Philosophy VSDC's philosophy focuses on deafness as a life to be lived, not simply a problem to be fixed. VSDC is committed to improving the life opportunities of some 3,500 Victorian children and young people, who are deaf or hearing-impaired. To do this, a great team of enthusiastic professional staff and volunteers is dedicated to the empowerment of deaf young people and their families.
VSDC is determined not to be merely a passive player in the provision of services and resources, but also to actively engage in setting the agenda.
A commitment to improved outcomes for clients, as well as improved efficiency and productivity from VSDC's services and within the wider service system, underpin our work.
Purpose We respond to the needs of children and young people who are deaf or hearing-impaired, and their families: providing information, advocacy, support services and educational resources.
Result statement Deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people in Victoria will develop competencies for personal empowerment and a successful life, through access to information, advocacy, support services and educational resources.

PresidentÕs Message

It is important for an organisation such as ours to always be looking forward so that we can provide efficient and effective statewide services for all families of deaf and hearing- impaired children. However, it is also good practice, I believe, to pause a moment and reflect on where our organisation was in the past and where we are now.

Over the past 8 years we have seen VSDC transform from a welfare organisation, captive of a small stakeholder group to a dynamic statewide service whose vision is the empowerment of clients through service excellence. We have doubled the number of services offered, tripled the annual turnover of the organisation, doubled the number of staff, developed a pleasing sum of net assets, have a clear direction with a vision statement of ÒDeafness is no BarrierÓ and have a Board of Governance with clear strategic and business plans regularly reviewed and updated.

Our report this year outlines the achievements against the VSDC key results policies.
We are extremely proud of these achievements and to Damian Lacey and his staff we wish to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation for the hard work and difficult challenges that had to be worked through to achieve these results.

The challenge for the Board in the near future is to revisit medium and longer term directions including further raising the public profile of deafness and the issues involved. We are currently looking at several options in this area.

I would like to again express the BoardÕs sincere appreciation to all the volunteers, fundraisers and supporters of our organisation, without whom, we could not deliver the high quality of service. In particular I would like to make mention of the outstanding contribution of the Orringa Auxillary who have worked tirelessly for over 40 years and regrettably have decided to disband at their annual general meeting in 2003.

It is with deep regret that I also pay tribute to Mr. Harry Powell A.M., who passed away on October 1st 2002. Harry was the Superintendent of the VSDC from 1957 to 1982. He was loved by all and will be fondly remembered for his dedication to not only the welfare of deaf children and their families but to all children in Victoria. Listed amongst his unique qualities was his ability to make everyone feel important, his ability to remember everyoneÕs name and his telling of great stories and singing self penned songs.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members, including Christopher Koren who retired this year, for their support and contribution throughout the year.

Robyn Womersley
President

Highlights

Some of the highlights across the organisation over the past year have been:

- The review of Key Results Policies completed in consultation with families
- New learning opportunities for families and additional information resources produced
- Major restructure of services into three regional teams with team leaders recruited internally
- Additional staffing in direct service and in policy work funded by VSDC from investment and fundraising income
- VSDC Employment retains top five star rating from government
- Newborn hearing screening and the education of deaf and hearing-impaired students given key policy focus

Chief ExecutiveÕs Report

ÒLearning in organisations means the continuous testing of experience, and the transformation of that experience into knowledge Ð accessible to the whole organisation, and relevant to its core purpose.Ó Peter Senge

The past year has been an exciting yet testing time for VSDC. A big effort has been required of and given by the whole organisation. The contribution of families, who have given honest feedback and involvement; of staff, including a large number of volunteers, who have embraced major change and generously given outstanding service; and of other stakeholders who have witnessed this change and perhaps faced some of its challenges, are greatly appreciated.

Families want VSDC to be more proactive in advocacy and advice

Early in the year we set out to review achievement against VSDC key results policies, in consultation with families. This review confirmed our directions but also gave a strong message that families want VSDC to be more proactive in advocacy and advice, working with individual families and family networks to address their concerns.

The review of key results was paralleled by a revision of service management resulting in a major restructure of core operations into three regional teams. We are now more than six months into the new arrangements and are confident that the results are well worth the effort required.

The Board has continued to provide excellent leadership in its governance of VSDC. For this I am grateful, as it creates the proactive environment within which organisational learning can thrive. I also appreciated the support of VSDC to undertake a study tour of the United States and England in July 2002, during which my focus was early detection programs, family support and advocacy services.

The following report of highlights is formatted against the revised key results policies, against which it is not always easy to provide assurances of our achievements. We do so to ensure that stakeholders can continue to hold this organisation accountable for what VSDC aims to achieve and to ensure a better response to the needs of deaf children, young people and their families living in Victoria.

Damian Lacey
Chief Executive Officer

Families and young people have the knowledge and skills to successfully manage their own needs.

Information and Advocacy

Information provided by VSDC is accessible, balanced and impartial.

In order for families to feel successful in managing their own needs, they require access to quality information. Unfortunately, those of us charged with information provision have not always passed the test, with parents reporting that in general information is often lacking in quality or difficult to find or, alternatively, overwhelming and often contradictory.

Some of the achievements this year have been:

¥ Website is maintained to provide service information including links to other sites (44 visitors per day)

¥ A free-call 1800 number provides access to rural families and is well used (1,281 calls received)

¥ The Auslan for Families video project was enhanced with the production of a Turkish version to complement the Vietnamese, Cantonese, Arabic and English packages available

¥ A state of the art video conferencing centre is maintained

¥ TTY access is fully integrated into VSDCÕs computer network

¥ The Deaf Support Register continues to be a well used resource for families

¥ VSDC paid for the production of 5 mental health Parent Information Leaflets developed by VicdeafÕs Step By Step, Mental Health project.

