

Everyone deserves to play

Play Poverty in Australia
Impact Report
November 2024

Imagine the *loneliness* of
watching from the sidelines.

EVERYONE
DESERVES
TO PLAY


Good360
BRINGING GOOD TOGETHER

Everyone deserves to play but there are *3.8 million Australians* currently facing play poverty.¹

Everyone, at every stage of life, deserves the chance to play. It's essential for emotional, physical, and social well-being.

Play poverty is an often-overlooked part of living in poverty, affecting both children and adults. It limits access to activities that nurture creativity, social skills, and mental health. For families and individuals struggling to cover basic needs, finding money for things like toys and sports equipment become impossible luxuries.



Play poverty affects people of all ages



Summary

What is play poverty?

Play poverty means not being able to afford the basic items that make play possible, such as toys, sports gear, and art supplies - things that bring relaxation, leisure, connection and creativity into our lives.



1 in 7 Australians (3.8 million Australians) are currently experiencing play poverty.¹



The emotional wellbeing impacts of missing out on sports and 'play' are felt more strongly than physical health impacts.



The cost of living crisis has also meant 50% of Australians are worried about affording Christmas gifts for their family.



Charitable organisations play an important role in supporting people in play poverty. Since 2015, 4,437,474 play items have been connected to communities in need from Good360's member network.



So far in 2024, over 1 million individuals have been supported with brand-new play items from Good360's member network.

Introduction

Everyone deserves the right to play at all stages of life to improve emotional, physical, and social well-being. Play poverty is the lack of access to play resources due to financial hardship.

Play poverty is a lesser-known but significant part of living in poverty. It affects children and adults alike, limiting their ability to engage in vital play activities that nurture creativity, social skills, and mental well-being. Many people might not realise how deeply this impacts physical and emotional health. For families already struggling with basic needs, finding money for play and sporting items becomes impossible.

When children or adults miss out on opportunities for play, it can reduce their ability to fully participate in everyday life. The effects can be isolating, with individuals feeling excluded, and ashamed, or struggling with their mental health as a result.

What does this look like? It could mean a child not going to school because they feel left out during playtime, or a family avoiding community activities because they can't afford sporting gear. This could have long-term effects on development, well-being, and social participation.

Nearly 3 million Australians say the cost of sports equipment and other recreation or 'play' items is a major barrier to participation for their family. This lack of access to play doesn't just limit enjoyment - it can lead to social isolation, affecting a person's sense of belonging and connection within their communities.

Families and individuals are missing out on essentials for play:

- › Toys
- › Books
- › Puzzles
- › Outdoor adventure equipment and apparel
- › Board games
- › Fitness equipment
- › Sporting shoes and apparel
- › Art and craft supplies

Good360 Australia is bringing together national research alongside stories from our charity network. Our research sheds light on the reality of play poverty in Australia today, and the steps that we can take together to ensure no one has to go without.



We have been partnering with Good360 as a recipient of donations from generous corporates to ensure children who are doing it tough get to experience positive surprises and the wonder of receiving something special that they can call their own. The experience of receiving a gift can bring a sense of being loved, honoured, and respected to a child who has only ever experienced trauma.

The lessons associated with receiving a gift are numerous. Receiving can teach gratitude. It can show children they are valued. It can be the beginning of a child learning about healthy relationships. Learning to receive a gift can also be about knowing that not everything comes with expectations of giving back or needs to be received with feelings of guilt, which can be important life lessons for traumatized children. Thank you Good360 for showing vulnerable children they are valued.

Infinity Community Solutions, QLD



Play poverty is the **lack of access to play resources** due to financial hardship.

Nearly 3 million Australians say the **cost of sports equipment and other 'play' items are a major barrier to participation.**¹




The importance of play

Play isn't just for fun - it's a key part of learning, staying connected, and supporting our wellbeing at every age. Whether it's a family game night, a quick kick of the footy, or a solo art project, play helps us explore our imagination, express our creativity, and connect with others. For adults, play offers a much-needed break from work and commitments, providing a chance to engage with others in a relaxed, unstructured way². It's about enjoying the moment rather than focusing on achieving a goal. Through play, we build empathy, improve our communication, relieve stress, and even boost our relationships. It's essential for a healthy, balanced life. Play can also be a powerful tool for healing. For children who've been through complex trauma, play therapy is often used to help build emotional resilience and support mental health.³

Unfortunately, the rising costs of sports equipment, toys, and other play items mean many Australians are missing out on these benefits.

