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### Gympie supports childhood development with Healthy Play

With school nearly out for another year, children under the age of five or those who are home-schooled in Gympie and the surrounding area now have access to a mobile play-based program designed to support childhood development.

Healthy Play is community-driven initiative of the Gympie Local Level Alliance, who are hosting at least 30 play sessions at various locations in Gympie and outlying areas over the next 12 months.

Gympie LLA Coordinator Caroline Collins said Healthy Play, funded by Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN, combines developmental play activities with health and parenting advice and group education sessions in a fun and informal environment.

“Healthy Play puts the family at the centre of care by taking the services to where the families are,” Ms Collins said.

“We are taking the program to shopping centres, playgrounds, family fun days, playgroups, early education centres and other places that families frequent.

“We’ve employed a social worker to help families navigate the health system and the reaction from parents and children has been really positive.”

The Healthy Play program will also provide 150 pre-screening sessions with health professionals for children 0-5 years, drop in clinics, education sessions for families, and access to allied health support.

The PHN’s Sunshine Coast Senior Manager Robb Major said Healthy Play is an early intervention model helping children build essential skills for life.

“Recent data shows nearly 28% of the 600 children starting school each year in the region are presenting with at least one developmental delay on the Australian Early Development Census domains”, said Mr Major.

“Those domains include physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills and communication skills and general knowledge.

“While it is likely some of these children are already connected with support before they start school, this program will target those who are not.”

Families identified as needing further support will be assisted to access support as required.

Healthy Play is just one of a suite of activities planned by the LLA, which helps develop and implement practical, on the ground strategies to create change including the Family Support Collective, Reading With Children Working Group and a Reaching Families Team.

Healthy Play will be at the Anglicare Early Years Hub on O’Connell St Gympie on the first Friday of every month.

For more information about Healthy Play events, please contact 0497 159 254 or follow Healthy Play Gympie on Facebook.

IMAGE ATTACHED – Healthy Play social worker Amanda Bovingdon-Milgate engaging in a sensory play activity at Gympie Central with Lachlan (7) and Jake (4) Trewbridge.  
(Photo credit: Caroline Collins)

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**For more information contact: Jess Barr, Regional Manager Media and Communications, Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN on 5456 8100**