Toy Libraries
AUSTRALIA

TOY LIBRARIES

an original foundational support

Our history

The first Australian toy library was established by Noah's Ark (Melbourne) in 1971. At the time, families were beginning to refuse to put their children with disabilities into institutional care but they had limited resources and information to support them as parents. Toy libraries became a place where parents could learn about their child's development, get support and a friendly ear, and meet other families in similar situations.

Toy libraries today

Today there are 390 toy libraries across Australia supporting over 80,000 children. A small number of specialist disability toy libraries exist, but most toy libraries are mainstream services that inclusively support all families in their community.

Characteristics of toy libraries

Family and community-centred

Toy libraries are strengths-based and embedded in the community. Using a community development approach, they reflect the needs of local families.

Mainstream soft-entry point

Our libraries are an accessible soft entry point for busy families juggling multiple commitments and those who don't engage with formal early years services.

Existing cost-effective service

Toy libraries are already established and have capacity to grow. The community toy library model is cost-effective and supported by volunteers.

GET IN TOUCH

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Foundational supports for the early years

Toy Libraries AUSTRALIA

Purpose

Foundational supports should provide equitable, effective and accessible supports as early as possible to reduce all children's developmental vulnerability and better support families to improve their wellbeing.

Toy libraries can be a...

- <u>mainstream</u> service for all families
- <u>gen</u>eral foundational support for children with developmental concerns, delay or disability
- <u>targeted</u> foundational support for children with disability requiring specialist toys and resources

Toy Libraries Australia is improving the accessibility of toy libraries for children with disability and their families, fostering inclusion and community connection.

Foundational supports should be...

(1) Family- and community-centric
- empower parents and caregivers
- consider the whole family and the child's broader ecosystem, particularly siblings
- promote learning in everyday environments
- reflect the child and family's preferences

(2) Well integrated
with mainstream, foundational and specialist supports

(3) Easily accessible
- timely and not requiring a diagnosis
- local with good physical accessibility
- welcoming for families with disability
- available at convenient times

(4) Place-based within national guidelines
- co-designed with the community
- reflect cultural diversity
- national equality of access

(5) Built on what exists today
- Build on the strengths of what exists

For toy libraries' to be sustainable foundational support...

Individual toy libraries need funding to:

Undertake training and supervision

Toy librarians need specific training to understand child development, how developmental differences can be supported in a toy library, and disability confidence and inclusion in a toy library context.

Improve integration

To better integrate the toy library with other services, toy libraries need to engage with early years networks and understand how to make connections between families, key workers, navigators and other early years services.

Increase accessible

Employ more qualified staff, allowing the toy library to provide specific services for families with disability or developmental delay and increase opening hours making it easier for families, key workers and therapists to visit.

Toy Libraries Australia needs specific funding to:

Deliver training and supervision

Employ qualified staff to develop and deliver training to toy libraries on disability confidence, access and inclusion, and provide supervision for staff providing foundational support services.

Roll out disability inclusion initiatives

Support all toy libraries, including small regional ones, to roll out disability inclusion initiatives.

Open more toy libraries

Support communities to open new toy libraries, so that all children have a toy library close to home. Gaps exist today including in rural and First Nations communities, growth areas, Brisbane & Tasmania.

Establish action research

Systematise a cyclical process of inquiry, change and evaluation to continuously improve toy libraries performance as a foundational support.