

Deaf Children Australia.

IMPACT REPORT **2021**





Deal children Australia would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the country where we work and provide service. We would also like to acknowledge all indigenous peoples, whose wisdom and knowledge offered great opportunities for humanity to learn how to be more respectful of the land we inhabit.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware this publication may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.

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MISSION

To inspire and empower deaf and hard of hearing children and young people to reach their full potential.

VISION

To create a world where children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing have every opportunity to achieve positive life outcomes.

We create meaningful ways to connect children, young people and their families to a community that understands them.
Coming together to share stories, experiences and challenges, changes lives. We got inventive to make this possible though a year of restrictions and lockdowns.

DCA is a registered charity.

Registered NDIS Provider

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We have great pleasure in presenting this, our 159th Impact [Annual] Report for the year ending 30 June 2021.

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Providing the reassurance and support parents need when navigating a new world.

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Sharing stories of the amazing people we support via social media, our website and the media to raise awareness of their skills and determination.

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We are delivering what families have asked for to best support their child: Platypus Playhouse and Flying Colours.

20 FINANCE

Innovation and determination steered us through the 2020-21 financial year. We continued to call on new ways to deliver services and programs to inspire, motivate and connect the people we are here to support.

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We are constantly improving and reviewing our processes to ensure we can best support our community.

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Driving us forward to understand the opportunities and challenges ahead so we can continue to invest in the children, young people and families that we support.

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Helping us to preserve close to 160 years of Deaf history.



CHAIR & CEO REPORT

Together we make all the difference.

We have great pleasure in presenting this, our 159th Impact [Annual] Report, for the year ending 30 June 2021. COVID-19 has certainly continued to challenge us with rolling lockdowns keeping many people at home and taking a toll on mental health. Adjusting to this new 'normal' provided ongoing challenges for service delivery and supporting our participants, families, and communities.

Despite the trying times, DCA continued to deliver quality resources online and we were delighted to launch our new resource, the Flying Colours website, designed to support, inform, and inspire families all over Australia who are raising children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH).

DCA is committed to delivering the absolute best advice, support, and resources to DHH children, young people, and their families around Australia. To ensure we stay focused and deliver what is needed, we commissioned a comprehensive survey asking parents what they needed to raise successful resilient children. The Flying Colours Survey was completed by over 500 people, providing us with valuable information.

This survey acts as a blueprint for DCA's future - providing data and evidence for the services we offer. The new Flying Colours website meets many of the needs of families of DHH children. Most of these families have no experience of hearing loss.

As well as offering information and plain English summaries of academic research, Flying Colours also includes videos and interviews with parents of deaf children including our parent mentors who share their life experience, together with newer parents of DHH children.

We were also delighted to kickstart another fantastic project, DCA Blueprint – Lead by Example. It will see DCA deliver resources for community organisations across Australia to encourage them to be more accessible to DHH children and young people. Our Flying Colours survey demonstrated that parents found it difficult to get their child into local clubs and activities. A docuseries featuring DHH children and young people who are already successfully participating in a community activity, will form a key part of the project.

This inspirational work will encourage other children and young people to take part and function as a blueprint to community organisations across Australia to be more accessible to those that are DHH.

Our volunteer Board members continued to manage a higher number of board and committee meetings to ensure DCA proactively met the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. We thank them for their continued commitment.

We would also like to thank our staff who have been hardworking, capable, positive, and creative throughout this difficult year.

Thank you also to our volunteers who are similarly committed to achieving our mission. On behalf of our clients and stakeholders we express our gratitude to our donors, corporate and philanthropic supporters, and government funders. Your support makes an enormous difference, enabling us to provide valuable opportunities for DHH children and young people, along with their families.

As we look back on the year we are reminded of our resilience and dedication. Our humble gratitude goes to all our stakeholders. We acknowledge the strength and courage of the children, young people, and families we are here to support.

CHAIR | Dr Kerry Ferguson



CEO | David Wilson





Our Chair, CEO and Board members are committed to understanding what families need and attend events such as our family camp to find out.
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
KAREN CLEAVE (BOARD MEMBER), KERRY FERGUSON (CHAIR), DAVID WILSON (CEO), AND CAROL WEBB (BOARD MEMBER AND PROUD MUM TO DAVEY), AND OF COURSE THE FABULOUS DAVEY.

PARENT MENTOR PROGRAM

"I just wanted to say how amazing DCA parent mentors are - I am mentored by Emma. Having a neutral third party to just talk to about anything, has been a godsend. Even if we just have a yak, it has often been the release I've needed to just breathe for half an hour. I can't say thank you enough!"

Having a deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) child can often be a parent's first introduction to the deaf world.

Our Parent Mentor program helps to link families up to parents with lived experience of raising a child who is DHH. For parents, it's important to be able to communicate with someone that has an understanding of what a family goes through, someone that understands the fears, the concerns, the challenges and that will let them know everything will be alright.

Many families are overwhelmed by the news of a diagnosis and the highly medicalised settings they encounter. Families tell us that when they connect with a Parent Mentor, they find they speak their language, they provide a much needed human face and unbiased support. During restrictions, our Parent Mentor team continued to offer their amazing support in a variety of ways: Telephone, Zoom and a range of online catch ups via its POD Parent Network including coffee mornings, dads' catch up, kids corner, and parent drinks.

As soon as we are able, the face-to-face engagement with families will reconvene and we will also plan family camps and day activities.

> "...there was always someone there that knew what it was like to have a child with hearing loss."

For the last 12 months the Queensland and Victorian Parent Mentor Program delivered

1,865

Occasions of support/service

99% INCREASE



JODIE'S STORY

Jodie's daughter was nine and a half when she was first diagnosed with mild to moderate hearing loss, and for Jodie, having the support of Parent Mentor Bianca, really made a difference.

"Bianca is a fount of knowledge and shares her journey as well as listening, supporting and letting us know about our options," Jodie said. "I am so grateful to have had this support over the past 15 months!"

"It was amazing to meet someone else who gets it."

Jodie had limited experience with the deaf or hard of hearing world before her daughter's diagnosis.

"When we look back now as a family, we see the signs," Jodie told us. "We sought professional help early on, but we were told it was fine. We trusted the experts and because she often got ear infections, croup, and asthma we all dismissed it. They told us she would grow out of it but that never happened."

Finding out so late about her child's diagnosis, Jodie found herself wondering if anybody else had experienced what she was going through.

> We are very grateful for all the support so far, and we look forward to meeting more amazing people on this journey.



"As a parent there are moments where I feel parent guilt for not insisting on more tests, taking her to another specialist, not trusting my gut enough," Jodie continued. "My child was nine and a half years old when she finally got diagnosed and there were years where she could have had assistive technology and not had large gaps in her learning."

