

PRESS RELEASE: **UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 08:00AM 9.6.16 AEST**

New toy bounces into Play School in time for 50th celebrations



A new friend is set to bounce into ABC KIDS' *Play School* just in time to celebrate the program's 50th birthday. Joey the joey, designed by award winning children's book illustrator Bruce Whatley (*Diary of a Wombat*, *Josephine Wants to Dance*, *The Ugliest Dog in the World*), will make her debut on the much anticipated birthday episode, *Come To The Party*, airing on ABC KIDS and ABC iview at 9.30am on 18 July.

Play School Executive Producer, Jan Stradling says, "We're very excited to welcome Joey to the *Play School* family and look forward to sharing her with viewers on the momentous occasion of the series' 50th birthday. It's been a joy working with celebrated artist Bruce Whatley and watching him bring Joey to life. We know she will be warmly embraced by viewers all around Australia."

Bruce Whatley says, "Play School was such a staple part of our household when our children were growing up and as adults they still have fond memories of the presenters and toys. It was quite an honour to be asked to create the character of Joey for such an iconic production as *Play School* and it's pretty cool to even be a small part of the nostalgia of the generations that are to follow."

As well as meeting Joey on *Play School*'s 50th birthday, viewers can continue to enjoy two more instalments of the *Play School Celebrity Covers* episodes on ABC KIDS and ABC iview: The Umbilical Brothers with *Fairytale Mash-up* at 8am and John Hamblin singing *Old MacDonald* at 5pm, followed by the half hour *Play School Celebrity Covers Special* at 6.30pm, featuring Hamish and Andy, John Hamblin, Dan Sultan; Molly Meldrum and Charlie Pickering, Delta Goodrem, Benita Collings and Don Spencer, Josh Thomas, Annabel Crabb and Leigh Sales, Guy Sebastian, Magda Szubanski, and You Am I.

Join the conversation on *#PlaySchool50*

ENDS

For more information, images and interviews please contact Safia van der Zwan, Publicist, ABC TV, vanderzwan.safia@abc.net.au / 02 8333 3846

About *Play School*:

- *Play School* is a 27 minute program for preschool children made by ABC's Children's Television in Sydney
- *Play School* airs on ABC KIDS, weekdays at 6:00am, 9:30am, 12:30pm and 3:30pm and weekends at 9:30am and 3:30pm, and is available on ABC iview
- *Play School* was first broadcast in Australia on July 18, 1966
- The ABC has made approximately 2250 episodes of *Play School*
- With an emphasis on "learning through play", *Play School* aims to reflect a modern, multicultural Australian society with a range of family situations and experiences
- Together, *Play School* apps *Art Maker* and *Play Time* have had over 90 million sessions and 550 million screen views since their release in 2011 (*Art Maker*) and 2013 (*Play Time*)

*Jigsaw Research, August 2015