

# THE SOCIAL BENEFITS OF TOY LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA



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CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

2019 Research Report

# The Social Benefits of Toy Libraries in Australia



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## Executive Summary

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The main aim of this research was to identify and document the full range of social benefits delivered by Toy Libraries (TLs) in Australia. This information can be used to assist TLs in Australia to improve their internal operations and strengthen their external relationships.

We administered a survey to 280 TLs across Australia between March and April 2019. Of those contacted, 121 responded to the survey for a response rate of 43%. We found that TLs in Australia are primarily organised as independent incorporated associations and run by member volunteers. The typical TL has seven active committee members and five volunteers who provide a total of 10 hours of volunteer labour per week.

TLs main goal is offering affordable quality educational items, but they provide a number of additional social benefits to families and children. The typical TL serves around 62 members and 115 children and makes

available approximately 1,000 toys for loan. Across the TLs surveyed, they serve 18,228 members and 32,784 children, and offer 138,141 toys for loan. In addition, TL purchase a total of AUD\$418,755 of toys per year and receive AUD\$161,860 of toys per year in donations.

Children benefit from the variety of toys and the significant developmental support provided by volunteers and trained staff. Children also benefit from being TL members because they learn to share, make choices, and respect and care for the borrowed toys. They also learn important social skills as they interact with other children. Many children learn that they do not need to own toys but can instead benefit from borrowing toys.

Many TLs provide additional services to support their members. Some TLs host 'play and stay' sessions, which are typically held once a year.

Some have programmes and services to support at-risk groups, such as specialist or sensory toy sections TLs also serve at risk groups in their community, including immigrants, low socio-economic groups, and children with special needs. In addition, each year TLs across Australia organise 246 community events and attend 286 community events.

TLs benefit members by offering social support during the challenging life stage of early parenthood. They do this by providing social support in the form of emotional, cognitive, and material support. They give emotional support to families during family emergencies, such as illness. TLs also offer emotional support when parents are overwhelmed by the stresses of parenting. Cognitive support is provided in the form of information on member notice boards or in newsletters. However, some TLs take an active role giving members referrals to specialist health professionals (e.g., speech pathologists) or other community

support services (e.g., domestic violence prevention). TLs offer material support to members by giving free memberships, direct financial assistance, as well as offers of food, toys, or babysitting.

TLs serve as hub organisations in their communities fostering connections among individuals and other organisations. We find that many of the TLs have relationships with other community organisations. These relationships enable the TLs to connect families to these organisations to access support, assistance, and information. TLs foster these relationships by holding or attending community events.

TLs face four key challenges: recruiting and motivating volunteers and members, attracting funding, finding adequate facilities, and attracting new members. We provide recommendations to address these challenges. Across all of these challenges, the individual TLs represent one of the greatest assets and untapped resources.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Toy Libraries

TLs are community organisations that lend or hire toys to families, groups, or organisations (e.g., schools). Parents or others can become members by paying a low annual fee, and toys can then be borrowed for a set lending period.

The primary goal of TLs is to facilitate play. In order to accomplish this goal, TLs provide resources for play, including toys, puzzles, games and dress-up costumes, with trained staff and dedicated space provided on a non-commercial basis [1]. Through play, toys are intended to contribute to child development [2]. TLs provide toys to suit the age and developmental stage of children, primarily between the ages of birth to ten to 12 years old. The toy offering varies from library to library. Some TLs offer specialist toys, for example, adaptive toys, which are specially modified for children with physical disabilities. This enables children to be able to play and learn as independently as possible [3].

As well as lending toys and games, TLs often provide other services, including information, guidance and support for their members [1]. For instance, many TLs provide a place where children and their family can spend quality time together.

The first TL was founded in 1935 in Los Angeles [4]. Currently, there are approximately 400 TLs in the United States, approximately 6500 in Europe, and TLs are also well established in Australia, with over 300 TLs. The first European TL was opened in 1959, in Denmark. One year later, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) presented a plan to create more TLs [5]. In 1963 TLs or “*lekoteks*” started in Sweden with a focus on children with special needs. Soon after, TLs opened in the United Kingdom (1967) and in Norway (1969) [4].



**“The right to play is a child’s first claim on the community. Play is nature’s training for life. No community can infringe that right without doing deep and enduring harm to the minds and bodies of its citizens”.**

**—David Lloyd George (qtd. in Hewes 2007)**



In the 1970s, TLs started in many other countries, including Australia (1971), Switzerland (1972), the Netherlands (1973), New Zealand (1974), and Canada (1975) [6]. More recently, in 1992 the first TL opened in Russia [4]. There are also TLs in other continents (e.g., South America, Central America and Asia). In many countries, TLs are open to everyone (e.g., children and

adults, able-bodied and disabled persons, institutions and organisations) [5]. They serve all types of people without making a distinction as to race, sex, disability, religion, language or national origin. However, in some countries (e.g., Denmark, Sweden and Croatia), TLs are specifically designed for children with special needs.

## 1.2 Toy Libraries in Australia

Toy Libraries Australia (TLA) is a not-for-profit incorporated association and the peak body of TLs in the country [7]. TLA has close to 300 libraries, which service more than 15,000 families with AUD\$6.5 million worth of toys provided [8]. TLA's main aim is to publicise the role of TLs and thus increase the number of TLs in the country. TLA is funded by membership fees and managed by a committee of volunteers.

According to the TLA, TLs in Australia have several key goals.

These include:

- “provide quality educational items for loan.
- are inexpensive (usually, an annual subscription is charged).
- principally cater to younger children.
- have a range of items covering all stages of growth and development.
- provide an opportunity to meet other caregivers to share concerns, interact with others and make new friends.
- help parents and carers learn about the ages and stages of child development.
- usually, open on set days and hours” [9].

### 1.3 Toy Library Literature

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Two major models of TLs have been identified in the literature. The Swedish model (or *lekotek*) is a form of TL that is staffed by professionally trained personnel. This type of TL provides toys, support, and information to families to help children with special needs develop through play. The English (or community-oriented) model serves the needs of local families, tends to be more informal, and is often run by community and family volunteers [10, 11]. Community TLs are increasing in popularity and may serve families with children who are able bodied or face challenges [11]. However, each TL system is influenced by the special conditions, needs, and development of its particular country and by each country's cultural and social system [12].

TLs provide a number of benefits to both children and parents. Research finds that parents believe TLs allow them to spend quality time with their children, help children socialise, and provide children with a diverse array of quality toys and games [13]. In another study,

parents report that children learn to be responsible and share toys through TL participation [14]. Ozanne and Ozanne [15] find that TLs provide economic benefits to families, such as reducing the need to purchase new toys and enabling them to try before buying. They also report that parents discover a community of like-minded parents sharing similar values, and parents describe how the TL experience provides a space for children to learn the values of sharing, responsible use, and respect for other users. Ozanne and Ballantine [16] identify several groups of parents who participate in TLs for varying reasons, including the social benefits they provide during this particularly challenging life stage.

The benefits provided by TLs may be particularly important to parents given this challenging time of life. Becoming a parent is a major developmental transition of adulthood that can present a number of challenges [17]. Individuals experience numerous transitions over their lifetime, such as the transition to parenthood.

These transitions can place them in so-called liminal phases (transitional phases between different states of being). These events can trigger emotional distress as individuals confront their changed circumstances. During liminal periods, individuals need to find ways to cope with any associated distress and uncertainty. The coping strategies individuals may utilise in these situations draw on psychological resources, social resources, and distinct coping responses [18]. Social resources are particularly important and involve the use of social networks to access

various resources, thereby reducing stress and anxiety. In essence, social networks enable individuals to access various forms of human, social, and economic capital to cope more effectively [19]. Caplan [20] suggests that social support networks can take the form of formal and informal relationships and groups through which an individual receives the emotional, cognitive, and material support necessary to master stressful experiences. TLs may provide parents with these social support networks to help them navigate this challenging time.





## 1.4 Purpose and Scope of This Research

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The existing literature suggests that, TLs provide social benefits to children and parents. We aim to investigate more deeply TLs in Australia.

Specifically, the aims of this research are to:

- identify the full range of social benefits provided by toy libraries in Australia.
- better understand the full range of social benefits provided by TLs. With this information, we hope to assist TLs in Australia in internal operations and external relationships:
- For internal operations, impact data can help recruit and motivate volunteers, improve operations, and play a critical role in strategic planning.
- For external stakeholder, impact information can help make the case for donations and investments from foundations, businesses, and government agencies.

We also identify challenges faced by TLs in Australia, and provide recommendations for these TLs in order to meet the challenges, and take advantage of our findings.



## 3. Methods

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This section provides a brief description of how the data for this report were collected. Full details can be found in the Appendix.

### 2.1 Data Collection

To identify and understand the full range of social benefits provided by TLs, a survey was developed and implemented using Qualtrics XM. This software allowed for online delivery and receipt of the survey. Qualtrics XM uses secure socket technology to assure confidentiality in its transmission. The survey was distributed to all coordinators of TLs that were provided by TLA. Participation was promoted by TLA through a letter endorsing the survey and social media. The survey was sent out to 280 TLA members across Australia from March to April 2019. A second email reminder was sent to encourage participation.

The survey asked for information about the location and structure of the organisation, followed by questions about the volunteers and membership.

The survey then asked respondents about the services that they provide to their members, and the impact these provide. Members were asked to share stories of benefits and stories of change. Participants were also asked to provide detailed information regarding the additional types of support that they offer to their members. Participants were then asked for information regarding staff and volunteer pay and hours. The final section contained questions regarding costs and productivity. The full survey is found in the Appendix.

We analysed quantitative data by extracting key statistics, and we identified key themes in the qualitative data using thematic analysis [21].

### 3. Findings

In the following sections, the findings from the survey are presented. First, in section 3.1, we present the findings from the qualitative part of the survey (i.e., short-form questions about the TL's staff, volunteers, members and services). Then, in section 3.2, we present the findings from the qualitative questions of the survey (i.e., long-form 'storytelling' about the TLs). These stories paint a more complete picture of the type of support provided by TLs to their members.

#### 3.1 Quantitative Findings

A total of 121 TLs across Australia responded to the survey (a response rate of 43.2%), although not all participants answered all questions. More responses were received from the Melbourne area than from other locations (see Figure 1). Other main centres (e.g., Sydney) had several respondents. As shown in Figure 1, a few respondents were outside the main centres. Those who answered the survey were mainly senior members of the organisation: President (34%), Coordinator (11%), Secretary

(4%), Manager (3%), Chairperson (2%), Committee member (1%), Vice president (1%), and Other (43%).

In terms of organisational structure, TLs in our survey are primarily independent incorporated associations (82%). The majority (57%) are run by member volunteers. However, 30% specified that they have a paid member of staff, and 13% indicated that they have non-member volunteers working at the toy library (see Figure 2).