Parents are confident in accessing support services.

The numbers of self directed referrals to VSDC, for support services and advocacy, have substantially increased over the past year. Not only are families asking more of VSDC, but they want better access to community services.

VSDC sees a key role for itself in assisting those organisations to develop the skills they need to effectively manage their interactions with deaf and hearing-impaired children, young people and their families.

Learning opportunities are offered to families and young people.

Learning opportunities for families and young people are, like access to information, critical to the development of self confidence and to the success of our partnership with them.

Some of these opportunities have been:

¥ A FatherÕs Weekend at Mt Buller in August, supported by the Rothschild Trust, attracting 11 fathers from around the state, was a first

¥ Five mothers from the South West who were funded to visit Bendigo and Shepparton to gain first hand experience of how other regional communities had established education programs for deaf children

¥ An Advocacy Weekend held in November, enabling 19 families to develop their understanding and skills. The event also afforded VSDC the opportunity to develop our understanding of the key advocacy issues for families

There is greater understanding in the wider Victorian community of the needs of deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people.

¥ Submission writing workshops were conducted in April and assisted 27 parents interested in writing to the Senate Inquiry into the Education of Children with Disabilities.

A total of $29,657 was awarded to 28 young people from the VSDC Youth Awards fund. For the first time they included grants to two young deaf blind students from Carronbank School to enable their education program to include more community based learning opportunities in preparation for increased social confidence and independence when they leave school.

The Awards also included sponsorship of two young people to attend the Asia Pacific Youth Conference of the World Federation of the Deaf, held in New Zealand in January, and support for three young women to attend the DeafWay2 international congress in Washington DC in July 2002. Learning opportunities of this type are important benchmarking and awareness raising activities of personal and community value and we are proud to be able to make them happen.

Family networks are encouraged and supported.

Parent networks play a fundamental role in the provision of the kind of information that many families would like. Information is personalised and contextualised, and is more likely to reflect a wider range of views and opinions. For these reasons VSDC continues to develop and support regional parent networks.

A total of 11 networks have been actively supported through joint activities, cash grants and advocacy support during the past year.

We also maintain contact with the Parents of Hearing Impaired Children, Victorian Federation.

The President of the Federation, Jo Quayle, along with VSDC Board member Gene Reardon, who is a parent, were invited to represent families at the Second National Symposium on Childhood Deafness in the United States of America in October last year. Unfortunately the incidents of September 11 led to the cancellation of the trip. We will maintain an interest in events such as this and will include family representatives in VSDC delegations.

Families report receiving balanced and sensitive advice from medical and other professionals.

VSDC research has confirmed that there is no more critical a time for families than at the point of diagnosis of hearing loss in their children. As a result, VSDC has become active in advocating for family friendly practice at this crucial time. Given recent moves to establish universal neonatal hearing screening programs across the country, VSDC has prioritised this area of work. VSDC sponsors the Victorian Neonatal Hearing Screening Interest Group, which aims to promote the views of families and educators within the broader debate.

In order to centre its advocacy around best practices in neonatal hearing screening, VSDC sponsored the Manager of Policy and Development, Veronica Pardo, as well as Julia Roberts, Senior Teacher at Monnington Centre to attend the 2nd International Conference on Newborn Screening, Diagnosis and Intervention which was held in Italy in May. The knowledge gained has allowed us to adopt a key role in policy development with a view to influencing discussions at a political level about the most appropriate response of government and other stakeholders.

Young deaf people are affirmed as valued members of a diverse community.

Through the engagement of young deaf and hearing-impaired people as volunteers, paid staff and as Youth Award recipients, VSDC aims to promote a Òcan doÓ attitude among young people. In turn these individuals become role models for younger children and families.

Government demonstrates a greater appreciation of the unique and varying needs of deaf children and young people.

Submissions to the Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools: A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Educational Needs and the Senate Enquiry into the Education of Children with Disabilities, have been major projects for the Office of Policy and Development. We await outcomes of these reviews and a demonstration of greater commitment from our State and Federal Governments.

A significant achievement against this objective was the result of our advocacy work in the South West. A major consultancy has been awarded to VSDC to undertake an analysis of the educational needs of deaf and hearing-impaired children and to develop a model of educational service delivery following best practices in deaf education. This project is a collaborative venture between VSDC, the families in the region and the Department of Education. It is also an affirmation from government that the needs of deaf and hearing-impaired children are unique and thus require a unique response.

Support Services are provided within a service philosophy based on deafness as a life to be lived rather than a problem to be fixed.

VSDC Support Services

Users experience positive outcomes and renewed confidence in their abilities.

VSDCÕs success in extending services in rural and regional areas, while initially meeting needs, raised expectations of families and as a result presented more challenges. This has required a commitment of additional resources as well as a new responsiveness from our staff.

Rural families, in particular, told us that workers appeared overloaded and were therefore unable to meet the demand for support in a satisfactory way. As a result, during the second half of 2001, staff tackled the question of unmet need and the demand for increased flexibility in our services. A productivity improvement project was completed by a project team of staff representatives with the support of an honourary consultant, Mr Lew Smallwood.

Recommendations included the forming of three regional teams with additional expenditure of $100,000 approved by the Board in December, enabling additional family services, interpreting and recreation staff to be employed. The teams were created prior to Christmas and recruitment of the new positions completed by March.

Users are empowered within and by service intervention.

The regionalisation project also highlighted the importance of outcomes based practice. Following the recruitment of additional staff, an in-service day focused on the model of practice to be used by staff. This has been supported by regular supervision sessions for individual staff, with monthly training and peer supervision programs also put in place. This training is top priority under VSDCÕs current training plan and will be reviewed in December 2002.

Role Models, peer support and networking opportunities are available.