Through our Parent Mentor Program, we helped to connect Jodie's family with another family who have a daughter of similar age and that is also hard of hearing, and they have developed a great friendship. These connections make a world of difference.

"We hope she continues to find her people – that she makes fabulous friends and meets amazing teachers who support and accept her."

Through the Parent Mentor Program Jodie has been able to make new connections and develop the knowledge and skills to advocate for her daughter.

"I'm so glad that I got onto the Parent Mentor Program because they just listened to me and listened to my story. I'm so grateful."

"We hope with more networking to build a support group for these kids," Jodie added. "We are very grateful for all the support so far, and we look forward to meeting more amazing people on this journey. We are supporting her on this journey."

Keeping families and children connected through restrictions with the POD online meet-ups.

22
POD EVENTS

3
FACE-TO-FACE POD EVENTS



19
ONLINE POD EVENTS

PARENT MENTOR TESTIMONIALS

Parents share their Parent Mentor experiences.



"I just wanted to say thank you for the other week. I really appreciated you picking me up and getting me out of the house. It was lovely to chat with someone who understands what I'm going through with regards to Robbie and his hearing." - **Ange**

"Thank you for being an amazing mentor to me and my family. You have been so supportive throughout this year.

"Bianca, you have been there at a time that was very difficult for me and just made me feel so much at ease every time you called me, or I called you. You kept reassuring me everything will be OK. Helping and guiding me to educate myself further about hearing loss.

You are truly amazing Bianca, I'm so glad you are part of this Parent Mentor Program."
Nada

"I could ask any question and got to speak to someone who had been through it before."
Parent

"I liked that my son was able to attend the picnic pre-covid and that I was able to connect with other parents via a zoom catch up. I look forward to attending a camp or program so he is able to meet other children who also wear devices.

The zoom session I attended was great as I also met parents from interstate and another mentor. For me personally, I was able to gain insight into the issues (and sometimes barriers) that other parents were experiencing with their children from newly diagnosed upwards." - Parent

Total number of families supported

335

The Parent Mentor team in Victoria and Queensland delivered over 350 hours of support

1,282
TELEPHONE CALLS

398
EMAILS

67
FACE-TO-FACE CONSULTATIONS

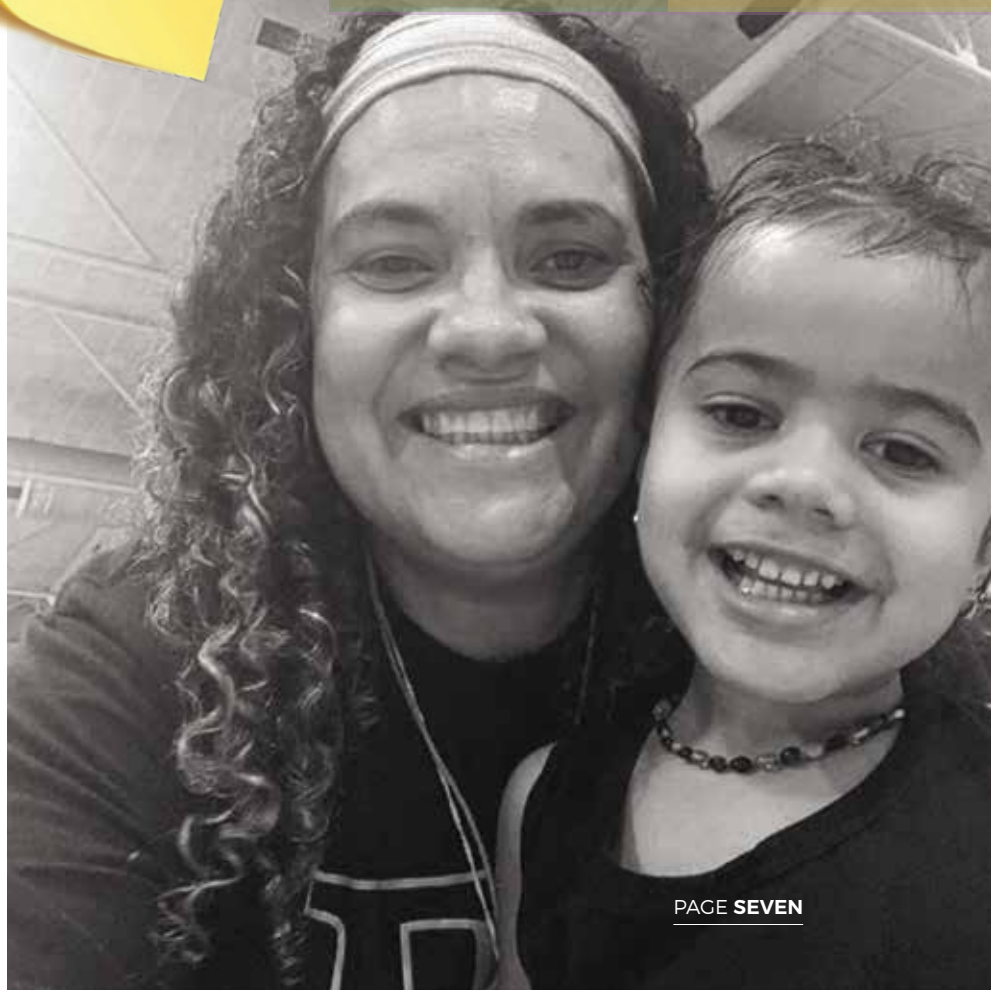
98
AVERAGE NUMBER OF FAMILIES SUPPORTED EACH MONTH





STORIES







GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Building bridges and creating better futures for young people.

The Nelson & Brook Educational Trusts, The Allen & Cecilia Tye Fund, and our generous supporters allow us to support young deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) people around Australia, to pursue their dreams.

Many of the projects young people wished to undertake in the past year have been impacted by COVID. It is inspiring to see the unwavering determination and drive of our recipients to keep pursuing their goals in whatever way they can.

YOUTH GRANTS

We allocated approximately $29,000 to supporting young people to reach their dreams, across an amazing range of disciplines. From photography and piloting to Go-Karting and GateBall – we are helping 14 young people across five states to explore the possibilities, and to turn their dreams into realities!

Although the pandemic has impacted much of our day-to-day lives, it has not stopped young people from dreaming and reaching their goals.

In Queensland, we are working with the amazingly talented Crystal: who will be starting her own GateBall team and competing in the Australian GateBall Championships!

Meanwhile in Victoria, we are working with professional Go-Karter Taine Venables – as he tears up the road and gets ready for the Karting Nationals.

For Catherine Thecla-Saun, who recently won Best Young Actress at the St. Kilda Film Festival, our Youth Grants program offered her an opportunity to delve deep into acting lessons – helping to increase deaf representation on the big screen.

