

## Family Experiences of PlayConnect+

The research is being carried out by the following researchers:

Role	Name/s	Organisation
Lead Investigator	Kristelle Hudry	La Trobe University
Other Investigators	Alexandra Aulich, Catherine Bent, Cherie Green, Melanie Muniandy, Katherine Pye, Jodie Smith	La Trobe University
Research funder	This project is part of an evaluation that has received \$300,000 funding to La Trobe University from Autism Queensland, as part of the broader Department of Social Services contract to Autism Queensland and the State and Territory Playgroup Organisations to run PlayConnect+ (2023-2025).	

### 1. What is the study about?

We invite you to share your experiences of PlayConnect+ for yourself, your child, and your family, by speaking to us in a one-on-one interview, and also introducing us to your child by letting us see you together in play and snack-time activities. We are inviting any family involved with PlayConnect+—including right across Australia, no matter how long or little you have been involved with PlayConnect+, and whether you attend face-to-face, online, music, or holiday groups. We want to understand how PlayConnect+ runs, if you feel it supports you, your child and/or your family, and what could be better. A good quality program is really important to the government that funds PlayConnect+, the organisations that coordinate PlayConnect+ across all States and Territories, and the staff who run PlayConnect+ groups. To be sure PlayConnect+ is running as well as it could, we need to hear honest opinions from families like you.

### 2. Who is being asked to be involved?

We are inviting any family involved with PlayConnect+ to share your experiences with us. The more families we hear from—and making sure we hear from families in different parts of Australia, from different backgrounds and personal situations—the more we will learn about the program; what is good and working well, and what could be better.

### 3. Do I have to be involved?

You can choose whether to be part of this project. Please read this information carefully and ask us any questions to help you decide. If you decide not to be involved, this won't affect your relationship with La Trobe University, the people and organisations that run your PlayConnect+ playgroup, any other organisation involved, or any other service you are connected to. Unless you tell them, the staff and other families involved in your PlayConnect+ group will not know if you have decided to be involved. This ensures it is your choice about whether or not to be involved, and if so, that you can tell us honestly about your experiences and opinions.

### 4. What will I be asked to do? If you want to be involved in this project, we will ask you to do two things.

One is to speak with us about your child and family situation, and your experiences of PlayConnect+. This would be an individual conversation between you and a member of our research team. We know you have a lot on, so we would aim to keep this to about 20 minutes (but it could be longer if you have a lot to say). We would like to hear your honest opinions, and we can meet with you online (via zoom) or—depending where you live—possibly in person. Either way, with your permission, we will audio record the conversation. What you will say is important to us and we won't be able to write it all down or remember everything, so we will want to listen to it again later.

We would also like to meet your child and get a sense of his/her skills and any challenges, and how you interact together. We can meet your child with you online (via zoom) or possibly in person for some families. To learn a lot about your child in a short time, we will ask you to show us how you play together with some favourite toys or activities, and how you have snack time together. With your permission, we will video record these activities for about 10 minutes (5 minutes each play and snack). Again, this is because we won't be able to remember everything about your child and would like to see the video again later. The recording will only be seen by our research team.

To thank you for your time, we will offer a gift voucher of up to \$25 for the interview with us and the chance to meet and film your child interacting with you. If there is time and you are willing, we may connect with you again later in the year or early next year to hear an update on how things are going for you both (and offer another gift voucher at this time).

### 5. What are the benefits?

This project is set up to collect information about PlayConnect+ program quality, so we can tell the organisations that are running it, and the government department that is funding it, what is working well, and how it could be better. If we have suggestions that can be put in place easily, this might improve PlayConnect+ in ways that benefit you and other families directly. Other suggestions may take time to put in place, but we hope will benefit you and other families in future. We also hope being involved in the project will be interesting for you personally, reflecting on your PlayConnect+ experience.

## 6. What are the risks?

With any study there are (1) risks we know about, (2) risks we don't know about, and (3) risks we don't expect. If you experience something you aren't sure about, contact us immediately to discuss the best way to manage your concerns.

Name/Organisation	Position	Telephone	Email
Alexandra Aulich La Trobe University	Senior Project Coordinator, PlayConnect+ Evaluation Team	03 9479 2891	<a href="mailto:playconnect@latrobe.edu.au">playconnect@latrobe.edu.au</a>

We have listed the following possible low-level risks that we can foresee, to help you decide if you want to be involved.

- Actual or perceived pressure from PlayConnect+ staff or organisation to be involved or share only positive things. We think this is unlikely. But to reduce the chance of this, we will communicate directly with you to answer any questions and, if you are willing, to schedule a time for you to meet with us. So, unless you tell them, staff and families with your PlayConnect+ group will not know that you have been involved, or what you have told us.
- Risk of mild upset from speaking with us about challenging experiences. We think this is possible, but will work to reduce the impact of this. Our research team has a lot of experience working with children with additional needs and their families and will listen to what you have to say empathically and non-judgementally. In this way, we hope speaking with us will be a positive experience. For extra support, we also recommend calling Lifeline: 13 11 14.