In terms of the participation of volunteers, the typical TL has seven active committee members. In addition, the typical TL has five volunteers, providing a total of 10 hours of work at the TL per week. However, there are some very large TLs with a large number of volunteers (e.g., 50) and hours (e.g., 300) of volunteer labour provided.

We also asked respondents to indicate who helps at the TL. 27% specified that retired individuals volunteer, 23% indicate that students volunteer, 16% indicate that those returning to the workforce volunteer, 14% said that new migrants volunteer, and 10% said that those with special needs

volunteer at their TL (see Figure 3). Across all TLs that responded, there were 1,312 active committee members, with 785 volunteers helping each week. There were only 69 paid staff. The volunteers provided 2,094 hours in total each week.

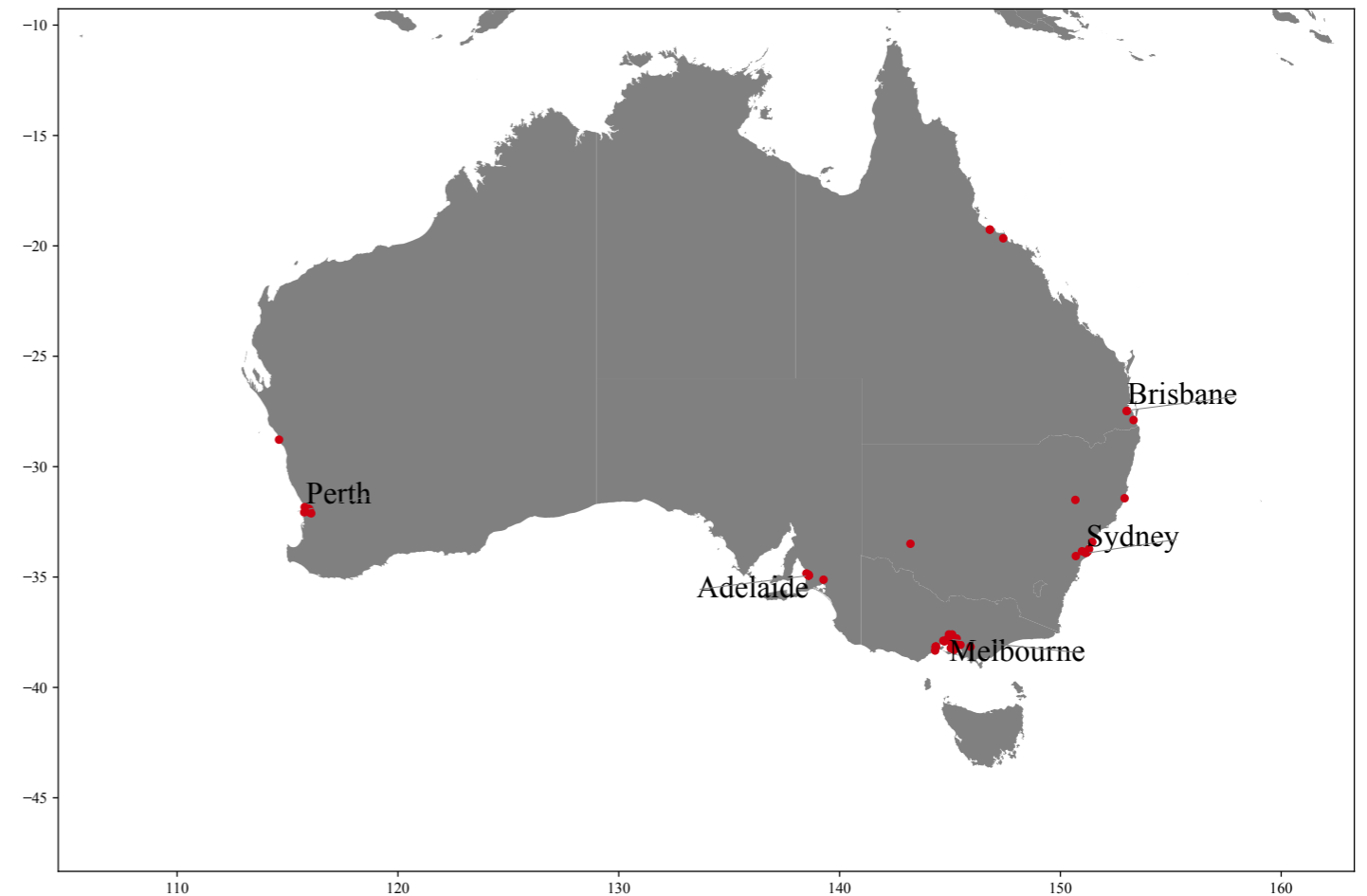
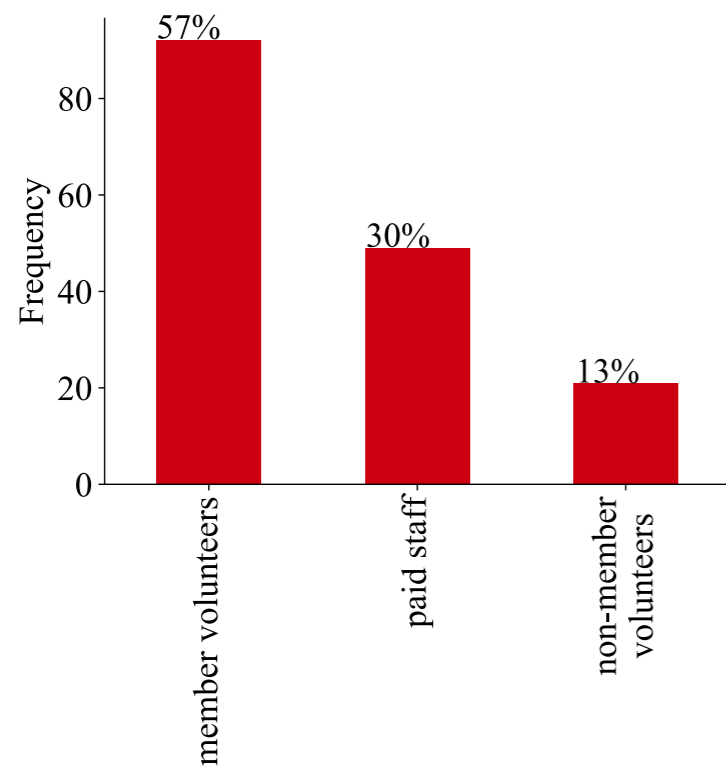
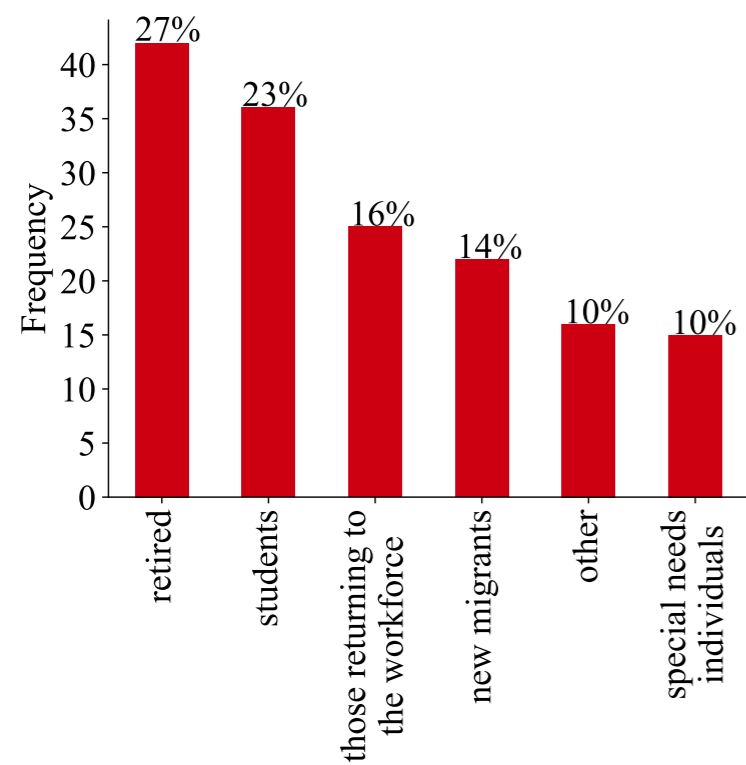


Figure 1: Map of where the survey respondents were located



**Figure 2: Who runs the toy library**



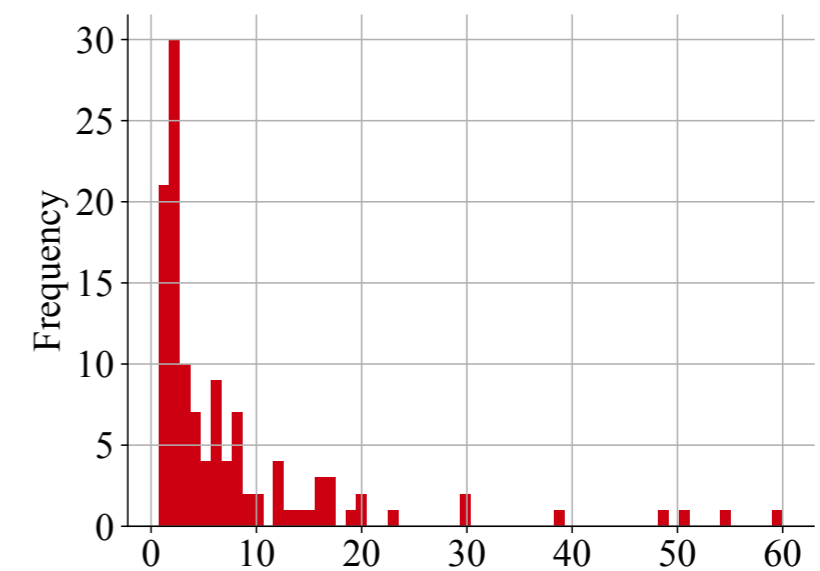
**Figure 3: Volunteers who help at the toy library**



The TLs that responded had 18,228 members between them, served 32,784 children and held 138,141 toys. The typical TL in our sample had 62 members and served approximately 115 children. However, there were a few TLs with very large memberships, over 500 members, serving several thousand children. In addition, the typical TL in our sample had approximately 1,000 toys in their collection. We also asked respondents to estimate the value of their toy collection. Most of the toys were purchased by the TLs, rather than donated. The typical TL in our sample purchased approximately AUD\$2,000 of toys

and had approximately AUD\$500 of toys donated to their library each year. The total value of donated toys in the past year was AUD\$161,860, compared with AUD\$418,755 for purchased toys. The value of donated services (AUD\$216,512) exceeded the value of donated toys.