Regional teams are responsible for the development of local networks and group activities, as well as the recruitment of role models and volunteers. In the past we have relied on separate programs such as recreation or Auslan tuition to do this work.

The regional approach to our work aims to develop the effectiveness and efficiency of our intervention, the results of which will be increased ability to take on additional challenges. We also intend for these endeavours to include local service providers and thereby extend the support available to families.

The needs of children and young people and their families are known and met through appropriate and effective programs.

Staff resources are deployed by teams of highly skilled specialists and represent a diversity of professional and community perspectives.

The additional resources applied to the Regionalisation Project have enabled the development of three teams with core roles covering team leadership, family and community work, information provision, recreation and interpreting. The employment of our first parent in a professional role, increased numbers of recreation staff and deaf employees, and three full time interpreters on staff have strengthened already strong professional expertise in staff.

After six months of successful implementation of the new structures, there is clear evidence of improved collaboration between VSDC and community agencies, as well as engagement with families. Examples have been:

¥ whole teams working on community education strategies

¥ development of regional partnerships and communication strategies with other agencies

¥ family workers and recreation staff jointly working on family activities.

Families at risk, including those of high socio-economic need, non-English speaking background and from rural areas are identified and supported.

VSDC services are biased to those families most in need:

¥ Rural families represent 30% of our user group

¥ 18% of families are from non-English speaking backgrounds

¥ Families who are financially disadvantaged constitute 32% of clients.

Children and young people with disabilities receive additional levels of support.

Deaf and hearing-impaired children who have additional needs, represent about 18% of clients. The Independent Living Skills program is targeted specifically to those teenagers with additional needs in personal care and independence skills prior to leaving school. Clients with additional needs are also given priority access to other services including accommodation, counselling, physiotherapy and speech therapy.

Service users are assured of consistency of service at an agreed level.

The Funding and Service Agreement between VSDC and the Department of Human Services is maintained.

VSDC is very appreciative of the funding provided by the Department of Human Services. This funding covers a range of services types including case management, independent living training, information, recreation, and accommodation.

Grant income has remained consistent across these services in recent years, with the exception of accommodation funding where a progressive withdrawal of funding has been taking place due to an acceptance that this service should be a responsibility of the Department of Education. The Òwhole of GovernmentÓ rhetoric of the new State Disability Plan, we hope will give improved opportunity to redress the loss of funding in this area of essential service.

Users are fully informed about the services available and all relevant changes in services and service levels.

VSDC News is published on a quarterly basis and is provided to all users and stakeholder groups for whom we have contact details. Service information and changes are reported in this way. The VSDC website www.vsdc.org.au is also a useful source of information.

Individual families are kept informed of service provision and changes through individual service plans where these are active.

Users are assured of the highest standards of professional ethics applied by staff.

As a learning organisation VSDC is guided by a comprehensive Quality System which aims to incorporate and integrate, at the operational level, corporate and governance policies and specific quality procedures. Our commitment to quality is a continuing process that involves the development of systems to meet user needs and the Victorian Disability Service Standards, the training of all staff, the purchase of equipment to keep abreast of changing technology and service requirements, and the implementation of work practices that contribute to a safe and healthy workplace.

These practices, with the assistance of the Office of Policy and Development which has specific responsibility to overview staff training and development of services, underpin and support the endeavours of staff in the provision of the highest service standards.

Service access is based on an assessment to determine priority within available resources.

While substantial additional resources have been committed to increase availability of services, assessments are still conducted to ensure those with greatest need gain support as soon as possible. Pressure is most often felt for Auslan tuition, and Family and Community Worker support.

Persons deemed ineligible for services are referred to the most appropriate service provider.

As a service provider VSDC promotes its services as being available to deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people and their families. Few referrals therefore, are received where VSDC is clearly not an appropriate provider. At the same time VSDC does not promote itself as the ÒonlyÓ provider as it is important that families take advantage of the expertise that is available in their local communities. Partnerships with agencies that provide local generalist input with VSDC providing deafness expertise are essential to our work.

Partnerships are established and fostered amongst all parties interested in addressing issues associated with deafness.

Community Partnerships

Opportunities to maximise service delivery are researched and realised.

Partnerships with parents are essential to VSDCÕs work. These partnerships are formed with both individual families and with groups of families across the state. They underpin and inform all our work.

At an interagency level key partnerships with service providers continue through activities including the Rural Worker Alliance; Hearing Awareness Week; the Deaf Support Register; Deafness Foundation Education Committee; Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE Ð Centre of Excellence for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students, advisory committee; Chisholm Institute Ð Auslan Studies Program; and the Victorian Council for Deaf People advisory committee.

VSDC continues to be a member of ACROD, the national industry association of disability service providers, Deafness Forum Australia, the Association of Children with Disabilities, and the Victorian Council of Social Services.

VSDC demonstrates a willingness to share information and learning within the network of providers.

This year new partnerships have been developed with several early education providers in the Newborn Hearing Screening Interest Group, with Monnington Centre with whom we conducted the Big Arts Day, and with Vicdeaf in the joint conduct of an industry based Frontline Management training program.

VSDC facilities, including meeting rooms, vehicles, and equipment are regularly made available free of charge to many community groups. Monthly meetings of the principals and coordinators of all education programs for deaf and hearing impaired children are held in the Lucy Lewis Room, our laptop computers and digital video projectors are in constant demand as are buses for camps and other outings.

Mergers and alliances are explored and implemented where efficiencies can deliver improved service.

During the year the VSDC Board approached the Victorian Deaf Society (Vicdeaf) with a view to holding formal discussions regarding a merger of the two organisations. This approach was made following the advertising of the position of Chief Executive of Vicdeaf and the decision by that organisation to sell their Jolimont property.