Maggie Sandles received a Youth Grant in 2020 and is training to represent Australia in Triathlon on the world stage.

For Sam, we'll be helping him to take to the skies as he does work experience at Mareeba Airport – pursuing his lifelong dream of becoming a pilot.

This year, our Youth Grant stories are incredibly diverse – exploring and encouraging talent across so many areas of life. Our Youth Grant participants are not only pursuing their own dreams, but they're inspiring others to reach their goals – and during the pandemic, the dedication and drive our recipients have shown has been truly inspiring.



It is amazing to see all the wonderful things that young people have accomplished during this time – and our wonderful Youth Grants program proves that nothing can stand in the way of young people making their dreams come true.

TYE FUND

Through the Tye Fund we support individuals and organisations and awarded more than $15,000 throughout the 2020-21 financial year. This includes supporting DeafBlind Victoria's Yarn Bombing Project and Furlong Primary School's camp to create opportunities for growth and social development. It also helped inspiring young talent work toward their goals, including deaf swimming record holder, Nicholas Layton.

We also worked with a participant experiencing incredibly challenging circumstances, which prevented them from accessing programs to advance their skills. We collaborated with their Support Coordinator to fund their participation in Ready Set Drive and participation in acting classes. The young person is incredibly grateful for the support and is making the most of the opportunity.

It is a privilege to help make a difference to the lives of young people in a myriad of ways, building bridges to brighter futures.

We couldn't offer these grants without the support we receive from the community - thank you.

Christine Shin is one of our 2020 Youth Grant recipients, and is working hard to drop her golf handicap to 1.



YOUTH SUPPORT

Helping participants take part in mainstream activities to connect them with community, and build their independence.

Supporting deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) young people is at the heart of our mission. By providing one-on-one support in day-to-day activities, Youth Support Workers can help participants take part in mainstream activities. They help to communicate with their peers and the broader community – to bring everyone closer together.

Due to COVID-19, we moved all our youth services online – and this has provided us with the amazing chance to create a lasting impact in the lives of young people through the digital space. The team also devised a variety of creative ways to maintain a connection with participants, through games and puzzles.

Our changes in service delivery allowed us to adjust and accommodate the needs of participants more effectively. Our team is better able to work around school hours, and we are also able to deliver unique online programs such as our popular Get Connected workshops. It helped young people from across Australia to engage with one another while building lasting connections and communities!



For young people, social inclusion is essential for expanding their support networks. Our Youth Support Workers help participants get involved in arts, recreation, camps, and other community-based activities, which are essential to building friendships and engaging in the community.

We also offer individual support to help young people with public transport, language development and daily living skills which includes managing money, bills, looking after the home, and daily planning.

Our Youth Support Workers are extremely valuable for our DHH participants – helping to guide young people through important conversations about identity, while providing mentoring as they explore Deaf community and their deaf identity.

GET CONNECTED

Get Connected is our unique national online mentor workshop. It launched in September 2020 to help connect deaf and hard of hearing (DDH) young people aged 12-15 years, at a time when they were cut off from school and their friends. We knew this would create additional challenges for DHH young people and we wanted to deliver a program to lift them out of isolation and to arm them with new skills.

Get Connected offers a fun and engaging way to build social connections and confidence, in a safe and supportive environment. It has become a flagship program and we continue to run the workshop for ages 12 – 15-years. In May we introduced a program dedicated to ages 8 – 11 years.

The aim of the four week program is to help young people develop skills in self-advocacy, learn how to speak up, build their social skills, create stronger connections to the Deaf community, and make new friends. The program also addresses how to cope with bullying and participants also learn motivational techniques to keep them striving toward their goals.

Our inspiring DHH mentors have lived experience. They can relate to participants and are passionate about supporting young people.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **Recognise similarities and differences in experiences from other DHH peers/mentors and realise they are not alone**
- **Communicate about their experiences with other young people**
- **Feel confident that being DHH will not stop them from achieving their dreams and goals**
- **Learn strategies on how to cope with bullying**
- **Identify their needs to make their environment more deaf friendly**
- **Find deaf friendly events/ recreational activities online**

Feedback from a participant who has moved to Queensland:

"Victor and Tom used to bowl together in the early days so it's great to see the foundations laid by Victor continue to grow and be a community connection for Tom."

Good news story: Youth Support Worker Caitlin Di Benedetto with Jayden:

"Today, Jayden practised public transport training, familiarising himself with the route to DCA. We read the announcement boards and checked the train times before getting on-board.

Jayden was excited to chat with lots of people. He was confident in approaching them and did so on his own accord, happily asking them to slow down or repeat signs when necessary.

From the few hours spent at Tradeblock Café, Jayden's Auslan skills seemed to improve, he relied less on phone notes and more on fingerspelling, even learning some new signs while we were there!"

Success stories

"I have been working with a participant for a long time. He does not like going out of the house due to his experiences in the past and the COVID-19 situation got his anxiety to an all time high. Until the second lockdown at end of last year, I went to the participant's house, and he was more than ready to go outside in the public. I worked so hard to assure him that everything will be okay during the lockdown period. We managed to go to Mt Dandenong, Melbourne city and a few shops around his home. He was more confident in going out in the community which was great to see."

"I am working with two participants at the same time. I pick them up from their school and and I play a game with them where they have to find my car. Each week I park my car at a different train station. My clients must figure out how to get to my car via public transport. They enjoy every challenge, and it is great to see them being more confident in taking public transport around Melbourne. I know they will ace it when they get older."

Victor Belousov,
Youth Support Worker





3,278

TOTAL HOURS OF SUPPORT DELIVERED

Youth Participants who were serviced remotely

21% INCREASE



AUSLAN SERVICES

"There is strong evidence that a bilingual approach, provides significant benefits for a deaf child's language and intellectual development at critical stages in their development, irrespective of their degree of hearing loss."
Dr. Elizabeth Levesque

For deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children, being able to communicate with siblings and family is vital for self-confidence. Learning Auslan as a family supports everyone – helping families to build stronger connections while aiding in supporting their DHH child.

Babies and children meet a series of the same language milestones in either sign language and spoken language, or both if they grow up bilingual (Auslan and English). Our Auslan Services create opportunities by helping to build shared language between DHH young people and their families.

The sooner parents can communicate effectively with their DHH child, the better the outcomes. Therefore, it's important the whole family feels comfortable communicating with each other, and that the surrounding language environment is rich, rewarding, and meaningful.

Deaf Children Australia's wonderful Auslan team helps to bring families closer in a welcoming and relaxed setting to allow all the family to learn and enjoy the experience of Auslan.