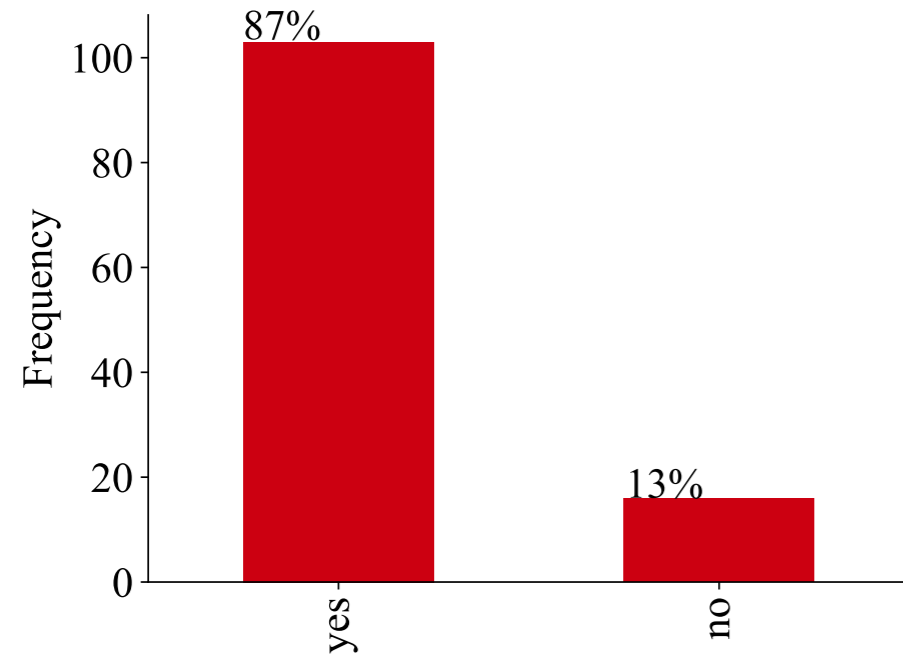
Most of the TLs (90%) operated from one location and did not have a second location. In addition, the majority of the respondents indicated that they were only open a few hours per week (see Figure 4), with the typical TL being open about 3 hours per week. However, some opened most of the time.



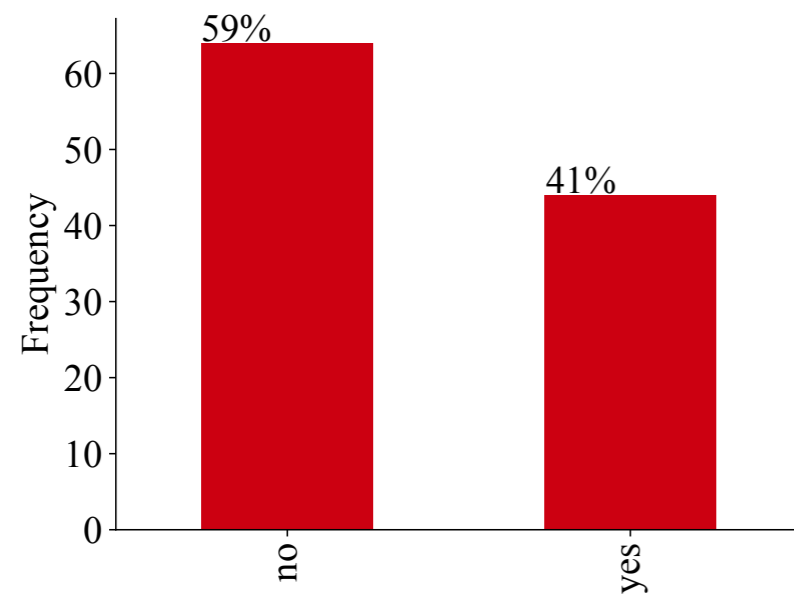
**Figure 4: Average number of opening hours per week**

Most of the respondents (87%) indicate that their TL has a dedicated space to display toys (see Figure 5). As well as lending toys, some of the TLs offer additional

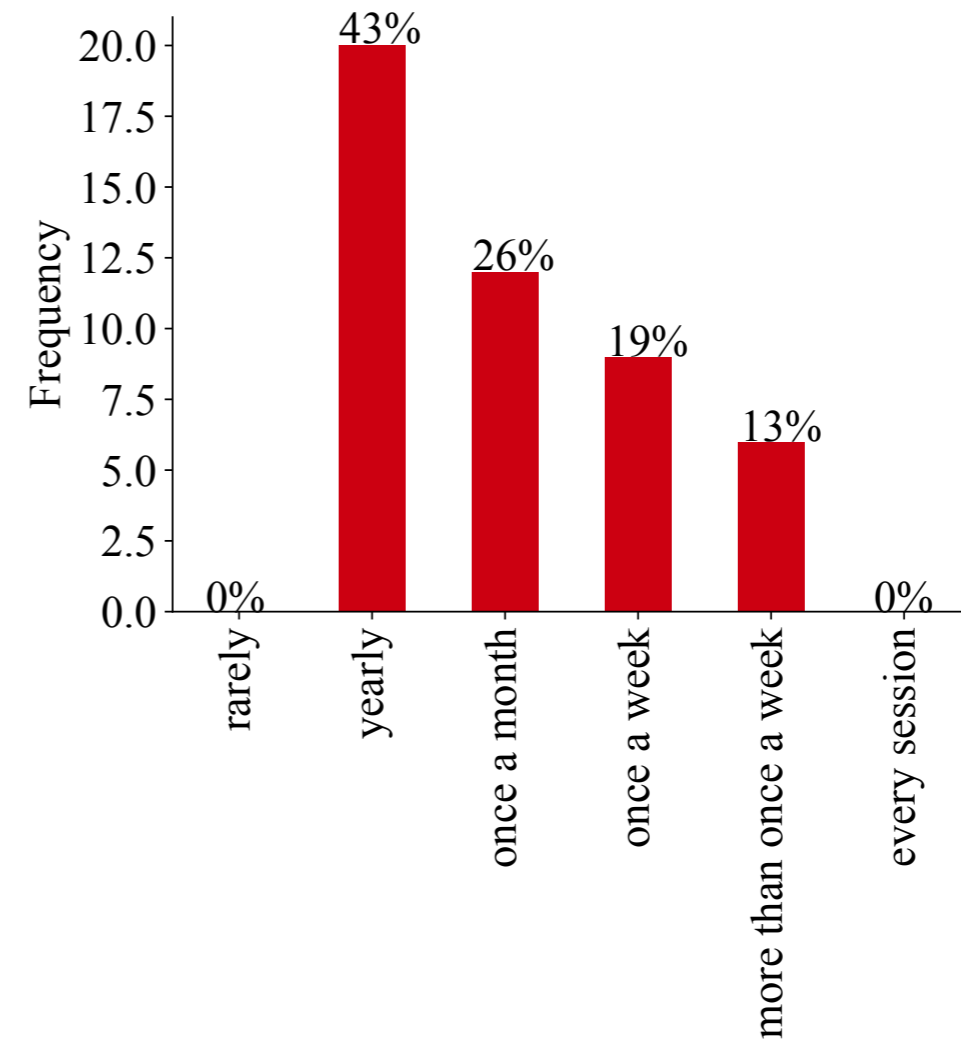
services. For instance, some of the TLs host 'stay and play sessions' (see Figure 6). However, these sessions are typically only held once a year (see Figure 7).



**Figure 5: Number of toy libraries that have a dedicated space to display toys**



**Figure 6: Number of toy libraries that offer "stay and play" sessions**



**Figure 7: How often "stay and play" sessions are hosted**

We asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they serve diverse groups in the community. From their responses, we see that TLs serve low socio-economic groups (9%), immigrants (19%), children with special needs (4%), and to a much lesser extent, elders or older adults (1%) (see Figure 8).



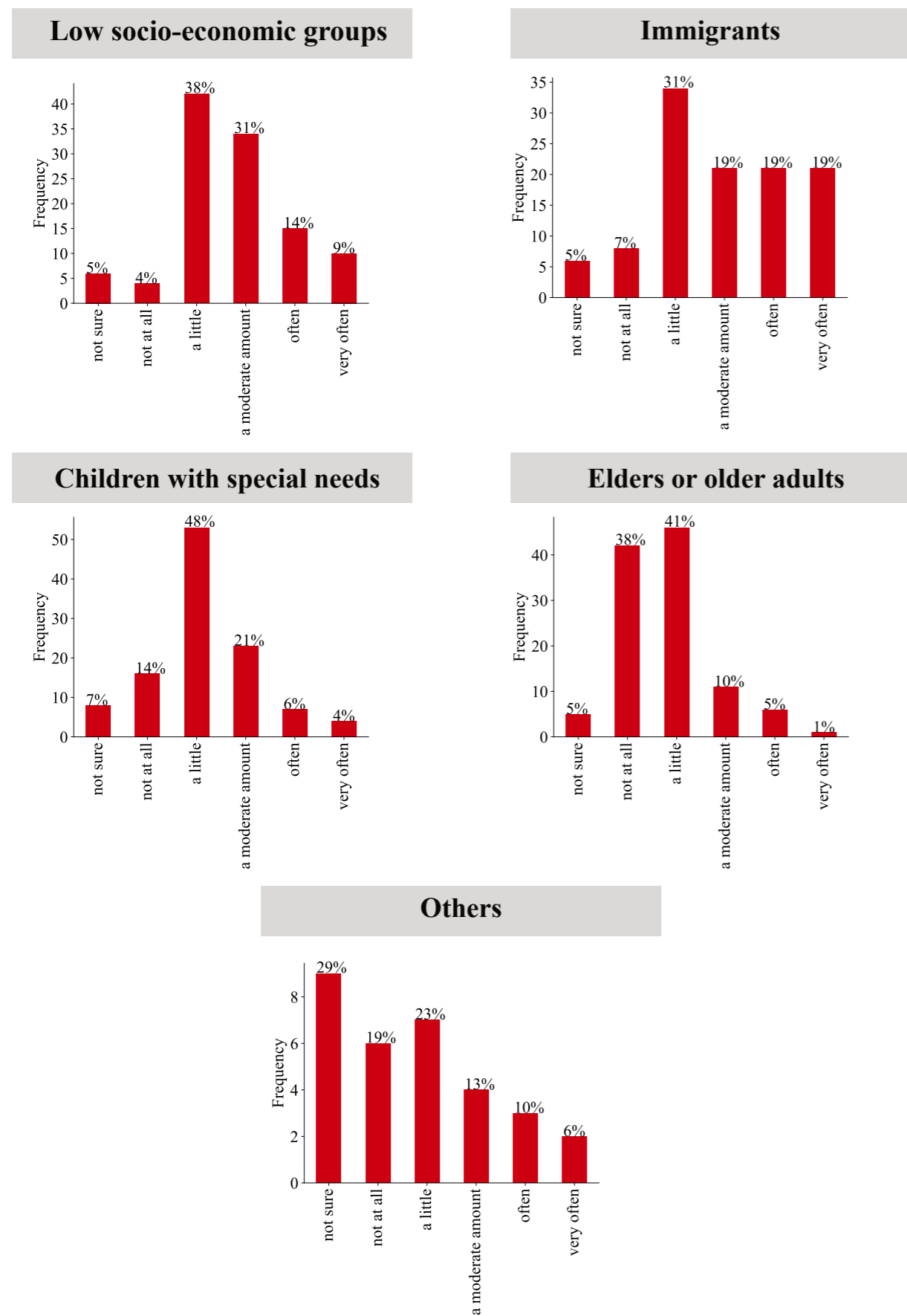


Figure 8: Different groups served by toy libraries

Others groups served include schools, playgroups, those with disabilities and travellers (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: Word cloud of other groups in the community served by toy libraries

Some TLs (33%) have programmes and services to support at-risk groups (see Figure 10).