VSDC believed this was an opportune time to consider the overall efficiency of the deaf service sector in comparison to other sectors. VSDCÕs approach was declined, which was a disappointment to us. In comparison to other service sectors deafness is small and has continuing difficulty in meeting service demand. We will continue to be open to the possibility of mergers and alliances to bring benefits to our service users.

Our views, priorities and issues are heard and respected by the Victorian community.

Raised Profile

VSDC actively promotes awareness of its work.

Recognition of the unique needs of deaf children and young people and of VSDC and its work remains a high priority. Despite increased media exposure in the past year, we remain dissatisfied with the level and sophistication of the wider community understanding of deafness issues.

Promotion and marketing activities include publication of VSDC News four times a year, the VSDC Shop, the VSDC Youth Awards and the VSDC Australian Deafness Projects Fund. Recreation grants to individual young people, to parent networks and to schools are also important activities.

Discussions have been held with marketing consultants in regards to a public media campaign. Several innovative concepts are being considered however the costs are generally prohibitive. As a result, consideration is being given to a national branding concept as it has proven difficult for VSDC to tap into the cause related marketing budgets of major corporations to assist with the costs of marketing.

Stakeholders report that media portrayal of deafness is balanced.

Unprecedented media coverage in April included an invitation to VSDC by both The Age and Herald Sun to contribute editorials. The focus was the decision of a deaf couple to plan a deaf baby and then not to avail themselves of technology to assist the babyÕs capacity to hear.

The five week debate in VictoriaÕs media afforded a range of opinions to be aired. It also gave VSDC the opportunity to promote its philosophy of deafness as a life to be lived, not simply a problem to be fixed.

Standards of service provision are enhanced.

A large proportion of VSDC funds are self generated. The association has accumulated a substantial endowment in serving the needs of deaf children and young people over the past 140 years. The management of this endowment is a major activity and, together with fundraising activities that include an in-house telemarketing operation for donor acquisition and renewal, contributes the discretionary finances to provide essential, unfunded, services to families.

Highlights this year have been:

¥ 3550 donors supported VSDC for the first time (3553 last year)

¥ 6169 donors in total supported our work (5,104 last year)

¥ $635,372.26 of bequest income was received (last year $14,141).

Resources are available for innovative endeavours.

Outstanding gains from trading activities combined with substantial bequest income this year to produce a large surplus which has been added to the endowment. Income generated from investments is used solely for VSDC purposes, including additional service staffing and in areas of policy development. Over the past five years, during which Government funding has reduced substantially, VSDCÕs total expenditure has almost doubled. This has been possible because of the continuing support of the Victorian community and the excellent stewardship of the associationÕs assets.

This year, in addition to an extra $100,000pa to fund the regionalisation project, $250,000 has been committed over three year to support an additional full time position in the Office of Policy and Development, in recognition of the value of, and demand for, the work of this office.

VSDC grants and sponsorships are used strategically.

The achievement of VSDCÕs Key Result Ð that deaf children and young people will develop competencies for personal empowerment and a successful life Ð is supported through direct grants and sponsorship programs:

¥ Youth scholarships and awards of $30,157 this year have encouraged individual achievement, leadership skills, a focus on learning, and contribution to the community

¥ Grants of $10,532 were directed to schools and family groups and are focused on recreational and networking opportunities

¥ Financial assistance of $2,696 was provided directly to benefit disadvantaged families; enabling attendance at camps and programs, purchasing equipment, and paying fees

¥ The VSDC Australian Deafness Project Fund committed $20,000 this year to support the publication of a book of family experiences and decisions in regards to the cochlear implant; and will assist the new PEJS / Monnington facility in Blackburn to establish a video conferencing centre to support the delivery of services into regional Victoria.

VSDC has sufficient resources to meet our program objectives for quality of services and initiatives for deaf children and young people, and their families.

Deaf children and their families have access to an equitable and understandable system of education and support.

Deaf Education

VSDC contributes to the development of a consistent statewide policy for education, which delivers improved equity for all eligible users.

Following the creation of the Office of Policy and Development in February 2001 the first major undertaking was a review of VSDC key results policies on behalf of the Board. A report was presented in September and highlighted the need to focus attention on what many families believed to be a Òcrisis in deaf educationÓ.

This became the focus of the Annual General Meeting in November. Fortuitously the Victorian Government chose this time to review the education of students with disabilities. That review, Better Services, Better Outcomes, provided VSDC a platform from which to launch our perspectives on what was wrong with the current system and what should be done to address these problems.

Some of our concerns are the:

¥ inability of current models to adequately cater for the needs of all students

¥ lack of co-ordination amongst educational service providers leading to disparity of outcomes

¥ inappropriate assessment of needs

¥ inadequate financial support for children in their chosen setting

¥ inadequate training/professional development of education personnel

¥ restriction of choice within catchment areas

¥ inability to attract qualified, appropriate professionals to rural and remote areas

¥ inadequate access to quality specialist services including educational audiology, psychology and speech pathology and

¥ lack of access to LOTE Auslan education.

Some of our proposals include:

¥ A statewide co-ordinator of educational services for deaf and hearing-impaired children who develops and monitors implementation of policies

¥ An advisory group comprised of parents and professionals with responsibilities for appraising the co-ordinator of most promising practices as well as quality and consistency of service provision across the state

¥ Effective regional plans for the implementation of policy in deaf education

¥ A service system based on principles not limitations.

The role of VSDC is clearly defined, and does not assume the responsibilities of others.

For VSDC to achieve its ends, it can not remain simply a passive provider of educational resources and support. In direct response to the needs of families, VSDC has developed an advocacy capacity, which in turn has created some tension with key stakeholders. While we support individual families in their advocacy needs, we believe that many of their issues are better addressed by working at a systemic level.