"I found the class to be safe and inviting; granting freedom to ask questions," one participant told us.

Over the last year, the Auslan team has come up with some amazing ideas to help teach Auslan while making online learning engaging for children and families. Creating an inspiring online experience and helping families to build shared language together is at the heart of our mission, and our Auslan Services Team has done a tremendous job of helping to build bridges with language.

We offer Auslan tuition to families, individuals, and communities. Despite COVID-19, our team has been able to adjust and thrive – supporting families from all corners of Australia.

Our Auslan tutors provide more than just a language. They provide their lived DHH experience, allowing families and participants to ask questions about their deafness – while helping them to learn about Deaf history and community along the way.

1,749
HOURS
Total Hours of Auslan Tuition delivered
46% INCREASE

75
PARTICIPANTS
Total families supported
99% INCREASE

Kathleen's story

"I'm a parent of two boys, Luca and Levi (ages 4 and 1), both with profound bilateral hearing loss and cochlear implants. They are the only people with hearing loss in my family. Since my first son was born, I have been very interested in learning Auslan and learning more about the Deaf community. We've been enrolled with Aurora for the past four years and they've provided amazing support and opportunity to connect with other families with deaf children. However, staying committed to learning Auslan was difficult for me especially when my first son Luca began to speak. When my second son was born last year and we found out he had the same hearing loss, I felt very motivated to commit myself to learning Auslan for both my boys.

I strongly feel when they're older they will appreciate my effort to ensure they feel a sense of belonging in both the hearing world and the Deaf community.

Fortnightly Auslan tutoring through DCA with Raquel has been wonderful because it's been a consistent opportunity to connect with a member of the Deaf community. She provides me with structured and informative lessons, but she's also allowed me flexibility to ask questions or take breaks when my boys are demanding attention. With each lesson, I'm not only learning vocabulary, but also history of the language and Deaf culture.

I feel one of the most valuable benefits of the classes has been the comfort and ease I feel using Auslan with my boys. Before tutoring with DCA, using Auslan felt unnatural for me because I was self-conscious or worried I would mess up in some way, but now I feel my confidence has increased and I'm happy to share it with my boys. Raquel has empowered me to share this very special gift of language with my boys and I'm very grateful to her and DCA for the amazing service provided."



SUPPORT COORDINATION

Over the course of this year, our team has taken every moment in its stride – identifying more efficient and more extensive ways of supporting our clients. During this unique period, our team has played an important role in advocating for the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing, people with a disability and across all ages. The team has played a pivotal role in ensuring access to services for all our clients. Our Support Coordinators have truly gone the extra mile to put our clients first.

With changing restrictions, our team was granted a unique opportunity to modernise, decentralise, and digitise. We have been able to deliver support coordination services online while still maintaining face-to-face contact with clients who have special support needs, and this has allowed us to adopt an agile approach during the pandemic.

Embracing online service delivery has allowed us to remain in touch with both rural and interstate clients. The connectivity offered by video conferencing and video relay interpreting tools, helped us to advocate for the needs of clients despite the distance.

We enjoy being able to support people across Australia. Our team can now support a much wider array of participants with a much more flexible approach.

We have also assisted people with using their NDIS funding to procure communication technologies – helping participants to remain connected during restrictions. It is amazing to be able to watch our team grow and change, adopting all these amazing new methods of service delivery. Our team's outside-the-box thinking has led us to adopt new practices and new strategies.





SUPPORT COORDINATION

Helping build a family or individual's capacity to be independent and to successfully manage their NDIS plan.

3,889

TOTAL HOURS OF SUPPORT DELIVERED

94% INCREASE

152

NDIS participants helped with their plans

80%

INCREASE

62

Participants accessed the following unique programs:

GET CONNECTED
STAY CONNECTED
READY SET DRIVE
PADDOCK TO PLATE

SIGN FOR WORK

"You changed my life! Now I am here, launching into a dream career I had deemed unachievable!"

Sign for Work is a Disability Employment Service delivering a specialist service for people with an injury, health condition or disability, and those that are deaf or hard of hearing. It is able to assist people at all stages of their employment.

Team members have specialised knowledge and skills including Auslan, to address different communication needs.

It is a small boutique operation offering a welcome and supportive environment to help people prepare for work, seek work and stay in work. This is achieved via the open communication the team has with employees and employers to ensure both parties are supported.

Our service is free and strives to facilitate all that a participant might need to build independence and a career.

ALEX'S STORY – OPENING DOORS

When Alex graduated from university just prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, it felt as if all the doors had closed on him overnight.

"It felt like my entire world had come to a standstill," Alex said. "The world was locked off to me, like it had shut its doors on me. I felt as if there was nowhere left to turn."

As he searched for opportunities during the lockdown, Alex made that first phone call – getting in touch with Joshua from Sign for Work.

"Having Josh's support made all the difference, and making that first call was the best move I ever made.

"I felt the world open up to me," Alex said. "Josh was amazing, and every time I needed his help – his line was always there. I felt like I had someone I could turn to."

Living with Asperger's Syndrome, Alex has always struggled with job interviews – but Josh's remote interview coaching helped him to gain confidence. Josh worked tirelessly with Alex, talking with him, and helping him to secure an amazing position as a communications and media assistant.

For Josh, being able to support people like Alex to reach their objectives is its own reward.

"When someone gets a job, you're not only helping them get a job – you're changing their life," Josh said. "I hold this close to my heart when I'm working with my clients. Sometimes that change can be pretty overwhelming, but when it works, it works – and I truly feel like I have done a good job".

Alex is now working hard and is grateful to be part of an amazing team. For Alex, knowing he has the support behind him helps him to achieve his goals.

"The best part of being with Sign for Work is knowing the support doesn't go away, the team is always there to support you when you need it." Alex added. "Thank you Josh, for supporting me on my journey."

Alex initially worked two days a week. However, after only a short time, Alex was working full time: doing the work that he loves as part of a great team.

"Being able to call Josh, and to know he is there supporting me – it really helped me to see a brighter future. He helped me to follow my own path. I don't think I would ever be able to thank Josh enough for that."

JESSICA'S STORY – ROAD TO RECOVERY

When the Queensland floods hit Jessica's home in 2011, her life was irreparably changed. Losing her veneer of composure and falling into a deep depression, Jessica's relationships broke down. She then left Queensland, but was forced to relive the trauma of 2011 when another flood swept through New South Wales in 2013.

"I was depressed, and I felt completely misunderstood," Jessica said. "I felt as if I wasn't able to describe how the world felt different for me. It created the perfect storm for emotional disconnect."

Shortly afterwards, Jessica was diagnosed with PTSD, Bipolar, and Borderline Personality Disorder. Jessica arrived in Melbourne "lost and in pain" as she awaited surgery on both her stomach and a torn labrum in her hip. The road to recovery was long, but for Jessica – the most important thing was having the right people in her corner.