## 7. What will happen to information about me?

If you give us permission, we will **collect** information about you in ways that will reveal who you are (i.e., audio recording of your voice; video of you and your child together; your name and contact details to allow us to reconnect later on). We will **store** information about you in ways that will not reveal who you are (i.e., audio recording of your interview deleted after typed transcript created and fully de-identified [names of people, specific places, etc. removed]; video recording stored securely and only viewed by the research team, with no names in the file).

We will **publish** information about you in ways that will not identify you (i.e., summary information across the whole group or subgroups of families, any direct quotes fully de-identified so readers will not know who said them; videos never shown to people outside the research team).

We will **keep** your information for 7 years after the project is completed. After this time, we will destroy all of your data. The storage, transfer and destruction of your data will be undertaken in accordance with the [Research Data Management Policy](https://policies.latrobe.edu.au/document/view.php?id=106/) <https://policies.latrobe.edu.au/document/view.php?id=106/>. The personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with applicable privacy laws, any health information collected will be handled in accordance with the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic). Subject to any exceptions in relevant laws, you have the right to access and correct your personal information by contacting the research team.

## 8. Will I hear about the results of the study?

We will let you know about the results of the study, summarised across the whole group, by email.

## 9. What if I change my mind?

You can choose to no longer be part of the study at any time, during the interview or up to the point your interview has been transcribed and fully de-identified (approximately four weeks later). You can let us know by:

1. Completing the 'Withdrawal of Consent Form' (provided at the end of this document);
2. Calling us; or
3. Emailing us

Your decision to withdraw at any point will **not** affect your relationship with La Trobe University or other organisations.

When you withdraw, we will stop asking you for information. Any identifiable information about you will be withdrawn from the research study. However, once your interview has been transcribed, fully de-identified, and audio recording deleted, we can only withdraw information such as your name and contact details from our records for future followup contact. If you wish to withdraw before we have done this, it is your choice whether or not we may use your interview.

## 10. Who can I contact for questions or want more information? Please contact

Name/Organisation	Position	Telephone	Email
Alexandra Aulich, La Trobe University	Senior Project Coordinator	03 9479 2891	<a href="mailto:playconnect@latrobe.edu.au">playconnect@latrobe.edu.au</a>

## 11. What if I have a complaint? Please contact

Ethics Reference Number	Position	Telephone	Email
HEC24045	Senior Research Ethics Officer	+61 3 9479 1443	<a href="mailto:humanethics@latrobe.edu.au">humanethics@latrobe.edu.au</a>

**Consent Form – Declaration by Participant**

I (the participant) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the participant information statement, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study with my child. I know I can withdraw at any time until four weeks following the collection of my data. I agree information provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a report, presentation and published in journals on the condition that I cannot be identified.

I would like my information collected for this research study to be:

- ☐ Only used for this specific study;  
☐ Used for future related studies;

- ☐ I agree to have my interview audio recorded  
☐ I agree to have video footage collected of me interacting with my child  
☐ I would like to receive a copy of the results via email or post. I have provided my details below and ask that they only be used for this purpose and not stored with my information or for future contact.

Name	Email (optional)	Postal address (optional)

**Participant Signature**

- ☐ I have received a signed copy of the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form to keep

Participant's printed name	
Participant's signature	
Date	

**Declaration by Researcher**

- ☐ I have given a verbal explanation of the study, what it involves, and the risks and I believe the participant has understood;  
☐ I am a person qualified to explain the study, the risks and answer questions

Researcher's printed name	
Researcher's signature	
Date	

\* All parties must sign and date their own signature

**Withdrawal of Consent**

I wish to withdraw my consent to participate in this study. I understand withdrawal will not affect my relationship with La Trobe University or any other organisation or professionals listed in the Participant Information Statement. I understand the researchers cannot withdraw my information once my interview audio recording has been transcribed and de-identified (usually within 4 weeks of the interview).

**I understand my information will be withdrawn as outlined below:**

- ✓ Any identifiable information about me will be withdrawn from the study
- ✓ The researchers will withdraw my contact details so I cannot be contacted by them in the future studies unless I have given separate consent for my details to be kept in a participant registry.
- ✓ The researchers cannot withdraw my information once it has been analysed, and/or collected as part of a focus group

I would like my already collected and unanalysed data

- ☐ Destroyed and not used for any analysis  
☐ Used for analysis

**Participant Signature**

Participant's printed name	
Participant's signature	
Date	

**Please forward this form to:**

CI Name	Kristelle Hudry
Email	k.hudry@latrobe.edu.au
Phone	(03) 9479 5649
Postal Address	Department of Psychology, Counselling and Therapy School of Psychology and Public Health Kingsbury Drive Bundoora, VIC 3096 Australia