The result of our systemic advocacy in the South West of the state has seen a unique partnership emerge between VSDC, parents and the Department of Education to create an appropriate regional response to the needs of deaf and hearing-impaired children. This project, both in its method of operation and from its expected contribution to the practice of delivering regional education services, will be used as a model for future work.

At the state level we have made submissions to the Better Services, Better Outcomes review, and have continued to make representations to the Department. The Senate Inquiry in the Education of Children with Disabilities, provided an additional opportunity to present our views and to encourage families to make their our submissions. In April two seminars on submission writing were well attended and resulted in many individual submissions from families. Two parents were subsequently invited to address the Inquiry when it sat in Melbourne, and were supported by VSDC.

Principles of Educational Service Provision for Deaf and Hearing-impaired Children

1. Deaf students have access to a quality education that provides the foundations for a successful life.
2. Deaf students have access to the support required to ensure all their needs are met.
3. Deaf students have access to an appropriate environment for the development of social and emotional wellbeing, including peers and role models.
4. The support needs of Deaf students are independently assessed and continually monitored.
5. The assessment of support needs is conducted using an appropriate assessment instrument.
6. Parents are empowered in their decision making by quality information.
7. Professionals have the specialised knowledge and skills needed to work with deaf children.
8. All placement options offer a range of methodological choice.

The Funding and Service Agreement between VSDC and the Department of Education is maintained.

VSDC is contracted by the Department of Education and Training to provide a range of services to increase the participation of students in their educational programs. This financial support is greatly appreciated.

Clinical services are available to the four deaf schools in Victoria while consultancy advice to schools and parents is available across the state.

The agreement between VSDC and the Department of Education for the support of the Victorian College for the Deaf (VCD), as a statewide K-12 educational option, is maintained.

In a partnership agreement that dates back to 1913, the outstanding facilities of the Victorian College for the Deaf are provided free of charge by VSDC to the Department of Education.

This support has ensured that families across the state have the option of a K Ð 12 specialist deaf education centre. The College promotes a bilingual education program using Auslan as the first language, with English taught as a second language through reading and writing.

VCD meets its general school operating expenditure, and is an autonomous entity, setting its policies as a government school and without reference to VSDC. The Chief Executive of VSDC is a member of the College Council.

Deaf children attending Princess Elizabeth Junior School (PEJS) enjoy uninterrupted access to their learning during the transition of the program to new Government provided facilities.

VSDC has operated PEJS for some 52 years, 44 in partnership with the Department of Education. This partnership is soon to begin a new phase with work now commenced on the construction of a new facility for the Princess Elizabeth Junior School at Holland Road, Blackburn South.

To be provided entirely by the Department, the state of the art facility will accommodate Monnington Centre as well as PEJS, and is expected to become available by August 2003.

VSDCÕs formal support of the school operation will cease on 31st December 2002, when the agreement with the new Burwood property owner, Deakin University, comes to an end. Deakin University and the Department of Education are in negotiations regarding any ongoing use of the site.

VSDC will continue to support the provision of accommodation for country families who travel to Melbourne with their preschoolers to attend the school, and also provide education support services including speech therapy, family support, audiology, psychology and physiotherapy services.

Quality options in the provision of education services, are provided in partnership with the Ministry of Education and/or independently.

Accommodation Support Services are provided for country students and families choosing to access Melbourne based programs.

Powerpoint fundraising for VSDC family house Project

Accommodation for school days is provided in VSDC group homes to students of VCD at a cost not greater than the Isolated ChildrenÕs Allowance.

VSDC Accommodation provides children and young people from country areas with group-home accommodation, Monday to Friday, which enables them to attend the Victorian College for the Deaf.

Three houses have been provided to accommodate 14 students this year.

Funding provided for many years from the Department of Human Services is being phased out. The Department of Education has, for the first time this year, contributed limited funds to the program. It is, however, yet to accept responsibility for the provision of accommodation to enable all country students needing to attend the Victorian College for the Deaf to do so. There is a sizable unmet need requiring the GovernmentÕs urgent attention.

Until this issue is resolved, the numbers continue to decline with only two houses expected to be open next year and with a viability question hanging over the program once Department of Human Services funds are fully withdrawn within a year or two.

Accommodation services for families and their preschool children will be provided at minimal cost.

Three flats are provided within the Princess Elizabeth Junior School facilities at Burwood, and are maintained in conjunction with the school. The conversion of the previous caretakerÕs house will add an additional unit from October 2002.

VSDC has purchased a property in Blackburn South, close to the new school site, and planning is underway to demolish the existing house and build two townhouses in which to accommodate up to four families at a time. A fundraising campaign will be conducted to assist with the expected cost of approximately $900,000.

Short-term family respite and holiday accommodation will be provided when facilities are available.

Residential properties owned by VSDC are made available to families for respite and holidays when they are not being used. During the year country families have used these facilities to enable children to participate in Melbourne based holiday programs conducted by VSDC Recreation.

There is acknowledgement that VSDC is a major custodian of the heritage and history of Deaf Australians, which is reflected in a commitment to the preservation of historic buildings and records for handing on for the enjoyment of future generations.

Heritage

The property at 597 St Kilda Road is developed in keeping with appropriate preservation standards, while not limiting its development for current and future use.

Situated on the corner of High Street and St Kilda Road, Melbourne, VSDCÕs substantial property comprises a large 1866 bluestone building accommodating staff and tenants, as well as a modern school facility accommodating the Victorian College for the Deaf.

Over the past ten years in excess of $5,000,000 has been spent in restoration and development work on the property. This year funds were committed to the restoration of the top floor, to create additional office space, and to the installation of a lift. Air conditioning is being fitted to the hottest areas of the building.