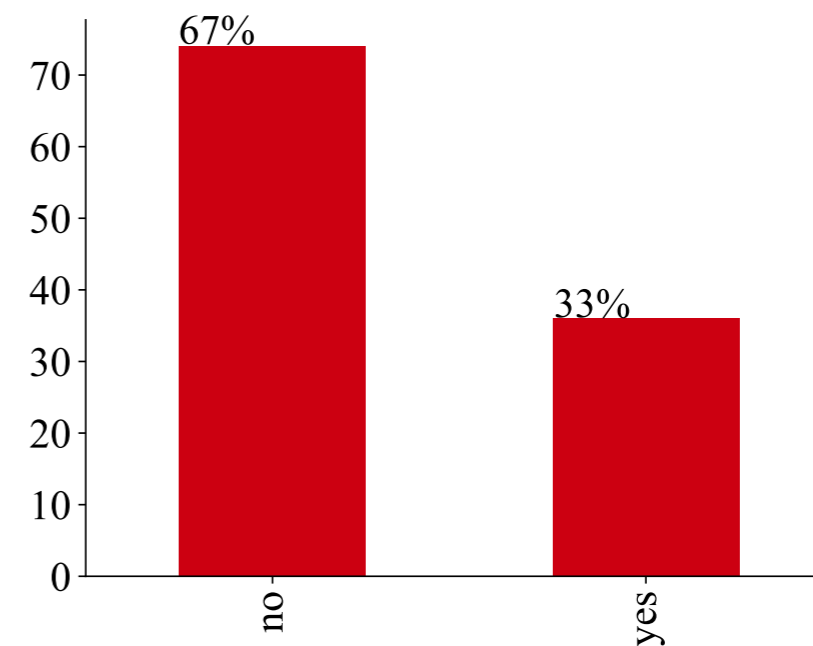
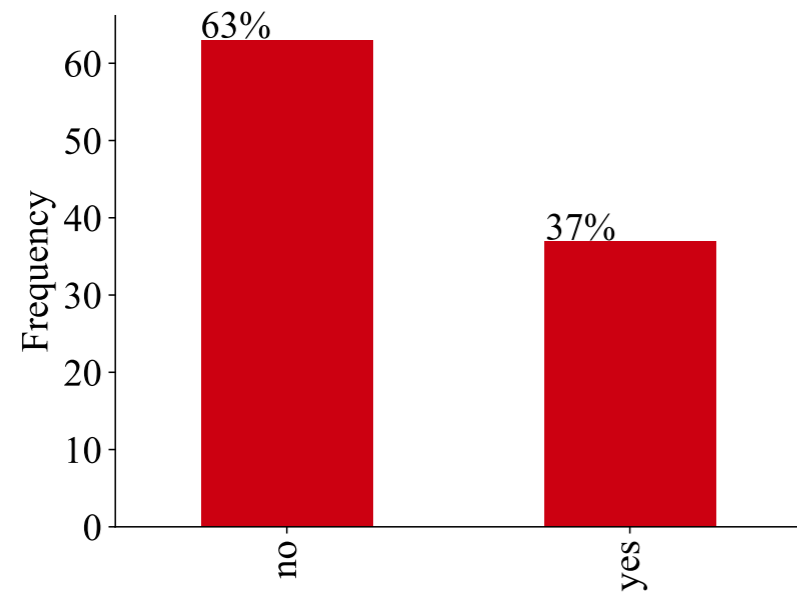
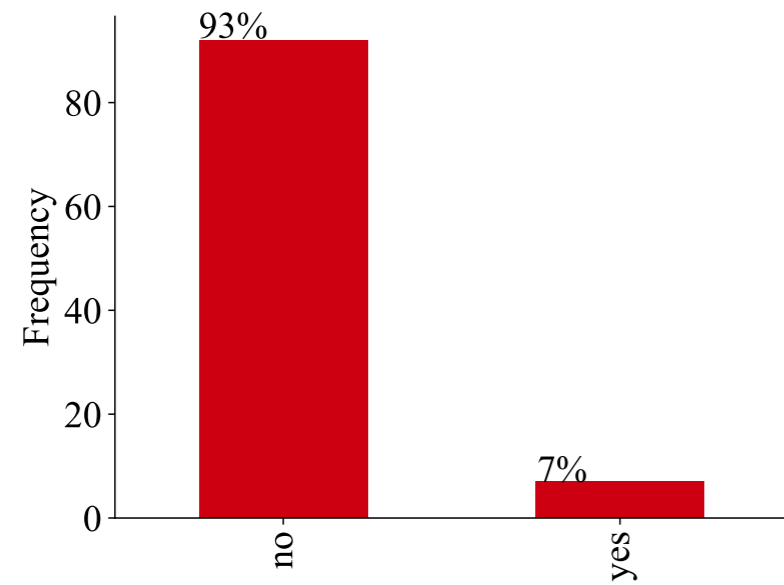


Figure 10: Number of toy libraries that offer programmes to support potentially at-risk groups

These programmes and services include specialist or sensory toy sections (37%) (see Figure 11), and, less commonly, sensory or other specific sessions that children and parents attend (7%) (see Figure 12). Note that fewer people answered the question for Figure 11 than Figure 10.

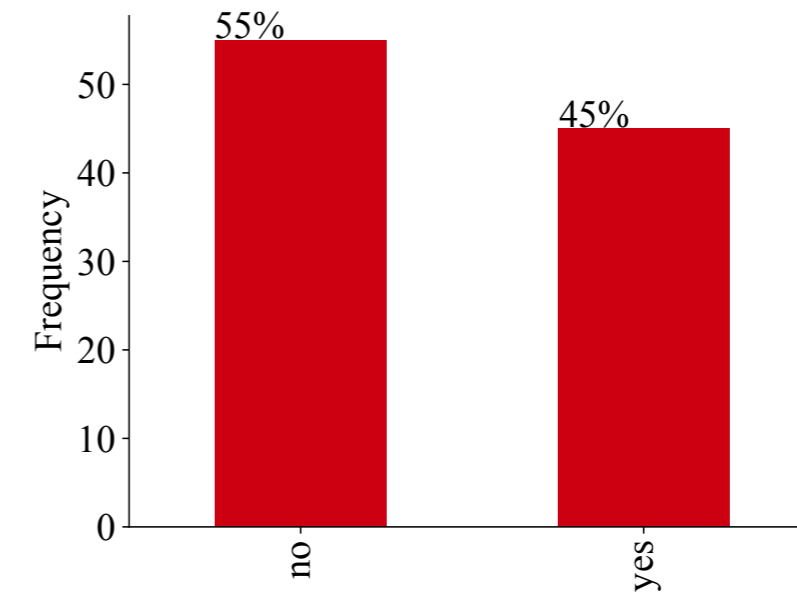


**Figure 11: Number of toy libraries that offer specialist or sensory toy sections**



**Figure 12: Number of toy libraries that offer sensory sessions or others specific sessions**

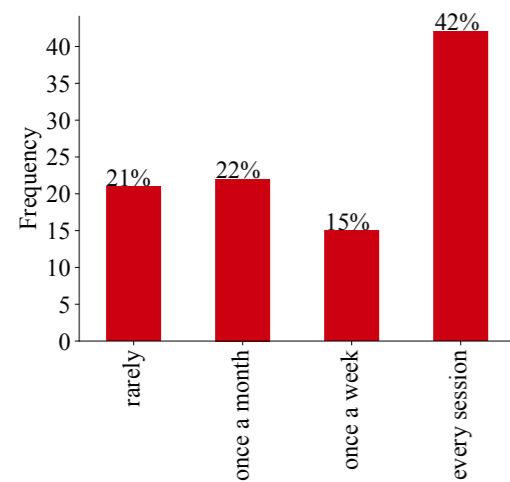
We also asked respondents the degree to which their TLs support families more broadly. A large number (45%) indicate that they provide information for families needing support, assistance, or community engagement (see Figure 13).



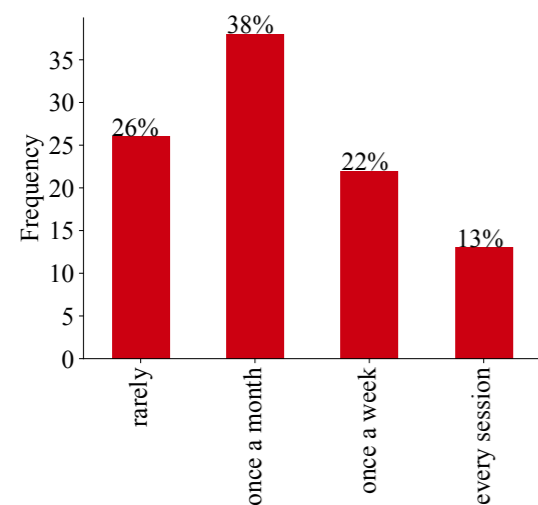
**Figure 13: Number of toy libraries that have information for families needing support, assistance, or community engagement**



As might be expected, the most common support provided by TLs relates to how best to use toys to support child development (see Figure 14), with these discussions occurring quite frequently (every session). A large number (55%) also discuss more sensitive family issues (see Figure 15), but these

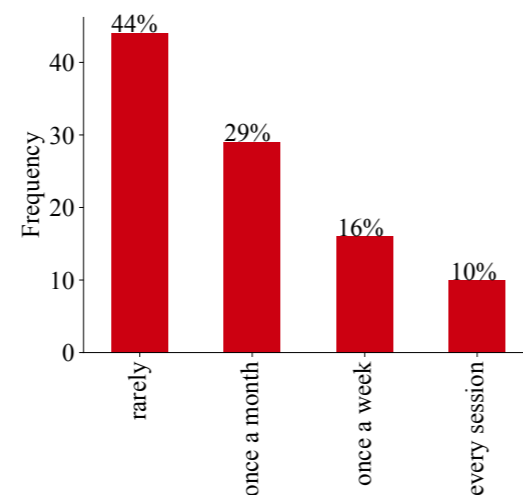


**Figure 14: How often staff talk to members about using toys for child development**

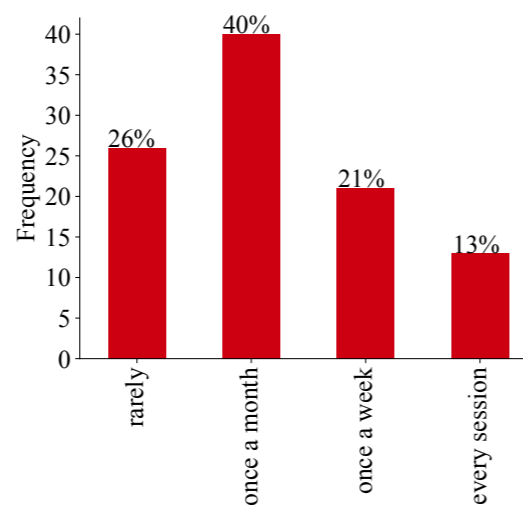


**Figure 16: How often staff talk to members about developing connections with the community**

discussions occur less frequently (once a week or month). A total of 73% of respondents, also indicate that they assist families in developing connections with the larger community (see Figure 16), and 74% indicate they assist members in where to find community resources (see Figures