"The most important part of recovery was getting my care team right." Jessica stated. "Moving to a new GP and having Sign for Work in my corner enabled me to accept the things that made me different. They worked with me, genuinely listening to me – they helped me to where I am now."

"Jo asked me what I wanted and how she could help make that happen – all the while intuitively providing me with the tools and support to figure it out," Jessica added. "Every time I met with Jo it felt like we had just left off from our last interaction. She knows enough about me to be able to draw on my strengths and when in doubt I always feel like I have her on hand with an open phone policy and genuine desire to help and see me succeed."

Now Jessica is working as a phlebotomist - launching into her dream career during the pandemic.

"You changed my life! You saw me through the shaking, exhausted mess and after years of feeling lost you created a safe space and a strategy for helping me recover and reconnect with my community," Jessica said. "Now I am here, launching into a dream career I had deemed unachievable!

"I am healthy and happy, looking forward to everything ahead," Jess told us. "I do truly owe it to you."

"Thank you for believing in me and inspiring me, I am so grateful for having had you on my team."



156

job seekers placed in employment in Victoria and Queensland

85

STILL WORKING 6 MONTHS LATER

Considering many of these placements would have been disrupted due to lockdown, the fact that 54% were still in their positions 6 months later is a great feat!

The Queensland office had 68% of placements in work 6 months later, an incredible achievement.



EVENTS

Our events are a unique opportunity for deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children, young people and their families to meet new friends, share experiences, learn from each other, and for the kids in particular, to connect with kids just like them.

We aim to create experiences that are fun, memorable, build communication and social skills, increase confidence, and inspire. Above all we want to ensure DHH children and young people can become independent and reach their goals. Event highlights during the 2020-21 financial year include:

READY SET DRIVE

On Wednesday 7 April 2021, Deaf Children Australia partnered with CRUDE Ultimate Driving Education to offer Ready Set Drive, a one-day driver training program for DHH people wanting to learn or further develop their knowledge on driving a vehicle, basic car maintenance, road rules and more. This is the only program in Australia helping DHH young people get their licence, a crucial step towards independence.

This comprehensive course served our participants as an introduction or refresher on their driving journey. The 17 people that attended the course thoroughly enjoyed the day, unanimously praised the teacher, and expressed an increased sense of confidence after attending the class.

Ready Set Drive will return in 2022, bigger and better than ever, with two separate programs. One dedicated to getting a Learner's Permit and a second to help young people move on to getting their P Plates.

We would also like to run the program interstate and we are seeking funding partners to make this possible.

PADDOCK TO PLATE

Paddock to Plate took place on 15 April 2021 at the Queen Victoria Market. It was a guided tour of this iconic fixture of Melbourne food culture for ages 12-18 years. For an hour and a half, our participants walked around the market, learnt about its history, met some of its shop owners, learnt how to run a small business, how to identify good produce and enjoyed many food tastings.

The event was fully booked. Everyone was very engaged, enjoyed learning something new, meeting up with their peers and the many food tastings.

> "It made me feel curious to try new foods. It was an interesting experience and exciting to walk around and observe what was there."

Participants wished it ran longer. They also asked us to run shorter activities more frequently so they can meet their peers and enjoy different experiences. We are on to it!

FAMILY CAMP

Our Victorian Family Camp took place on 15-16 May 2021, at the Summit Adventure Park. The event was fully booked. In total 83 people attended including 26 DHH participants and their parents and siblings. Participants and parents enjoyed the activities, the interaction with other DHH children, learning from our DHH Youth Support Workers, Parent Mentors, and other families.

The weekend was packed with a range of activities – arts and crafts, scavenger hunt, Auslan bushwalk, movie night, flying fox, leap of faith, and even an inflatable city!

The kids showed great enthusiasm for all the activities, but beyond the fun, Family Camp was about creating connections and offering support to families with a DHH child. The parents especially enjoyed the panel discussion with our DHH Youth Support Workers - to learn about their experiences. It sparked great conversations and learnings.



DONOR STORY

Lighting up your neighbourhood can light up the future for deaf and hard of hearing children.

LIGHTING UP THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

When she was 7 years old, Stephany asked her Mum why her older brother always ignored her.

It was only then that she learned he couldn't hear her. He had been deaf since he was 7 months old, after having meningitis.

"I was so curious," Stephany says. "I thought about it a lot over the next few years, trying to connect with him. When I was 12, and had done some research, I asked mum if I could learn Auslan and she said yes."

Stephany's parents and siblings never learned Auslan, so she was the only one who could communicate with her brother, and often acted as his interpreter. Asked whether this ever felt like a big responsibility, she is quick to say, "I loved it. It was like our secret language".

Stephany's family established a tradition of doing a Christmas light display at home in 1992. It was something Stephany's brother and father used to do together, and the family vowed to make it even bigger in his memory when Stephany's brother passed away seven years ago.

Last year, Stephany decided to turn their family tradition into a fundraiser for Deaf Children Australia, so that it would make a difference to others like her brother.

"Everything I do is for him," she said. "My brother grew up with a lot of love, but the one thing he had to do without was communication. I made a promise that I would never let another child go through what he went through."

Stephany works as a support worker/tutor with The Auslan Company and has visited families who have attended DCA's family camps, so a recommendation from her manager was all she needed to choose the charity to benefit from their generosity.

"It took a bit of faith as some people were a bit negative about the idea, saying that no one was going to donate to see the lights," says Stephany.

But Stephany dressed up as an elf, and her family dressed up as well. She handed out candy and encouraged guests to make a donation in the box that Santa was holding. Every night they brought the box in for safe keeping, Stephany was delighted to feel it was getting heavier and heavier.

A highlight was when two DCA staff members came to see the display and Stephany was signing with them. Other guests asked what that was about, and she relished the opportunity to share a bit about this language with people in her community who knew little about it.



Stephany's 2021 Christmas light display will raise funds for Deaf Children Australia again. Visit her at Fairway Dr, Drouin between 1 December – 6 January to support her fundraiser, or call our Fundraising Team on 1800 645 916 if you'd like to arrange your own.

> "It was only then that she learned that he couldn't hear her. He had been deaf since he was 7 months old, after having meningitis."



INSPIRING STORIES

Creating an inclusive world through inspiring stories.

Sharing the amazing stories of the people we support; their celebrations, challenges, and dreams is key to raising awareness among the broader community about deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children, young people, and their families.

We share these stories in several ways including social media, our website, the media, newsletters, and stakeholders.