The restoration work carried out has included use of the original colour scheme, determined using expert advice and painstaking effort. Costs were greatly reduced due to the generous support of the Master Painters Association, which used the project as a pre-apprenticeship training program.

To improve access generally, and for the safety of building users, work has commenced on the installation of a lift, and will be completed by early 2003.

Ò597Ó is acknowledged as an important international centre of deaf culture and receives widespread community support.

An annual Heritage Day in the grounds has become an important event in the Victorian Deaf Community calendar. VSDC is the oldest and most important ÒdeafÓ site in Australia and, as a result, history tours are in regular demand by locals, travellers from interstate and also international visitors.

A goal has been established to complete the full restoration of the exterior of the building by 2012, the 150th anniversary of the founding of VSDC. This will require some $2.5 - $3 million and will not be possible without the support of both the Commonwealth and State governments, as well as the Victorian community.

Historical and cultural information will be preserved and made available to the public.

With less than ten years remaining before VSDCÕs 150th anniversary, increased effort is being directed to heritage objectives. The major achievement of the past year has been the creation of a voluntary History Curator position to undertake the collection, maintenance, promotion and development of historical records. This position is supported by an enthusiastic team of deaf community volunteers, whose work is likewise, greatly valued.

Governance of VSDC

VSDC Inc is a not-for-profit organisation (formally established in 1862, with origins commencing in 1859) and is incorporated as an Association in the State of Victoria.

Membership

Membership of the Association is open to any person who applies, is approved as a member according to the Rules and pays the annual subscription fee. Life Governorship may be awarded by the Board to any deserving person. Life Governors remain a Member for life, without payment of subscriptions. Membership of VSDC as at 30th June 2001 was 184 individuals (184 last year).

The Board

VSDC is governed by an elected Board whose job is to represent stakeholders in determining and demanding appropriate organisational performance. To guide its work, the Board has established Strategic Results Policies, Governance Process Policies, Board/CEO Linkage Policies and CEO Limitations Policies. These policies are reviewed throughout the year based on an annual agenda that includes a planning retreat in November.

The Board has established three committees to assist in its governance responsibilities, namely Policy, CEO Performance Review, and Finance & Investment.

Board members contribute to VSDC a wealth of knowledge and experience which is greatly appreciated. Their work is entirely voluntary.

Mr R.E.M. ÒMacÓ Adam Ð Board attendance 9/11 meetings. Member of the Policy Committee. Mac a deaf person, is a long serving Board member commencing in 1987. He is General Manager of a Shopfitting Company. "The greatest opportunity as an ex pupil of the VSDC, is to contribute as a Board member. Being involved in decisions that make a difference in the lives of deaf children now and in the future, and which strengthens VSDC, is important to me."

Mr Doug Bartley Ð Board attendance 5/11 meetings. Treasurer and Member of the Board since 1991. Chairperson of the Finance & Investment Committee. Doug is a Chartered Accountant by profession which involves him in many different industries. "The opportunity to make a contribution to the not-for-profit sector, and VSDC in particular over the past eleven years has been most rewarding. Thanks to the generosity of donors and our investment policies we have been able to finance major projects and services while at the same time strengthening our balance sheet for future generations."

Ms Trish Dench Ð Board attendance 9/11 meetings. A Board Member since November 2000, Trisha is the first young deaf person to join the Board. An alumni of VCD, Trisha holds aspirations to become a Science Teacher of the Deaf. "Being involved with VSDC and the Board has given me a great sense of purpose as a young deaf woman. The opportunity to give something back to the Deaf Community and to make decisions at boardroom level that effect deaf children, is challenging and very satisfying."

Mr Andrew Perry Ð Board attendance 8/11 meetings. First elected to the Board in 1993. Member of the Finance & Investment Committee. Andrew is an Investment Advisor by profession and has an interest in serving the community. ÒMy passion for VSDC is based on the opportunity to assist a great organisation secure its capacity to meet the future needs of deaf children and their families.Ó

Mrs Gene Reardon Ð Board attendance 10/11 meetings. Elected to the Board member in November 2000. Chairperson of the Policy Committee. Gene has a management background in the Commonwealth Public Service and has worked as a Social Worker at Monnington, a deaf early education service conducted by the Education Department. Gene has a deaf daughter. ÒI feel passionate about the challenges that face deaf and hearing-impaired children and their families. Being on the VSDC Board allows me to make a contribution to furthering the interests shared by these families. It is inspiring to work with people at VSDC who share a vision, care about the community they serve, and work hard for change.Ó

Mr David Richards -Ð Board attendance 0/0 meetings. Joined the Board in September 2002. David is a Corporate Finance professional with extensive experience in the commercial finance industry. ÒI was honoured to be invited to join the Board as VSDC is a cornerstone Victorian organisation. The personal challenge to actively contribute to the BoardÕs drive to continue this excellent service and its progressive views was too overwhelming for me not to accept.Ó

Mr Peter Swan Ð Board attendance 10/11 meetings. Past President and Member of the Board since 1989. Member of the Finance & Investment Committee. Managing Director of a family business. PeterÕs deaf brother greatly influenced his commitment to, and involvement with, VSDC. ÒI joined the Board wishing to contribute both from a family view but also from a commercial management point of view. I believe it is imperative that not-for-profit organisations maximise returns for stakeholders and to do this external commercial experience is invaluable to the organisation and offers a different perspective in assisting the return to stakeholders.Ó

Mrs Cristina Taffe Ð Board attendance 10/11 meetings. Board member since March 2001. Cristina lives in Wodonga where her deaf son attends a local school. ÒI am honoured to be involved with this wonderful organisation. I would like to see the benefits of VSDC reach all deaf children and their families in city and country areas.Ó

Mrs Robyn Womersley Ð Board attendance 10/11 meetings. Currently President and a Board member since 1981. Convenor of the CEO Review Committee and Member of the Policy Committee. Formerly a Teacher of the Deaf, Robyn is the mother of three teenage children and has a strong commitment to community service. ÒI work for VSDC because I believe it is a genuine and caring organisation that strives to provide the best quality of service to the families it serves. I feel that with my long experience within the organisation, I have a valuable contribution to make to further enhance the standard of service that it provides.Ó

Mr Christopher Koren Ð Board attendance 5/6 meetings. A Board Member since 1992. Christopher, a Licensed Auctioneer, Real Estate Agent and BuyerÕs Advocate, is the father of a deaf teenager. Christopher resigned in December 2001.