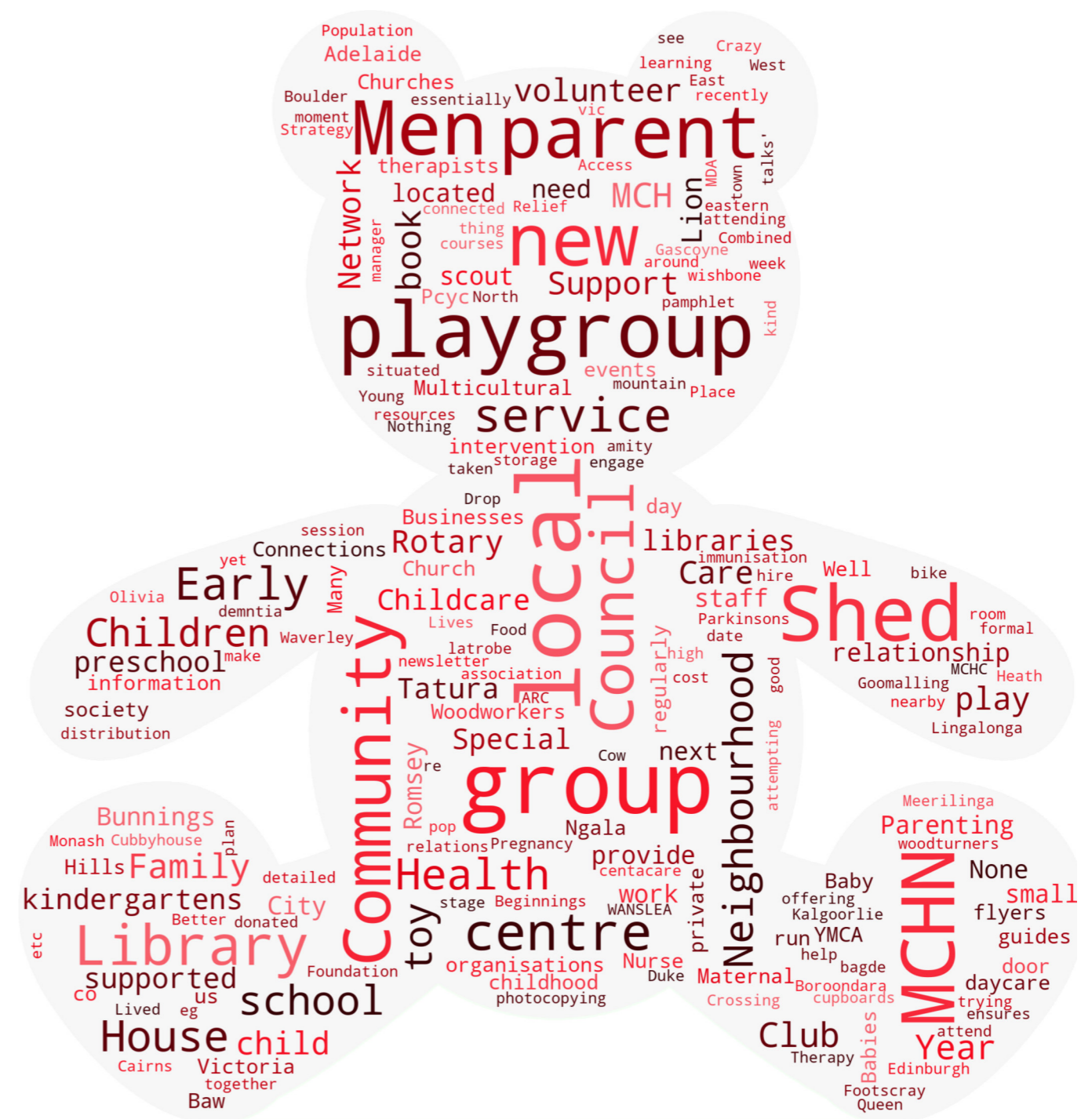


**Figure 15: How often staff talk to members about sensitive family issues**



**Figure 17: How often staff talk to members about where to find community resources**

Many TLs we surveyed indicate that they have relationships with other community organisations, including Men's Shed, MCHN, Local Playgroups, Local School, Council, Community House, New Parents Group, Lions Club, Neighborhood Centre, and Bunnings, Book Library (see Figure 18).



**Figure 18: Word cloud of community organisations the toy library has relationships with**



Figure 19 provides a snap shot of the findings. This snapshot depicts the total value of all of our 121 surveyed respondents. The TLs surveyed represented a total of 18,228 members across Australia, serving 32,784 children and offering 138,141 toys.

Across all TLs, there were 1,312 active committee members, with 785 volunteers helping each week. In addition, the TLs we surveyed

employed 69 paid staff. The volunteers provided 2,094 hours in total each week of labour. Additionally, the TLs organised 246 community events per year and attended 286 community events.

The total value of donated toys in the past year was AUD\$161,860, compared with AUD\$418,755 for purchased toys. The total value of donated services (AUD\$216,512) exceeded the value of donated toys.

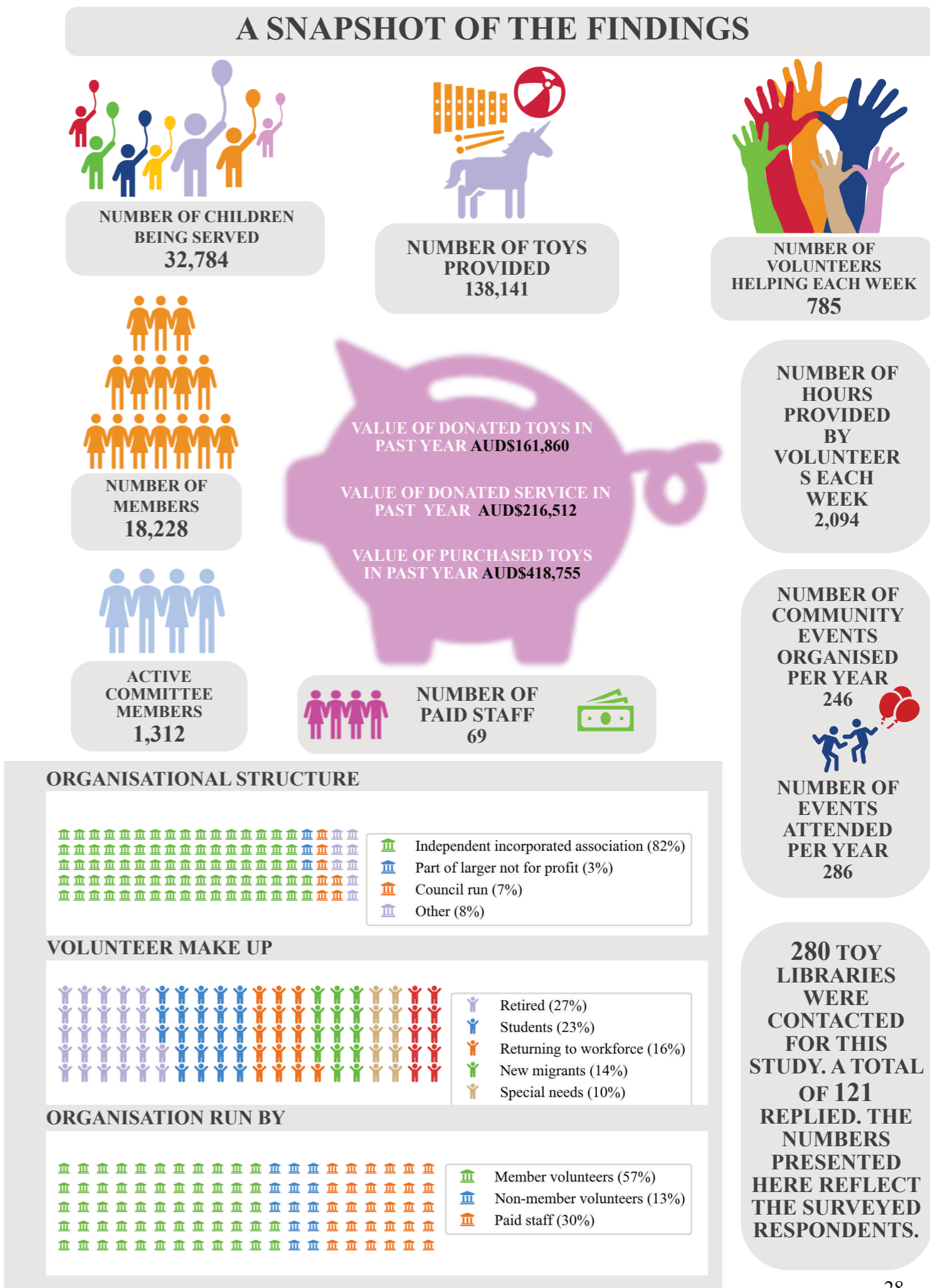


Figure 19: A snap shot of the findings



## 3.2 Qualitative Findings

In this section, we present the findings from the qualitative questions in the survey. These responses paint a more complete picture of the type of support provided by TLs to their members.

### 3.2.1 Support provided during a family emergency

We first asked respondents to provide a story when their TL supported a family during an emergency. A total of 35 respondents provided a story of support. See Table 1 for a summary of key themes.

For example, one TL supported a family with a free membership and toys when their house was burnt down and they lost all their belongings. In fact, one TL was started after a community emergency, the Ash Wednesday fires. “The toy library was established after the Ash Wednesday fires to support families who had lost their homes and possessions including toys.”