2021 highlights include:

Hello my name is

We ran a social media campaign during National Week of Deaf People (19-25 September 2020) to raise awareness about Deaf people, their culture and language, Auslan. The aim was to engage our stakeholders and the broader community in the campaign to sign "Hello my name is" and their name and share it on social media.

More than 65 videos were shared on social media, starring deaf, hard of hearing and hearing people from around Australia.



The campaign engaged:

20 Ministers, Senators, MPs, and Councillors

Celebrities and media identities including Emma Watkins, Todd McKenney, and Shane Jacobson

Media - ABC News Breakfast host, Michael Rowland

Cottage to Castle

To celebrate the life of our pioneering founder, FJ Rose, we created a video to highlight his remarkable achievements that live on today. Our Cottage to Castle video premiered on the 1st of December, commemorating 100 years since his passing. We interviewed past students, the people he has inspired, and those with a connection to the Bluestone including Deaf Interpreter Chris Dunn, celebrated Deaf historian, Dr Breda Carty AO, and teacher of the Deaf, Marnie Kerridge.

We were delighted to have Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria deliver a speech that highlighted the ongoing connection past Governors of Victoria have had with the Bluestone since 1866.

Feedback demonstrated that people enjoyed learning about Deaf experiences, and we are incredibly excited to continue sharing these wonderful stories.

Media coverage

To raise awareness among the broader community about the achievements and challenges DHH children, young people and their families experience, we rely on the generosity of those we support and sometimes staff to share their stories.

Shane Jacobson and Todd McKenney participating in the "Hello my name is" campaign.



To the participants and staff that step up to allow us to do this, thank you. These 'real life' stories resonate with the community and gain great traction, which helps to spread the word about what we do and why.

Our success stories have reached a huge audience with coverage in The Age (print and online), The Sydney Morning Herald, WA Today, Brisbane Times, Shepparton News, and 3AW.

We would also like to thank the families and young people that are happy to share their photos and videos with us from the events and programs they take part in. Their stories are engaging and inspiring - encouraging more DHH to access our services.

DCA is thrilled to be part of such a supportive and welcoming community and we look forward to building these connections in years to come.

Getting social

Over the past year, our growing social media presence has become an essential part of how we communicate and share stories. It is our shared community that makes this such a success and this is what we have achieved:

162%
increase in our **Instagram** audience

12%
increase in our **Facebook** audience

4%
increase in our **Twitter** audience

PROJECTS

Families are telling us they need to be able to offer the best support for their child.We responded with the development of Platypus Playhouse and Flying Colours.

UPDATE ON FLYING COLOURS

Flying Colours is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. This online resource will officially launch on 12th October.

To identify the content to feature on Flying Colours, we commissioned one of the largest surveys of its kind. More than 500 took part in the national survey including families with a deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) child, and allied health professionals. The survey responses were extensive, detailed, insightful – and will help to provide a clear direction on the content families are looking for.

With this advice, our Flying Colours website was launched for testing on the 30th of June 2021. It includes over 50 carefully curated summaries of relevant research, linking through to research papers. It also contains 17 written and recorded stories from families and young people with lived experience, and 27 carefully selected articles covering subjects and information parents told us they would like to see featured.

Flying Colours also includes profiles of our Parent Mentors, news articles, top ten 'burning' questions, and useful links. Flying Colours also helps to answer questions with our Facts vs Myths section, and our national service directory helps to connect people with around 2,592 support services across Australia.

Content is scheduled for refreshment every quarter. It will be enhanced regularly by contributions from our new Flying Colours Survey Collective - a group of engaged families who have offered to provide us with ongoing information, insights, and perspectives.

The resources are designed not only to complement each other but to facilitate playful, engaging opportunities for a child to begin to communicate and develop basic contextual connections with family and friends.

Each bilingual resource (Auslan and English) is created to help children learn, and build physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. The resources include links to a range of videos that show people how to sign not only individual words but also provide full Auslan translations of the books.



SUMMARY OF PLATYPUS PLAYHOUSE

Platypus Playhouse is an enchanting, creative, and unique range of learning tools designed to help build Auslan skills within families with a deaf or hard of hearing child. The range includes story books featuring Pip and Annie, two cute platypuses, their best friends (finger puppet animals), soft tactile fruit and vegetables, Auslan cards, videos and more!

The Platypus Playhouse range is in continual development – with a further six story book titles and corresponding Auslan cards and Auslan videos to be added through 2022. The Platypus Playhouse concept, relevant research articles, useful links and a Guide for Parents (digital book) are all featured at "platypusplayhouse.org.au".

We are grateful to the David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust managed by Equity Trustees, for funding the development and production of our first two Platypus Playhouse Storybooks and associate resources.

FINANCIAL REPORT

For the financial year ending 30 June 2021, DCA reported an operating surplus of $3.6m.

OPERATING RESULTS

DCA reported a positive financial result with an operating surplus of $3.6m for the financial year ending 30 June 2021. Again, the impact of COVID-19 presented many challenges in terms of service delivery, however, DCA was financially supported through various government initiatives including JobKeeper and Cashflow Boost. DCA was again able to adapt to remote service delivery.

WHERE THE FUNDING CAME FROM

Annual Income 2020/2021 $10.3m

Income for the year represents an increase of $4.2m when compared to the previous financial year. This is largely due to the performance of DCA's Investment Portfolio and government subsidies.
DCA is continually finding ways to generate more income and structure itself accordingly to ensure there is a positive legacy for the next generation of deaf and hard of hearing children.

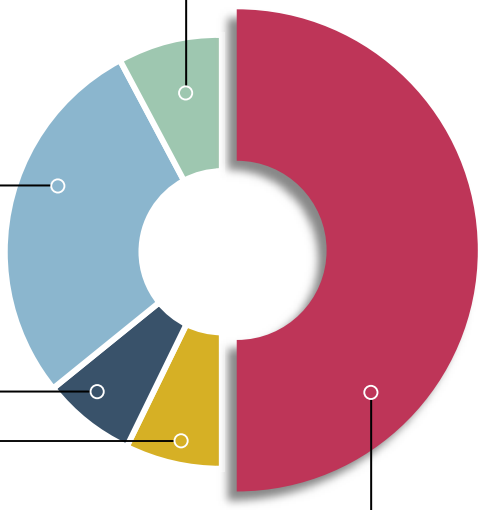
7%
Grants

28%
Fee for Service

8%
Investment Income

7%
Fundraising

50%
Other including government subsidies and fair value movement



OPPORTUNITIES

Equity

DCA continues to maintain a strong Balance Sheet. It has increased its overall equity and as at 30 June 2021, has $36.5m invested. The independently audited accounts confirm that DCA continues to be in a strong financial position. This is a significant advantage in the current environment when compared to other similar sized not-for-profit organisations.

