight nature-rich locations within a community and link them to fun nature play activities for families.

Nature Passports are developed in partnership with local governments and community organisations.

This year we:

- Created four new Passports.
- Undertook accessibility updates for our existing Passports.
- Printed and delivered a total of 9,000 Passports.





## Our Projects



### Events

At events, we invite families to connect through play and experience the benefits of time in nature, and listen to their insights to help shape our understanding of community needs.

This year we engaged with over 9,500 families across eight events, including:

- Muddy Hands with the City of Canning
- Muddy Buddies with the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale
- Nature Nook at the Town of Victoria Park's Family Day Out
- Storytime Cubbies with the City of Mandurah
- Mud kitchens and Nature Passports at Curtin University's Kids on Campus event
- Nature Nook at the City of Canning's Eid Festival



### Research

Participating in research is one of our strategic pillars and we are making it a part of everything we do. We were delighted to be a member of various advisory groups, joint research grant applications and research translation projects to enhance opportunities for positive impact on WA kids' childhoods.

We were even more thrilled to share some of the wonderful research outcomes through WA media outlets.

This year we:

- Presented to the WA Evaluation Society on our award-winning evaluation of Nature Play in the Park.
- Participated in the ORIGINS stakeholder workshop to help shape the direction of ORIGINS' esteemed and valuable work.
- Collaborated with colleagues from Curtin, Murdoch, UWA and The Kids Institute on a range of child health projects.
- Highlighted Nature Play in the Park through news media as an important translation piece from ORIGINS research with three-year-olds.



# Rediscover lost art of play

**KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**

A few years ago, I attended a talk by our



weren't under their feet, and into the street, where we met friends who were in the same situation. Driven to the brink of boredom-induced insanity, we'd come up with adventures and games that our friends and their siblings could all play. Our gang had to come up with a



**DR KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**  
NATURE PLAY WA CEO



## HEALTH STRUGGLE

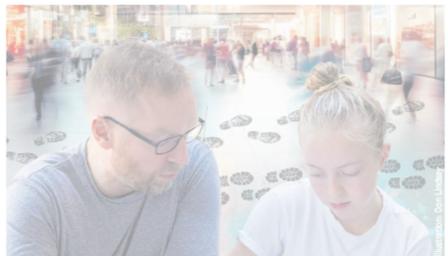
TEENAGE GIRLS FOUND TO BE LESS ACTIVE

48 OPINION

# Don't give up on your girls

**KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**

In a society, we have come to understand the unquestionable value of kids having a positive, engaged dad or dad figure in their life. When our kids are little babes, physical attachment and connection often come in the form of cuddles, feeding, bathing, dressing, and desperately trying to encourage sleep. Play is a wonderful way for kids and dads to connect in early and middle childhood. The unpredictable, vigorous and stimulating way that dads play with kids is important in helping develop kids' social-emotional skills such as self-regulation, resilience and empathy.



As the kids grow and start to move away from the... The girls experience a loss of connection with teammates and the sporting community, but

# Our Reach

(2024/25)

# 35,906

kids and families connected to nature through our work

# 1,518,971

viewers and listeners across TV, print and radio

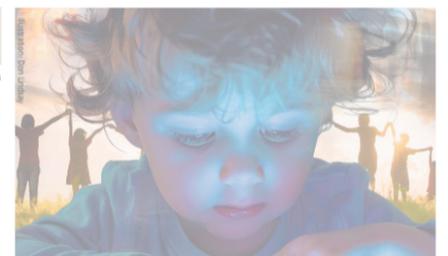
# 452,564

people reached on social media

# Why are toddlers anxious?

**KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**

When it comes to health, the mental and physical aspects are a fine line. A child's anxiety can be a result of many things, but for good children, it's often more than just a feeling. It can be a sign of a deeper issue, and that has led to a growing awareness of the importance of mental health in our community.



Preliminary research from WA, partnered with ORIGINS responsiveness. It means we

that we are OK, and we can bounce back when things don't go as hoped. The more opportunities that children get to learn this in small ways, the bigger their bank of resilience will grow, and the sweeter the accomplishments will be when they come. Outdoor play is the second premise and its value is amplified when combined with a playful mindset, or unsupervised play for older kids. When kids play outside, they get to move in big ways and take risks that they can't inside. They can take on physical challenges. They can run as fast as possible, climb things, walk on slippery and uneven surfaces and experience different weather. All these things help to build resilience and confidence - the building blocks to good mental health.



**KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**  
CEO NATURE PLAY WA



**DR KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**  
CEO NATURE PLAY WA



# Soothing kids' eco-anxiety

**KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**

Like adults, kids care deeply about the things and places they love. For the animal and nature lovers out there (of which there are many), the thought of losing a little bit of nature is heartbreaking. Many of us, adults and kids alike, will have seen trees coming down in suburbia as a result of increasing housing density. We are likely to have noticed trees dying from the long, hot summer drought, and now will be noticing the magnificent big trees being taken down in an effort to contain the polygons that hole borers that is working its way through hundreds of not just trees, but also the governments who have not done enough to address environmental issues, feelings of depression, anxiety, or panic, and the broader community. Tree planting allows for time in nature and being physically active, both of which have a positive impact on mental health. Innovative efforts that account for bio-security risks (like the honey bee) are a changing climate, and limited spaces across the city. While I chip away at making play forests a reality for our communities, I offer the



planting techniques. Forests are now up to 10 times faster than traditional plantations and with an incredible fast-growing forest canopy, heat reduction and animal habitat. The next step in this exciting approach is to take what we have learnt from the pocket forests, consult with kids, and plan for future forests to include all these environmental benefits as well as space for kids to explore and play. With some thoughtful design work, winding paths and a bit of space carved out, what is a wonderful scientific and environmental resource could also be a play and wellbeing forest. These play forests will provide the space that kids need to explore, climb, build, and imagine - all ingredients of a healthy childhood. While I chip away at making play forests a reality for our communities, I offer the



**Dr KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**  
NATURE PLAY WA CEO

**KELSIE PRABAWA-SEAR**

The UN's International Day of Play is almost here again and this year the theme is "Choose play - every day." It's interesting that the UN recognised the need for such a day considering play is what childhood is all about. Children don't need to be told to play. Given the time and space, they will naturally play. But for most kids (little and big) adults have become very stringent gatekeepers to their play, in the kids' detriment. This year's message is a gentle nudge to us all - parents, teachers, politicians, schools, and communities -

# 'childhood's heartbeat'



# Our Impact

In order to influence policy and advocate for unstructured outdoor play to connect WA children and families to nature, we have:

## Worked with

-  18 local governments
-  48 community organisations and schools
-  5 state government departments
-  17 research and advisory groups and projects

## Consulted with

-  934 children, young people and adults through schools and community organisations

## Delivered programs and presentations to

-  22,248 children and young people (and their families), teachers and educators



## Our Board & Team

### Our Board

Nick Sloan (Chair)

Danielle Ayres

Andrew Haak

Kate Inglis-Hodge (Youth Member)

Tamar Jordan

Niel Smith

Tim Swart



### Our Team

Kelsie Prabawa-Sear (CEO)

Ellen Alci

Fiona Bow

Loren Cassidy

Prisha Dabasia

Vanessa Dow

Kellie Hill

Paige Horak

Jane Leow

Sarah McGowan

Liz Mendelawitz





# Financials

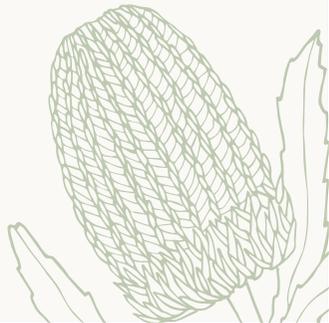
The 2024/5 financial year continued to build on the growth of the previous year. We saw a growth in funding for Nature Play in the Park, through grants and fee-for-service, with increased income associated with events and activations which offered nature play opportunities to a broader cross section of the community. Our growing body of work with teen and tween girls brought in grants to support projects on girls’ recreational space use and girls trails leadership and hiking.

One of our financial goals is to provide a ‘service dividend’ to the community of Western Australia, such that our primary grant, provided by Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), results in the delivery of services worth more than the value of that grant. We were pleased to achieve an increased ROI again this year and look forward to continuing to build on it in coming years.

## Total income against primary grant

| Financial Year                  | 2019/20   | 2020/21   | 2021/22   | 2022/23   | 2023/24     | 2024/25     |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| DLGSC consolidated funding (CF) | \$450,000 | \$400,000 | \$400,000 | \$400,000 | \$400,000   | \$400,000   |
| Total income                    | \$965,329 | \$978,000 | \$973,500 | \$970,000 | \$1,081,871 | \$1,259,946 |
| CF as % income                  | 46%       | 41%       | 41%       | 41%       | 43%         | 32%         |
| ROI                             | \$2.15    | \$2.45    | \$2.43    | \$2.42    | \$2.70      | \$3.14      |

## Return on investment of primary grant





## With Gratitude

Nature Play WA can only achieve what it does with the support of families and the broader community, our volunteer Board of Directors, and funding and project partners.

We'd like to thank all Nature Play families, our Board, and the following organisations for their support this year:



**Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport**  
**Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**