Often these stories described situations where the family was in need of emotional support as they experienced an illness or the loss of a loved one. For instance, one story described an immigrant family where the father had recently died. Here, the TL coordinator described the emotional support provided to their mother:

*“I wrote her a letter about all that I remembered about her lovely husband. I spoke of his kindness and generosity for he always offered to volunteer or fix things for us and I could see how much he cared for his family. I delivered this letter to her along with some small toys that her son to keep and encouraged her to try and keep visiting the toy library for support. She did return after a month or two, she did break down one day when her son was crying and I did my best to comfort her and see that she was ok.”*



Many stories described situations where the family was experiencing financial hardships. In these circumstances, the TL supported the family with a free membership, but the support might also take other material forms. For instance, one story described a woman whose husband had left her and she was trying to raise two children on her own. She was also struggling as she did not speak English and did not have family close by to assist her. The TL provided financial and other material support:

*“Our Toy Library was the first connection point for this woman to be heard, supported and empowered. We gave her a free Toy Library membership, found affordable accommodation for her in the form of a bungalow, assisted her with completing welfare forms, had the local grocer provide her with a gift voucher to supply fresh local produce, and helped with childminding when she underwent surgery.”*

Stories also described situations where parents were feeling overwhelmed by the stress of raising small children. In these situations, the TL often provided emotional support and directed the parents to services for additional support and information. For instance, this respondent discussed a typical situation where emotional support is offered:

*“We have many parents over the years break down at the toy library when everything has gotten on top of them. We have had parents distraught because their child isn't developing as expected or they aren't coping as they expected, in some cases, they are living far away from family. Often one of our volunteers sit with them and listens, and, where appropriate, guides them to other support services. We find many parents just aren't sure where to turn and today have less contact with other parents, so find it hard to get first-hand information from others. We have referred families to health professionals.”*

**Table 1: Types of support provided during emergencies**

Themes identified ( <i>n</i> = 35/121)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Families in need of social support (emotional and informational)</li><li>• Families with health issues or financial issues</li><li>• Families/individuals seeking general support</li><li>• Families in need of free membership (material support)</li></ul>

### 3.2.2 When the toy library provided social support or encouraged friendships

Next, we asked respondents to provide a story about the time when their TL provided social support or encouraged friendships. A total of 66 respondents answered this question. See Table 2 for a summary of themes.

Many respondents simply described how the TL is a natural place for families to socialise and meet new people. They also described how volunteering at the TL enables social connections.

*“Our Saturday mornings are busy and full of families accessing our service. There are many opportunities for our members to connect with one another! Joining our committee has enabled many of us to meet other like-minded people and make many friendships.”*

*“Having members complete a duty each term is a great way to meet other people/form friendships/share stories of early parenting and feel part of a community.”*



Many respondents described the important role the TL plays in supporting new parents during this challenging life stage. The stories below from two coordinators capture this vital role played by the TL.

*“Many isolated mothers and those with mental health issues have made friends at the toy library as I think they are more relaxed in a space that their child is safe to play in. They will often stay for the entire session while their children play. These are our members who are most likely to volunteer too.”*

*“For many first-time mothers, the toy library is one of the first places they meet other mothers.”*

In addition, some TLs take a very active role in helping new parents navigate this difficult life stage. For instance, the story below described how one TL actively supported both parents providing emotional support during play and stay sessions and providing special sessions for fathers.

*“Parents often come to Toy Library having had little or no sleep, limited or no extended family support or friendships. They need to get out of the house to a safe place where a child can play while mum or dad can sit for a while. We always offer tea/coffee and a chat for emotional/social support with other mums or staff. Activities are set up to engage children—play dough, train sets, outdoor toys. Thursday evening sessions see a lot of dads completing duties after work. The dads really like to chat about their child/children and share stories about them. I feel this is an opportunity they do not get while working all day. Play and stay sessions allow our parents to extend their visit beyond just borrowing and leaving.”*

The TL was also described as a place to help integrate new migrants into the community. In the following quotes, coordinators discuss how they help new migrants connect with other members of the community, access needed services, and generally support them in difficult circumstances.

*“I am a Mandarin speaker and have had many conversations with Chinese new migrants helping to introduce them to other Chinese members, link them into appropriate services and assist them in navigating the challenges of parenthood (especially while in a foreign country). I have heard stories of domestic violence, illness, death, disability and cultural challenges and it is rewarding to feel that I have helped and supported them in some small way.”*

*“An immigrant mother with little English came in daily for friendship and language learning. Our Coordinator visited this mother weekly in her home to give the mother the opportunity to teach our Coordinator how to cook the mother's favourite foods. This was specifically to enable the immigrant mother to feel valued and that she had something worth sharing.”*

**Table 2: Types of social support provided**

<b>Themes and sub-themes identified (n = 66/121)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To socialise and encourage friendship among parents and families</b></li> <li>• <b>To help those with special needs (e.g., disabilities, immigrants, mental health, domestic violence, unemployment, single parents)</b></li> <li>• <b>To provide parenting support (e.g., when parents are overwhelmed, socially isolated, under prepared)</b></li> <li>• <b>To support volunteers (with their own children)</b></li> <li>• <b>To help people socially integrate from different cultures</b></li> </ul>



### **3.2.3 When the toy library helped a family with referrals to important resources**

To better understand how TLs support families, we asked for stories of when the TL connected members to important resources or information. A total of 42 respondents provided an answer to this question. See Table 3 for a summary of themes.

Some TLs took a passive approach in this area. For instance, they provided information on notice boards or newsletters where members can access resources.

*“Our Toy Library provides advice, referrals and support for members. Our main referrals have been to local playgroups. However, our notice board has details as to how to access/contact community services, and family/parent support agencies and other groups.”*

Other TLs took a more active role in supporting families. In the example below, the respondent described how the TL directed a family to get more specialised care for their child. However, this happened over many visits as the TL gained the family’s trust. This relationship building was necessary because the mother had rejected the same suggestion that was made by the Maternal Child Health nurse.

*“One family with a child with a global developmental delay was in complete denial that their child had any issues. We slowly developed a positive relationship with this family and gained their trust over time, and were able to gently suggest a visit to a speech pathologist (as a starting point) as she was mainly concerned about her child's lack of speech. It was the first step, in an important journey for this family in both acceptance of their child's developmental delays, and in taking steps towards seeking the support the child needed.”*

In the second example, the TL also took an active role directing a mother in crisis to a support service and regularly checking on her and offering emotional support:

*“We have supported a mother who was experiencing domestic violence and referred her on to a women's support service as well as members regularly checking in on her, offering her a place to stay, and giving her a free family membership to the Toy Library.”*

Several TLs discussed their relationships with other organisations, and how through these connections, they were able to direct members to important community resources. In the second example, we see how these relationships help the TL to support families with special needs.

*“We often meet new parents who have recently moved to our area. Joining is a way for them to connect with their new community. Through our newsletters and member information board, we promote other local services such as kinder gym, playgroups, kindergartens, and some local small businesses. We have also been involved in events which enables our members to extend their connections in the community.”*

*“We have extended our reach through partnerships with Bayside City Council, Nappy Collective, and Connect Health and Community Development. We now provide (and host) regular new parent talks through MCH services: they raise awareness of our service and provide an opportunity for new parents to meet outside of regular MCH centres and sessions. Council’s Inclusive Services grant has provided funds for us to partner with a range of local providers to deliver new parent talks and sensory sessions for parents of children with additional needs. Through this initiative, we are working with PlayConnect (a playgroup for families with children with autism spectrum disorder). Finally, we are now supporting the Nappy Collective with unused disposable nappies, playing a small part in providing millions of nappies to hundreds of families in crisis or need.”*

**Table 3: The types of referrals provided by the toy library**

Themes identified ( <i>n</i> = 42/121)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To health professionals (e.g., autism, speech, physical development, mental health, disabilities, mental disabilities, and developmental delay)</b></li> <li>• <b>To community support services for families new to the area</b></li> <li>• <b>To partner community organisations that have with different types of services</b></li> <li>• <b>To playgroups</b></li> <li>• <b>To social and support workers</b></li> </ul>

### 3.2.4 How children benefit from being toy library members

We also asked respondents how participating in TLs benefit their children. A total of 68 respondents answered this question. See Table 4 for a summary of themes.

The most obvious benefit provided by TLs is in giving children access to toys that do not have to be purchased. Several TLs discussed how both children and parents benefit from the large variety of toys available. Generally, families have “access to high-quality, affordable and fun toys that inspire creativity and educate children through play.”

*“Finding the toy library with its HUGE array of amazing toys has been such a highlight of the first year with my daughter. Why buy when you can borrow from such a range of fun toys which also help development? Musical toys, walkers, dolls, trains, puzzles - it’s all there and we love mixing things up every few weeks, taking home new toys to play with.”*

The literature suggests that TLs provide a great opportunity for children to learn various skills through their participation in a TL. For instance, children learn to share, respect the toys, and they learn social and other skills [15]. Our findings support the literature. For instance, many respondents described how TLs help children learn these important skills. “By borrowing toys children learn to respect, look after, count and be responsible with toys. To follow rules, directions, patience, sharing, and simple social expectations.”

*“They learn the concept of sharing to a larger degree than with their peers, but rather with their community. That when their favourite toy isn't in that day it's because it's being played with by another child.”*

Other respondents explored how through borrowing toys at the TL, children learn new skills.

*“Many children have developed new skills whilst using resources from our toy library. Numerous families have told us that their children took their first steps using one of our push-along walkers. Another mother excitedly told us how her son first started counting while playing with one of our numbered trains.”*

*“They have had a much wider and more varied range of play experiences as I buy and then process all new toys for our toy library, they have also learnt strategy, risk-taking, turn taking and problems solving from playing the older kids and adult board games in our collection.”*

Many respondents explained how TLs have developmentally appropriate materials that enhance children’s gross motor skills. In addition, coordinators discussed how educational games allow children to learn to spell or develop their imagination through dressing up.

*“As with other toy libraries, we select toys for the catalogue based on their beneficial development for gross and motor skills. When promoting the toys, we always talk about the skills that are developed.”*

*“Parents can access toys and educational aids to support their child's development and learning. Literacy, numeracy, STEM, sensory, fine motor, gross motor, cognitive development are all supported by accessing our toy library.”*

The skills that children learn also included social skills. In the examples below, the coordinators discussed how children learn to communicate, interact, and follow social rules when they visit the TL.

*“Children learn with the support of their parents and coordinator the importance of packing up, turn taking, and sharing with other children while in the toy library. The toy library gives children an opportunity to interact socially with other children of mixed ages.”*

*“We now have a play space in the library where children can play at the table and it helps them interact with other children, they learn respect for the toys they are borrowing, learn that the toy isn't theirs but on loan and they must return it for other children to play with.”*

Some of the coordinators also explored other ways children benefit from spending time in a group: “spending time in a group helps them build confidence.” They also described how being part of the TL shows children how to make choices, become part of a wider community, and encouraged them to reduce the impact on the environment by borrowing rather than purchasing new.