WHERE THE FUNDING WENT

Annual Expenditure 2020/2021 $6.7m

Total expenditure for the year was $6.7m which includes an increase of $320k in employee costs compared to the previous year. Employee expenses amounted to $4.2m.

The Board and the Executive team will look to explore further savings opportunities, maximise the use of returns from the investment portfolio and minimise operational expenditure overheads.

CHALLENGES

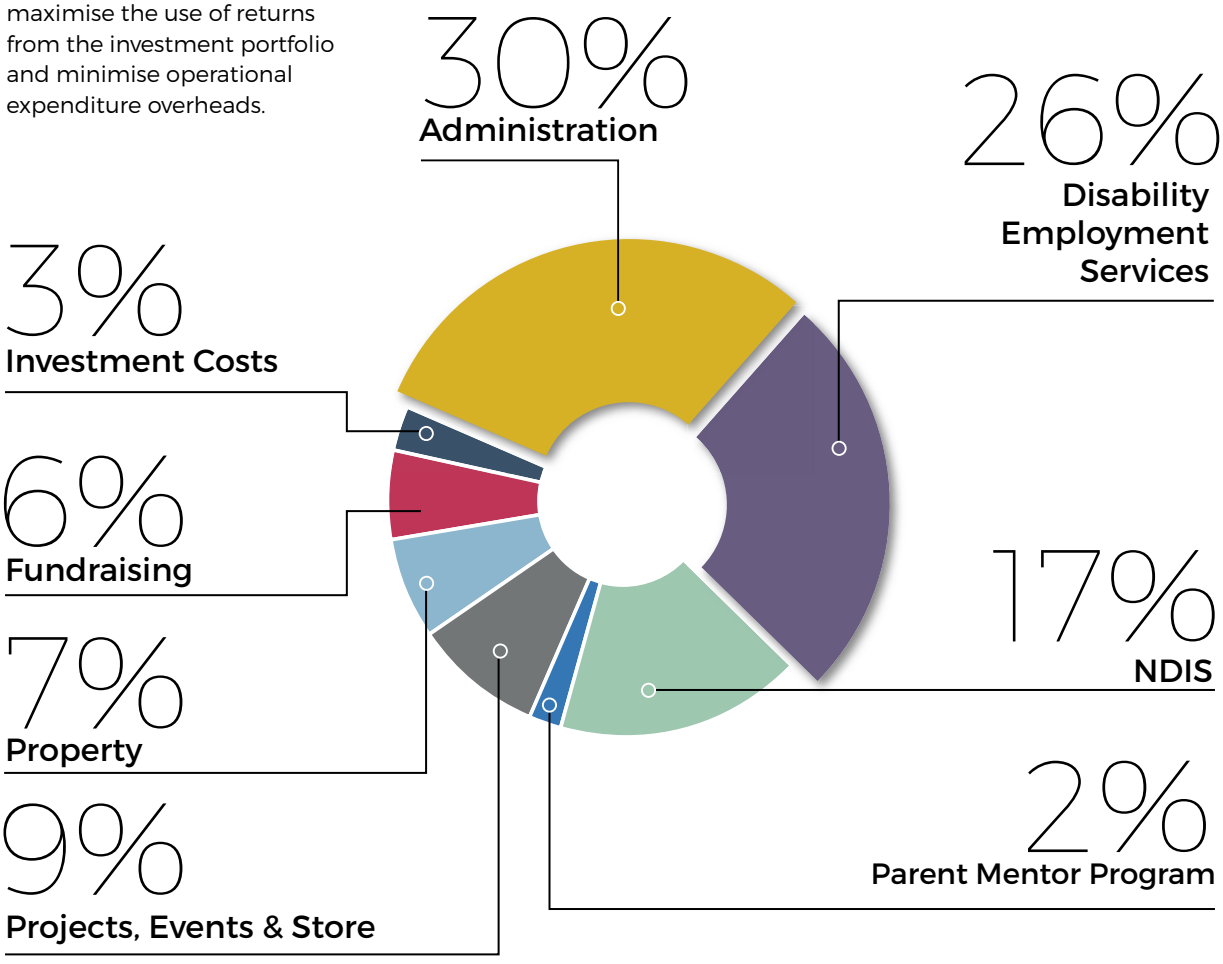
Cost pressures

Notwithstanding its strong underlying financial position, like most not-for-profit organisations, DCA continues to experience significant operational challenges.

DCA has several legacy issues that need to be managed to enable it to meet its strategic objectives. The maintenance of the Bluestone building continues to represent a significant financial challenge.

Learnings

DCA has been responsive to the recently challenging environment and continues to reassess its service offering to ensure it meets its commitments to the community. The organisation will continue to work towards achieving a financially sustainable position. It remains committed to doing everything it can to empower deaf and hard of hearing children and young people to achieve their potential.



OUR QUALITY

We are constantly improving and reviewing our processes to ensure we can best support our community.

HOW WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE

Deaf Children Australia is committed to ensuring quality and continuous improvement. Our Quality Management Committee is responsible for overseeing our Quality Management Systems. It regularly reviews and amends our policies and procedures.

This helps to ensure both quality and accountability to our stakeholders.

We undergo external quality audits annually. Our current auditors are Global Mark, and through their audits, we can ensure we meet the quality standards required for our work with both government bodies and the wider community.

Our extensive Quality Procedures are what allow us to maintain certification under the International Standard for Quality Management Systems (ISO:9001). Our internal audits help us to strengthen our quality, compliance, and risk management processes - while helping to feed into our continued quality improvement process.

Through our complaint and incident management systems, and the oversight of committees such as our Health and Safety Committee and our Child Safe Committee – Deaf Children Australia is able to ensure its work environments and service delivery is both safe and compliant.

We are always accountable to our stakeholders, and through our processes, procedures, and audits – we are constantly improving and reviewing our processes to ensure we can best support our community.



We value your feedback. You can provide feedback, lodge a compliment or a complaint at:

deafchildrenaustralia.org.au/contact

quality@deafchildren.org.au

SMS 0409 553 121

Telephone 03 9539 5300

DCA, 597 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, Victoria 3004.

Feedback will be directed to the relevant department for consideration and resolution. Compliments, complaints and other feedback are recorded against and reported to our Board.

OUR BOARD

We have great pleasure in presenting this, our 159th Impact Report for the year ending 30 June 2021

Deaf Children Australia is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by a board of directors. Our board meets monthly and maintains two committees to support its governance functions. The Audit, Finance and Strategy Committee meet monthly and is chaired by the treasurer Colin Clark, our Governance and Risk Committee meets quarterly and is chaired by Chris Penman.