Leadership Team

Damian Lacey, Chief Executive Officer
Diploma of Youth Work, Level 3 Sign Language Interpreter.
Damian joined VSDC in the role of Chief Executive Officer in 1995, and has worked over the last twenty-five years in the deafness field, including twenty years in CEO positions.

Deanne Cross,
Business Manager
Bachelor of Business, MBA.
Deanne has worked in finance management positions in the health sector for over seven years, in both the public and private sector. Deanne joined VSDC in 2000. During the year Deanne took parenting leave and has returned to VSDC in a part-time capacity.

Veronica Pardo,
Manager Office Of Policy & Development
Bachelor of Arts (Honours), Graduate Diploma in Education, Master of Arts, currently studying Doctor of Philosophy part-time. Veronica joined VSDC in 2001 having worked in the University sector, both in research and teaching for seven years.

Jennifer Bernal,
Manager Consumer and Organisation Relations
Bachelor of Education (LOTE), Master of Education. Jennifer is a deaf person.
Jennifer commenced with VSDC in 2001 having worked for eleven years in the university sector, pioneering the teaching of Auslan and the development of numerous teaching resources for Auslan, deaf culture and history.

Geoff Manton,
Employment & Contracts Manager
B.A Disability Studies, Diploma of Frontline Management, Advanced Certificate SACS Management, Diploma, Auslan Interpreting.

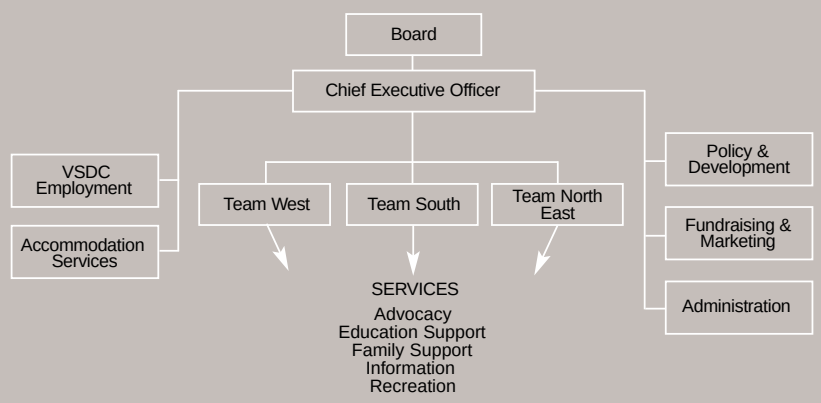
In 1998 Geoff was appointed to the position of Employment Manager at VSDC. Geoff has extensive experience working within Disability Employment Services and has been working within the deafness field for seven years.

Janet Anderson
Fundraising Manager
Diploma in Frontline Management. Janet has worked in fundraising roles for ten years and joined VSDC in 1999 as Telemarketing Co-ordinator, taking up the current position in 2000.

Lyn Wilson, Psychologist and Team Leader Ð Team South
Teacher of the Deaf, Honours Degree in Psychology, with majors in Psychology and Linguistics, Registered Member of the Australian Psychological Society, Master of Arts (Applied Linguistics) and a Graduate Diploma in Auslan (Language). Lyn commenced with VSDC in September 1987 as a full-time School Psychologist and was appointed Team Leader of the southern region in 2001.

Peter Folan, Recreation Officer and Team Leader Team West
Diploma of Frontline Management.
In 1984, Peter was employed as the Recreation Officer of VSDC to develop meaningful leisure experiences for students residing in the five family group homes and in 2001, as a result of regionalisation, Peter was appointed Team Leader of the western region.

Julie Davison, Family & Community Worker and Team Leader
Team North East
Advanced Certificate in Developmental Disabilities, Associate Diploma in Welfare Studies, Graduate Diploma of Human Service Administration, Diploma of Professional Counselling. Julie started working at VSDC in February 2001 as a Case Manager, following ten year experience in the deafness field. In 2001, Julie was appointed Team Leader of the north eastern region.



Human Resources

At 30th June 2002, VSDC had a total staff complement of 109 employees (70 last year). In addition the substantial contribution of many volunteers as Board members, supporters and workers, at various program levels, is essential to VSDC performance.

Prior to employment, police checks are conducted for all staff and volunteers who have regular direct contact with deaf children and young people.

Two significant retirements occurred this year:

¥ In July Bridget Phelan retired after 36 years of dedicated service as cleaner of the bluestone building. BridgetÕs years of service were remembered at a farewell function attended by many past as well as present staff and board members.

¥ In February, Dorothy OÕBrien stepped down after five and a half years as Director of Services. DorothyÕs skills during this period of substantial growth and change for VSDC were greatly valued and are missed. Dorothy has semi-retired and continues to contribute to VSDC and to the deafness sector as a consultant.

Remuneration

Remuneration to employees is in accord with seven different awards. Management staff are employed under individual fixed term contracts.