*“They are also happy to donate lots of their own toys to the TL as they can always borrow them again if they miss them too much. It's been great for helping us declutter our house and still help the children feel they are not missing out by giving away their toys.”*

**Table 4: The benefits children learned by being toy library member**

<b>Themes identified (<i>n</i> = 68/121)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Sharing</b></li><li>• <b>Respecting and looking after the toys</b></li><li>• <b>Social skills</b></li><li>• <b>Variety of toys</b></li><li>• <b>Educational and developmental support</b></li><li>• <b>Borrowing has advantages over ownership</b></li></ul>

### **3.2.5 Major challenges faced by toy libraries in the past year**

We asked respondents to share a story of the major challenges they have faced in the past year. A total of 84 respondents answered this question. See Table 5 for a summary of themes.

Many stories described situations where it is difficult to keep the TL running because of the challenges of meeting operating costs.

*“Operating costs can easily exceed revenue, and our financial position has come under significant pressure... While budgeted, no money has been spent on marketing for some time now, which constrains our ability to generate revenue through membership and philanthropic support.”*

Several TLs stated how they found it challenging to pay ongoing costs because of difficulty securing funding:

*“Funding and being able to pay our staff - we had to really become creative with asking for community help and applying for grants, we also had to cut down our expenses and look at other ways to increase our income.”*

Many respondents discussed staffing and volunteers. Some described situations where it was difficult to find and retain volunteers and committee members. This was affecting their ability to operate well.

*“A lack of volunteers means we can't be open as often as we like, this in turns limited the number of members as everyone is so busy these days.”*

*“Volunteer recruitment is always a challenge and has been particularly difficult for us in recent months. Our most difficult position to fill is our Roster Coordinator and for nearly 18 months we have been trying to recruit into this role, with limited success. As a result, our already stretched committee have needed to share this responsibility.”*

As well as the challenges of recruiting committee members, some TLs had difficulty getting the committee to function effectively, for example, “actively engaging the committee members to do the tasks they have signed up for.” As noted by one of the coordinators, this can have significant consequences: “securing a committee has been our biggest challenge with no-one volunteering to take on the president role and the library facing closure.” When TLs do recruit new committee members, the settling in process can be hard: “we had a new management committee elected at our 2018 AGM. All of us were new members within the 6 months prior to. This has been a steep learning curve for us!”

Several TLs also explored how it was difficult to recruit and maintain new members. Long serving members leave and potential members often do not see the benefits of volunteering in a TL: “toys are inexpensive and members do not see that value or want to make the commitment.”

*“Our greatest challenge is maintaining a sustainable membership. Fewer and fewer parents are becoming members, despite the very modest annual fee and duty expectations. It seems the prevalence of cheap toys are impacting the membership.”*

Stories also described situations where the TLs had run out of public space and storage space. In some of the cases, the coordinators discussed the fact they cannot afford to move into another space and how this was making a bad impression on potential members.

*“Our toy library has grown a lot in recent years and although we are one of the biggest toy libraries in Australia we are very quickly running out of physical space. New members can be put off by the crowded atmosphere.”*

Others explained the consequences resulting from relocations:

*“Our library has moved twice in the past 2 years and we lost a lot of members and gained no new ones due to the public no longer knowing where we were. We had to do a very intensive publicity campaign to let everyone know where our new building was and to reach out to new families.”*

Other challenges that were mentioned include: “changing from manual to online borrowing system,” “setting up internet banking,” “poor reception of reliable WiFi in a council hall,” and “decreasing membership due to old/tired toys and poor displays of toys.”

**Table 5: Major challenges faced by toy libraries in the past year**

<b>Themes and sub-themes identified (n = 84/121)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Funding and meeting operating costs</b></li> <li>• <b>Committee staffing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Difficulties in getting committee members</b></li> <li>- <b>Adapting to a new committee</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Lack of space</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Storage space not suitable</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Finding and maintaining volunteers</b></li> <li>• <b>Maintaining and recruiting new members</b></li> <li>• <b>IT issues</b></li> <li>• <b>Building maintenance, new location, toy shortage</b></li> </ul>

### 3.2.6 Most significant change toy libraries have made in the past year

In this part of the survey, we asked respondents to share a story of the most significant change their TL made in the past year. A total of 84 respondents answered this question. See Table 6 for a summary of themes.

Many respondents stated how they have made changes including how meetings are run, employing more staff, increasing the number of volunteers and members, reducing the use of plastic, and adding sensory sessions, stay and play sessions, and mothers group sessions. Others described how they have opened a second branch or how they had obtained the status of deductible gift recipient (DGR) which has allowed them “to apply for more grants and receive tax-deductible donations.”

Other respondents described how they have renovated. “Most changes were cosmetic as described by some of the coordinators: shelving, layout and general display of items old and new for best appeal to members.” Other renovations were for practical purposes: “we have redesigned our toy storage space to maximise the capacity.”

Some TLs extended their opening hours. Although this made the TL more convenient, it required more funding and resources.

*“We decided to add another open session this year on a weekday morning. This coincides with the preschool open times (they are next door to us) and appears to be a good time for parents of young babies. We hope that this will slowly grow our membership so that we can afford to keep running this session without too much fundraising required.”*

Several TLs explored how they have changed to an online system and the different positive aspects of it.

*“Switching to an online database (SETLS) has made everything easier, with a lot of automated emails and notifications being a godsend. Using an iPad to view the database and also to sign up new members is very much appreciated.”*

Some of the coordinators also described how they have made changes to their borrowing system including online banking. The major change was notably using technological advances such as “changing from manual to online” and by “putting all of the toys into an electronic catalogue that can be accessed on the internet.” This change increased convenience and allowed members (and non-members) to “view toys online, renew toys online and sign up for shifts etc.” Another coordinator mentioned that they had recently introduced a “colour coding system which is far more successful than any systems used in the past.” Several TLs mentioned using adding RFID tags to toy library items.

Other TLs described how they have increased their marketing efforts. Some had started to re-brand themselves, work on their logo, website, and advertising. Others were increasing their social media presence to gain new members.

*“Through actively involving our community with community events, social media, and a massive influx of new toys due to the tireless commitment of our Secretary to grant application. We have seen a massive jump in memberships over the past 12 months.”*

*“Opening a Facebook page has made us more visible and generated lot more interest.”*

Stories also explored how some of the TLs have managed to secure funding to support their services and introduce additional ones.

*“We have sourced funding from community partners, local businesses happy to give back to their community in exchange for publicity and promotion to our members. This will support our existing services, including outreach and new parents group program on baby play.”*

Several TLs discussed how they have made improvements to their toy collection to serve different members.

*“We have introduced robotic and coding toys. Previously we have avoided too much technology in our collection.”*

*“We have recently expanded our board games and puzzle collection to suit older children as well as adults. This is a very exciting progression for us as we now are attracting much older kids, teens, and even adults without children. We have started a games club and a learn-to-play sessions for the families with older children.”*

Some stories described situations where they had partnered with other TLs due to constraints and to be able to continue operating: “our coordinator left after 10 years and it gave us a chance to review our operations. We have reached out to 2 other local toy libraries to look at ways we can all help each other.” This has not always been easy and has created difficulties for some of the TLs.

*“Last year our toy library merged 3 separate branches and re-opened a closed branch. Since then we have been struggling with trying to merge 3 different set-ups into one working group. The committee meetings have been long, there are always more things that we don't get around to doing, and the people on the committee have been working super hard to get everything to work. If I could go back in time, I would make sure that we didn't commit to doing so much in a short time.”*





**Table 6: Most significant change made by toy libraries in the past year**

Themes identified ( <i>n</i> = 87/121)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Started an online system</b></li><li>• <b>Renovated</b></li><li>• <b>Extended/changed opening hours</b></li><li>• <b>Changed the borrowing system</b></li><li>• <b>Obtained funding, introduced social media, increased marketing</b></li><li>• <b>Partnered with other TLs and improved toy collection</b></li><li>• <b>Changed building, changed payment methods, changed location, reduced members and hours dues to budget limitation, changed committee members.</b></li></ul>

### 3.2.7 Reasons why the change was significant

In this question, we asked respondents to share a story of why the change was significant. A total of 87 respondents answered this question. See Table 7 for a summary of themes.

Many of the TLs described how changing to an online system has made some of the processes more convenient for their members: “putting our borrowing system online. It was a huge task for the committee, but means members can view toys online, renew toys online and sign up for shifts etc.” But the change was also convenient for those running the TL: “being online means our data can be monitored from home by select committee.” Also, “Committee members don’t have to handle money and bills can be paid online.”

Other TLs discussed how they had benefited from changing the opening hours: “we used to only be open for 1.5 hours on Saturdays, we are now open for 4. This increased accessibility for people in our community.”

Some coordinators also listed situations where other changes made the toy collection more diverse:

*“It has allowed us to improve the quality of our toys and ensure members are not disappointed when they get home to find broken, damaged, or poor-quality toys. We also completed a Toy Drive over Christmas to add toys in good condition to our collection.”*

Often these stories described situations where these changes were significant as they had led to an increase in memberships and bonding in the community.

*“Our member numbers have been raising up to 62%. 80% of expiring members have renewed. If I -as the coordinator- don't have any help on that session, quite a few members stay and help for a while without asking me. I can see we are becoming a bonded community.”*

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However, other TLs discussed how changes, such as expanding or joining with another TL, had increased their workload and, in some cases, made and it more difficult.

*“Twice the workload, for the same amount of committee! The toy library we have taken on hadn’t been run effectively for a little while, so it’s been difficult finding up to date information. One of the disadvantages of being volunteer run is the accountability is sometimes lacking.”*

*“Opening a second branch takes a lot of effort and time (2000hrs of volunteer time) to firstly lobby all levels of government and the local community, briefings, construction of store, fit out of storeroom, purchase and process 500 toys, market and promote new library etc.”*

A few of the TLs mentioned that changes to how they seek funding have allowed them more access to alternative funding streams.

*“By approaching local businesses, we have developed another revenue stream, making the Toy Library more sustainable into the future.”*

**Table 7: Why was the change significant?**

Themes identified (n = 85/121)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Easier/better for members</b></li> <li>• <b>Diversifying toys</b></li> <li>• <b>Easier for volunteers</b></li> <li>• <b>Increased membership</b></li> <li>• <b>Increased work for the committee</b></li> <li>• <b>Increased funding</b></li> </ul>

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In this report, we document a range of social benefits provided by TLs in Australia, which we summarise in this section. First, by undertaking their core business, TLs provide a number of benefits to families, children, and the wider community. In addition, at a macro level, TLs serve as hub organisations in their communities fostering connections among individuals and other organisations. At a micro level, TLs support members by providing social support during this challenging life stage. TLs provide social support in the form of emotional, cognitive, and material support. We review these findings and conclude by providing a number of strategic recommendations for TLs in Australia.

The TLA lays out the key goals of TLs in Australia [9]. By undertaking their core business and working to meet these goals, TLs provide a number of positive social benefits. First, our findings show that TLs in Australia serve over 18,000 members and over 32,000 children. However, these numbers would be much higher if we were

able to survey all TLs in the country. Second, TLs offer a locally available collection of toys purchased by TLs and donated by members. These collections allow parents to borrow, at low cost, a variety of toys to support children’s play, skill development, and education. TLs in Australia afford a local venue to display toys and facilitate social interactions among families as children play. TLs also have trained staff who advise parents on the most appropriate educational toy for their child’s stage of development. Finally, our findings document that some TLs offer programmes and services to support at-risk groups in the community, such as a specialist or sensory toy section.