For households already facing financial strain - particularly First Nations families, carers, single parents, and people with disabilities - the costs associated with play can be a major barrier⁴. During holidays like Christmas, when families look forward to connecting and creating memories together, the impact of these barriers is felt even more. In fact, over 1 in 4 Australians say this Christmas could be their hardest one yet with 1 in 2 worried they can not afford Christmas gifts this year.

Demand for play items in vulnerable communities continues to grow. In a recent survey, 61% of our charity and school partners reported an increased demand for play items. This reflects a broader trend: in FY2024, Good360 Australia experienced an 11% increase in charities and schools seeking support⁵. As times get tougher, support for local organisations is more important than ever to make sure that everyone has the essentials to live a connected, dignified life.

 *"We received a pallet of football boots from Good360 recently. We distributed 100 pairs of boots to the many children whose parents cannot afford to send them to sport or simply can't afford to buy this kind of shoes. We have teamed up with a few schools and local football clubs to share these amazing boots with kids in need and the smiles we got were worth their weight in gold. These kids can have a new pair of boots and join in with all the other kids and continue to grow and develop. Nothing makes us happier than seeing a child smile and being able to give them an opportunity they may not otherwise have had all thanks to the generosity of Good360!"*

The Bikers Hand Inc, NSW



The Good360 team sorting toys from a Hasbro donation - just in time for Christmas

Who is going without?

Nearly 4 million Australians (14%) are currently experiencing "play poverty," with many struggling to afford basic recreational items for the first time. In fact, 12% of Australians report that they're now facing new challenges in being able to afford play and recreation.

As housing and food costs continue to rise, items like toys, books, sports and fitness gear, and games become less of a priority for households already under financial strain. For nearly 3 million Australians, the cost of these play items is a major barrier, preventing families from participating in activities that build connections and support mental health.

Providing access to essential play and recreation items is vital to help people manage their finances while preserving their sense of community and well-being. This is why we're calling on businesses to step up and donate these goods, so charities can distribute them to meet the growing demand. Access to play isn't just a nice-to-have - it's essential to helping communities stay connected, resilient, and both physically and mentally healthy.

 *We received products from the fantastic brand Patagonia, which were perfect for the boys at the Clontarf Foundation. After we got the clothes, we delivered them to the boys, and they were thrilled with how they looked. Now, the boys have new clothes just in time for the school holidays, allowing them to look respectable. Good360 has been invaluable for us here in the Kimberley, as they provide tremendous support to many remote communities.*

Clontarf Foundation - Kimberley, WA

12%
of Australians
report they're *facing new challenges* in
affording play and
recreation.¹



1 in 2
Australians *are worried* about
affording Christmas
gifts for their family.¹

When asking the general public about their experiences affording play products, we found:



3.5 million Australians say that the challenges affording play items/activities have impacted their family's emotional well-being¹



4.8 million Australians (1 in 5) are worried about not being able to afford sports, play and recreational items/activities in the future¹

The impact of play poverty

Without opportunities for play, children risk isolation, loneliness, and diminished self-confidence. Serious play deprivation can lead to mild to moderate depression, physical inactivity, weight gain, and even anger.⁶ For young kids, free play is essential for fulfilling emotional needs, such as independence and connection with peers.

The consequences of limited play extend into adulthood, where fewer opportunities for leisure can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and burnout. Adults who lack play often face higher rates of health issues like obesity and heart disease⁷, as well as diminished creativity and social connections⁸. With nearly 38% of parents surveyed by The Royal Children's Hospital National Child Health Poll citing the high cost of play items⁹, play poverty affects everyone - reinforcing the need for accessible play opportunities that foster healthier, more connected communities.

Donate to Good360 to ensure play isn't a luxury for people living in poverty.



\$10 can provide \$200 of new toys and play goods to kids in need.



\$50 can deliver a box full or \$1,000 worth of new play goods to families living in poverty.