Staff Welfare and Safety

A Human Resources team met monthly until the restructure of services in January, and has since met quarterly with the CEO to discuss matters of concern and issues of staff welfare and development. Membership is comprised of representatives selected by staff from all operational teams.

VSDC has an excellent safety record with eight reported incidents during the year, (five last year) only one of which required WorkCover notification.

Initiatives this year have been the formalisation of staff Exit Interviews under the Quality System, an updated Staff Manual, and a captioned Auslan video in reception, that welcomes visitors, orients them to our site and explains VSDC services. The introduction of Fire Extinguishers and First Aid kits to all new cars was also a staff initiative.

Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to the work of VSDC, providing hundreds of hours of work each month in roles from Board member to support workers, auxilliary members to Òcard flappersÓ, and from gardeners to historians. This work is greatly appreciated. The decision, last year, to record the monetary value of voluntary contributions still remains an objective.

Affirmative Action

VSDC seeks to employ deaf and hearing-impaired people where possible, across the organisation, believing that the life experiences of these employees add greatly to the quality of service delivery. 42 staff members (39%) are deaf or hearing-impaired. A deaf or hearing-impaired person, where possible, is a member of selection panels in the recruitment of staff.

Staff Learning

As part of annual reviews, all staff are encouraged to develop a personal learning plan. VSDCÕs Staff Development Plan focuses on training needs in relation to job competencies. Priorities for training have included first aid, fire safety, Auslan skills, information technology, teamwork, professional proficiency, and Frontline Management skills. VSDCÕs training investment for the year was $40,213 ($46,528 last year), excluding staff time.

Major Donors

AAMI Ltd
AES Yarra
George Alexander Foundation
Anchor Logistics Pty Ltd
William Angliss (Victoria) Charitable Fund
J D Brook Trust
Cabrini Hospital
Decor Corporation Pty Ltd
E.H. Flack Estate
Grant Bequest
Hunter Hearing Services
JB Were & Son Charitable Fund
Jean F Maver Charitable Trust
George Henry Jenkins Estate
Lincast Australia Pty Ltd
Kay McKenzie
Bertha Nelson Trust
Frank & Sybil Richardson Charitable Fund
RSL Bentleigh
Segue Portfolio Partners
Sweet Design Pty Ltd
R Taffe
The Rotary Club of Footscray
The Allen and Cecilia Tye Fund
United Way Geelong
VSDC Box Hill Auxiliary
VSDC Orringa Auxiliary
Joe White Bequest
Yoffa Estate - Henry Herbert

Generous Donors

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AAV Australia Pty Ltd
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Advanced Antenna Systems
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Alpha Magnetics
Amcor Cartons P/L
Amega 2000 Pty Ltd
Argosy Asset Management
Asian Pacific Building Corp.
Australian & New Zealand College Of Anaesthetists
Australian Budget Accommodation
Australian Real Estate Conveyancing Services
B & JG Hodge & Co Pty Ltd
Barden Manufacturing P/L
Bayside Chippery
Bayside Signs & Designs
Belugas At The Bay
Benton's Plumbing Supplies
Black Moon P/L
Reginald & Isabell Blamey Trust
Books Illustrated
Brunsdon Pump Supplies
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Burgher Association Australia Inc
Canberra Av Child Care Centre
Garry Castelow
CDK Stone Pty Ltd
Cenmel Embroidery Pty Ltd
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Chiquita Brands South Pacific
CHT Australia P/L
Citywide Service Solutions
Jill Clague
Clariant (Aust) Pty Ltd
Clothing Angel
Commonwealth Bank of Australia
Contrec Systems Pty Ltd
Core 8 Network
CRS Investments Pty Ltd
Cryovac Australia P/L
Culliver & Sim Pty Ltd
Cummings & Partners Pty Ltd
Maggie Irene Cunningham Estate
Curtain & Co
Cyco Group
Dana Australia Pty Ltd
Dandenong Plaza Shopping Centre -Centre Management
Dia Oro
Dial An Angel
Direct Cash Pty Ltd
Display Matters
Dominic Martin Pty Ltd
Douglas McLeod & Associates
Dr Notes
East Coast Steel (Vic) Pty Ltd
Empire Stone
Explas Products
Fifth Generation Consulting
Fletcher Food P/L
Forbes Fashion
Fowl Play Charcoal Chickens
Frame Spot Pty Ltd
Fred Hosking Pty Ltd
Frederick J White Trust
Frontier Software P/L
Gandel Foundation
Garuda Indonesia
Gearbulk Australasia
GNC Livewell
Golden Breed Corp Pty Ltd
Barbara Gray
Greens Removals & Storage Pty Ltd
GSS Insurance Brokers
GUD Holdings Ltd
GVP Fabrications P/L
H2o Water
Hallam Truck Centre
Hella Australia
Herald Roofing P/L
Heritage Clinics of Australia
Hinds Blunden (Victoria) Pty Ltd
Home Of Prestige
Homme Studio
Injectronics Australia Pty Ltd
ITS Integrated Technical Software
Ivanhoe Prestige Cars
J Gross & Co
Jada Engineering Pty Ltd
John Boyle & Assoc
John Diesel Fuel Injection Service
Johnson Matthey (Aust) Ltd
Jones Newell
JR Buxton Pty Ltd
Just Write Pty Ltd
Kabe Engineering Pty Ltd
Kailis Bros Melbourne
Des Kennedy
Kitten Club
Kookai
La Porchetta
Labsonics
Damian Lacey
Lettieri Constructions Pty Ltd
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Lions Club of Footscray
Lions Club of Mordialloc - Mentone
M E Bell Projects Pty Ltd
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Mainsbury Pty Ltd
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Matthew Davis Australia Pty Ltd
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McElligott Partners
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Rosemary Meagher
Meritor Light Vehicle Systems Aust Pty Ltd