TLs provide a number of social benefits to children in the community. Children benefit from being TL members because they learn to share, make choices, and respect and care for the toys. They also learn social skills, as they interact with other children at the TL.

Many learn that they do not need to own toys and learn the benefits of borrowing. Children benefit from the variety of toys available to them and the developmental support provided by volunteers and trained staff.

Second, at a macro level, TLs serve as hub organisations in their communities [22]. Hubs are individuals, groups, or organisations that are well connected and support others in the community [22]. For instance, we find in our results that many of the TLs have relationships with other community organisations. These relationships empower the TLs to connect families to these organisations to access support, assistance, and information. TLs foster these relationships by holding or attending community events. Also, through these relationships, TLs support vulnerable groups in the community, such as new immigrants, low socio-economic groups, and children with special needs. TLs in Australia depend heavily on volunteers, who serve as committee members and help run the TL. However, these volunteering opportunities also

foster links among member, increasing their social networks and their ability to access social support within the network.

Through these social networks, TLs deliver different forms of social support to their members during this challenging life stage. Emotional support refers to behaviour that fosters feelings of comfort and leads an individual to believe that he or she is admired, respected, and loved and that others are available to provide caring and security [23]. We found many examples of how coordinators and members emotionally support families in the TL community. For instance, TLs provide emotional support to families during illnesses and deaths. TLs also provide emotional support when parents are overwhelmed by the stresses of parenting. They provide a safe space where children are engaged and parents can meet and share advice and provide each other direct emotional support. TLs emotionally support vulnerable groups, such as new immigrant families.

As these parents are often socially isolated and from different cultures, TLs play an important role in connecting them to other members of the community and through their involvement in volunteering at the TL. TLs also provide families with cognitive support, which refers to information, knowledge, and/or advice that helps the individual understand his or her world and adjust to changes [23]. Many TLs offer this support passively by providing information on member notice boards or in newsletters. However, other TLs take a more active role and direct members to specialist health professionals (e.g., speech pathologists) or other community support services (e.g., domestic violence). This support is facilitated through relationships that the TLs fosters to other community organisations, such as playgroups, kindergartens, Men's Sheds, Maternal Health Services, or local businesses.

TLs also offer members material support, which are the goods and services that help people solve practical problems [23]. TLs support members in need by providing free memberships.

However, TLs also give families direct financial assistance, as well as offers of food, toys, or babysitting.

TLs face four challenges: recruiting volunteers and new members, attracting funding, and lack of space in their facilities.

First, TLs struggle to recruit volunteers and committee members. Our findings show that the members most likely to volunteer are the parents who feel most strongly the social benefits of TLs. For example, these parents stay at TLs for long periods because they enjoy the benefits of a safe and relaxed environment with their children. TLs could target these members, in particular, to encourage them to volunteer and deepen their engagement with the TL.

Second, although TLs attract both financial and labour donations, some TLs struggle to make ends meet. TLs could approach private companies for material donations. For example, toy shops might be approached for free toys in exchange for the opportunity to promote their stores to parents.

Or TLs could approach DIY shops or Men's Sheds for services, such as help building display shelving or even making and repairing toys. Private and non-profit organisations could benefit by forging authentic relationships with parents and the chance for favourable publicity.

TLs could also use the results of this study, which highlight the significant social benefits and reach of TLs. These findings could be used to justify the importance of TLs when applying for funding from governmental and non-governmental agencies including city councils.

Third, many TLs have limited space for their toy collections. In order to solve space issues, some solutions to these problems were identified by participants. Some TLs had managed to change location. For example, one TL stated that they had now started renting of "Actriv", which is a disability service provider. The space allows the TL to display their "toys neatly and easily in the one space. No space is wasted." Another TL had redesigned the storage space in order to maximise

capacity. We recommend TLs who found solutions to their space problems, e.g., organisations to approach to share space or rent from, or novel methods of storage, communicate their solution to other TLs (e.g., through social media channels). In addition, TLs could consider updating their toy collections and retiring some toys.

Fourth, TLs need to continually attract new members, especially as children age and no longer find the toys appealing. The toy collections can be expanded to include new toys, such as robotic and coding toys, as well as toys that are appealing to families with older children, such as board games and puzzles for family game nights. TLs are more attractive to families when the barriers to access are removed. TLs can attract new members by extending opening hours and making access easier by having online systems for registering, paying, or viewing the collection.

Across all of these challenges, the individual TLs represent one of the greatest assets and untapped resources. TL members generously shared both their successes and failures in the survey. Consistent with their guiding ethos of sharing, we suggest that these lessons learned could be shared nationally within the community. TLA has an active Facebook group where members could privately discuss success stories that could be imitated or even scaled up in different locations.

TL members should also be encouraged to share failures so that other members can avoid these

mistakes within this safe culture of sharing. Easy and informal information sharing on a nationwide level could allow funding and other ideas to spread among different TL organisations. For example, if TLs share information on all their community partnerships, this could help other TLs improve their recruitment and community engagement.

In Table 8, we provide a snapshot of the major challenges faced by TLs surveyed in this research. We also provide suggestions for how to address these challenges based on our findings.



**Table 8: Addressing major challenges**

<b>Major challenges</b>	<b>Ways to address these challenges</b>
<b>Finding Staff &amp; Attracting Volunteers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-re-branding (new logo)</li> <li>-advertising</li> <li>-use of social media (Facebook)</li> <li>-participate in community events</li> <li>-allow volunteers to sign-up for duties online</li> <li>-encourage members to undertake a small duty</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-acquire deductible gift recipient status</li> <li>-partnering with local business</li> <li>-partnering with other toy libraries</li> <li>-toy drive for donated toys</li> </ul>
<b>Limited Space for Toy Collections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-redesign toy space</li> <li>-colour coding system of toys</li> <li>-RFID tags on toys</li> <li>-change or update toy collection (retire some toys)</li> </ul>
<b>Attracting New Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-extend opening hours</li> <li>-online system to sign-up members</li> <li>-online banking and payment methods</li> <li>-electronic catalogue of toy collection</li> <li>-toy collection online</li> <li>-new toys (robotic, coding toys)</li> <li>-toys for older children (board games, puzzles)</li> <li>-games club/learn to play sessions</li> </ul>

## **Appendix: Method Details**

### **Questionnaire**

**We obtained ethics approval from the University of Melbourne for this study (Reference number 1852615.1)**

#### **Questionnaire questions for participants**

**Welcome to the University of Melbourne National Toy Library Social Impact Survey!**

**Thank you for agreeing to take part in the survey. The survey should take around 20 minutes to complete. Please be assured that all answers you provide will be kept in the strictest confidence. Please click 'Next' to begin.**

#### **Organisational Information:**

**In this section, we would like to gather some basic information about your toy library.**

1. Please provide the name of your toy library.
2. What is your role at the toy library?
3. What is the location of your toy library (e.g., town or suburb)?
4. Do you have a second location? If yes, please provide the location.
5. On average how many hours per week is your library open?
6. Do you have a dedicated space to display toys?
7. Please describe your organisational structure:
  - Independent incorporated association
  - Council run
  - Part of a larger not for profit, please specify
  - Other, please specify
8. Is your library run by: (please select all that apply)
  - Paid staff
  - Member volunteers
  - Non-member volunteers

9. Approximately how many active committee members do you have?

**Toy Library Member Information:**

**In this section, please provide us with some information about the members of your toy library.**

10. Approximately how many members does your toy library have?

11. Approximately how many children does your toy library serve?

12. To what extent does your library serve the following groups in your community?

(not at all, a little, a moderate amount, often, very often, not sure)

- Low socio-economic groups
- Immigrants (e.g. those who were not born in Australia)
- Children with special needs
- Elders or older adults
- Others

**Do you have any programmes to support potentially at risks groups in your community (e.g., low income, immigrants, families facing risk, children with special needs, elders)?**

- Yes, please answer the next question
- No, please skip the next question

13. Can you please describe the programmes you provide to support these groups?

14. Approximately how many toys are in your collection?

15. How many community events are organised by your toy library each year?

16. Approximately how many community events does your toy library attend each year?

17. Do you hold stay and play sessions?

- Yes
- No

18. How often are this stay and play sessions held?

- Once a week
- More than once a week
- Once a month
- Yearly

**Sharing Stories of Impact, More than Just Toys!**

In this section, please share stories about how your toy library has helped an individual member or family. Please feel free to share as many stories as you like—these stories can be long or short. (Please do not use the names of individuals and remember these stories will be kept anonymous and will not be linked to your toy library).

19. Please share a story when the toy library was a family's first responder during an emergency (e.g., family illness, job loss, etc.).

20. Please share a story where the toy library provided social support or encouraged friendships.

21. Please share a story where the toy library helped a family with referrals to important resources.

22. Please share a story of what children learn or how children benefit from being toy library members.

**Sharing Stories of Change**

23. Please tell us about a major challenge your toy library has faced in the past year.

24. Please tell us about the most significant change you have made at your toy library in the past year.

25. Why was this change significant?

**Other Benefits Provided**

**In this section, please tell us about the other support you provide your members.**

26. How often do you or a member of toy library staff talk to your members about:

(every session, once a week, once a month, rarely)

- How toys are best used for child development.
- Sensitive family issues (e.g., coping, behavioural issues, family stresses, health issues).
- Developing connections with the larger community (e.g., introduction to the neighbourhood).
- Where to find community resources.

27. Do you have available information on hand for families needing support, assistance, or community engagement?

- Yes

- No

28. What other community organisations do you have relationships with (e.g., Men's Shed, MCHN new parents group)?

29. Do you have a specialist or sensory toy section for those with additional needs?

- Yes

- No

30. Do you offer sensory sessions or other specific sessions for certain groups?

- Yes

- No

### **Staff and Volunteers**

**In this section, please tell us about how you staff your toy library.**

31. Please indicate the number of paid staff you employ.

32. Please estimate the total number of hours that are paid to all staff per week.

33. Please estimate the number of volunteers per week that help at the toy library, including committee members.

34. Please estimate the number of volunteer hours per week, including the hours of committee members.

35. Do you have volunteers from the following groups who help at the toy library? (please select all that apply)

- Students

- those returning to the workforce new migrants

- special needs individuals retired

- other

### **Associated Costs and Cost Estimates of Productivity**

In this section, could you please help us in measuring the costs of running your toy library.

36. Please estimate the monetary value of toys purchased over the past year.

37. Please estimate the monetary value of toys donated over the past year.

38. Please estimate the monetary value of services donated over the past year (e.g., expert services donated such as accounting, web design, and legal advice), excluding volunteers working in your toy library.

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