\$100 can give \$2,000 or a trolley load of new toys, games and sporting goods to a disadvantaged school.

Getting the goods into the community via Good360's member network

Good360's network of over 4,500 charity and disadvantaged school members located across Australia, play an important role in supporting people in play poverty. They provide shame-free access to products to help meet immediate needs and often act as a gateway to wider support.

In 2024 alone, **over 250,000 play items have been connected to people in need**, supporting nearly a million individuals.



There is an intangible magic shared as the items received are shared throughout our community. There is a joy that spreads as the children and carers participate in games, and along with laughter that rings through the air over shared experiences we are reminded of the positive impact Good360 and its donors have on the lives of those we walk alongside. There may be a power in play but there is a power in the kindness and generosity of Good360 and their donors.

Infinity Community Solutions, QLD

Thanks to our donors

We couldn't do this without the kindness of our product donors, who ensure vulnerable communities can access much-needed play essentials. A special thank you to:



ashtabula



patagonia



Lalit Parmar, Country Lead - Hasbro Pacific, said:

Hasbro is proud to partner with Good360 Australia to help bring the magic of play to families facing hardship, while creating a sustainable pathway to make a real difference and bring joy and happiness during the festive season. We look forward to a long and rewarding collaboration that helps build a brighter future for Australian families.

What can be done?

Play poverty is a growing and overlooked issue impacting nearly 4 million Australians, affecting both children and adults. The inability to access basic play essentials like toys, sports gear, and creative supplies has serious emotional and mental health consequences, leading to isolation and diminished social participation. While Good360 and our network of charities have connected millions of play items to people in need, many families continue to go without, struggling to afford these vital resources that foster creativity, connection, and well-being.

How everyone can play a role in tackling play poverty in Australia:



Donate play products

Retailers, manufacturers and brands with new play products to donate can contact Good360 Australia: corporatepartnerships@good360.org.au



Join our network to access play products

Charities and disadvantaged schools can join our network for free to access play products (and more) to support local communities. Register at: <https://good360.org.au/get-the-goods/>



Donate money

to help support getting play goods into the hands of people who need them, because everyone deserves to play.

Donate today via:

<https://give.good360.org.au/event/toy-drive/home>



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This is not a short-term problem, but a long-term challenge we cannot ignore. As living costs rise, play poverty threatens to become a new normal, further isolating vulnerable communities. We're calling on businesses, charities, and public bodies to step up and provide the resources needed to ensure every Australian can experience the essential benefits of play. Together, we can help restore the joy of play and build stronger, more connected communities.

A note from our Founder and Managing Director



This has been a tough year for so many Australians, and the Christmas period can exacerbate the financial pressure for families already struggling. Christmas should be a time of joy, but for many Australians, it's shaping up to be one of financial stress and anxiety. The cost of living crisis is continuing to push families to their limit, and no one should have to choose between simple gifts for their family and meeting basic needs.

Every Australian deserves the dignity and joy of the festive season, and we can do more to make this a reality. One in eight Australians live below the poverty line, creating a need for everyday items others may take for granted, such as clothing, basic homewares, bedding or even a toy for a child.

Play and recreation aren't luxuries; they are essential for mental health and wellbeing, and a sense of belonging. Items that support play, whether it's sports gear, art supplies or toys for children, bring joy and foster resilience. Everyone deserves the chance to experience this, especially children at this time of year.

We know families can face additional costs over Christmas, but families with school aged children also face the added pressure of purchasing 'back to school' items shortly after the festive season. This are no longer just pens, pencils and books, but increasingly include digital devices too."

Alison Covington AM,
Good360 Australia Founder & MD

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About Good360 Australia:

Good360 Australia is the largest digital marketplace in Australia for the retail industry to donate unused and unsold consumer goods to people in need. Good360 is a connector – we distribute millions of new, unsold consumer goods like clothes, homewares, appliances, furniture, toiletries and toys that have been donated by around 600 partners, to a network of over 4,500 charities and disadvantaged schools across Australia supporting people in need. The result is a Circle of Good that reduces need and waste in our communities, helping both people and our planet.



Be part of the Circle of Good.

For more information visit www.good360.org.au
or follow us @good360au