Kerry Ferguson | CHAIR

Audit, Finance and Strategy Committee Member



Melisa Sloan | BOARD MEMBER

Audit, Finance and Strategy Committee Member



Colin Clark | TREASURER

CHAIR Audit, Finance and Strategy Committee



Adam Rich | BOARD MEMBER

Governance and Risk Committee Member



Karen Cleave | DEPUTY CHAIR

Audit, Finance and Strategy Committee Member



Chris Penman | BOARD MEMBER

CHAIR Governance and Risk Committee



Carol Webb | BOARD MEMBER

Audit, Finance and Strategy Committee Member



Will de vere Gould
BOARD MEMBER

Governance and Risk Committee Member

MANAGEMENT TEAM

David Wilson
CEO

Angela Woodruff
COMPANY SECRETARY

Noel Henderson
GM FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT

Frank Nava
MANAGER SIGN FOR WORK VICTORIA

Rachelle Knoche
NATIONAL DES TRAINING & COMPLIANCE MANAGER

Ele Raimondi
OPERATIONS MANAGER

Lynn Crawford
FINANCE MANAGER

Jane Harris
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

HERITAGE GRANTS

Our connection to the past drives us to continue building a better future.

Maintaining our original Bluestone building at 597 St Kilda Rd and its 160 years of Deaf history is a great privilege but requires many resources. We are therefore extremely grateful for the ongoing support of Heritage Victoria for providing us with two important grants to assist with restoration projects.

The Western Façade

Heritage Victoria has generously supported the restoration of the western façade of our beautiful Bluestone building providing the necessary funds to repair and replace the timber windows. The funding helped us restore the windows and retain the original design while helping to improve ventilation and pest control.

The restoration process used traditional techniques and skills, employing specialist contractors, in consultation with our Heritage Architect – David Prest. This project fixed all the remaining windows on the west facing side – a restoration program that began with Stage 1 in 2017 through the generous support of a Living Heritage Grant.

We were particularly delighted we were again able to offer a work experience and history program to deaf students who worked alongside the expert team restoring the windows. Not only did the students learn about restoration and carpentry, they also learnt more about the history of our building and site from David. They were pleased to be contributing to maintaining such an important building for the Deaf community.

New Front Gate

We are also extremely grateful for the Grant from the Victorian Heritage Restoration Fund to replace the original front gate on the corner of High Street and St. Kilda Road with completion scheduled for the end of 2021.

This gate is designed as a reconstruction of our original 19th Century main front timber gate and gateposts, including cast iron gatepost capitals. The design – known as Five bar -is a traditional English agricultural gate. When the original gate was built in 1896, St Kilda Road was a rural setting with native trees and there were limited buildings in the area. The design of the gate is based on a c. 1920 small-scale photo, clearly showing the original gate with five horizontal rails (or bars) and diagonal members in tension.

We are looking forward to this work being completed.

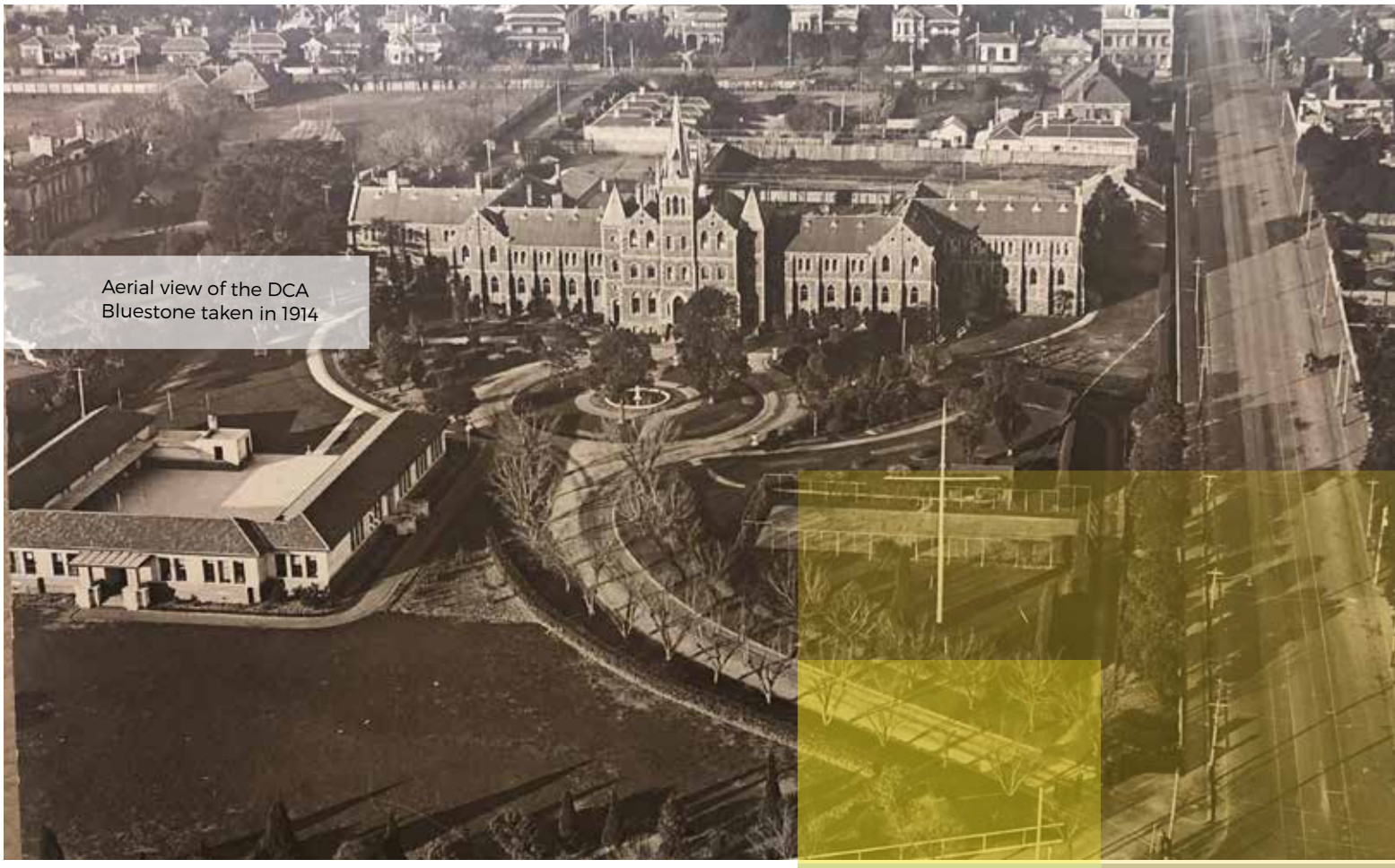


Our pioneering founder FJ Rose and below the fountain he gifted in 1868

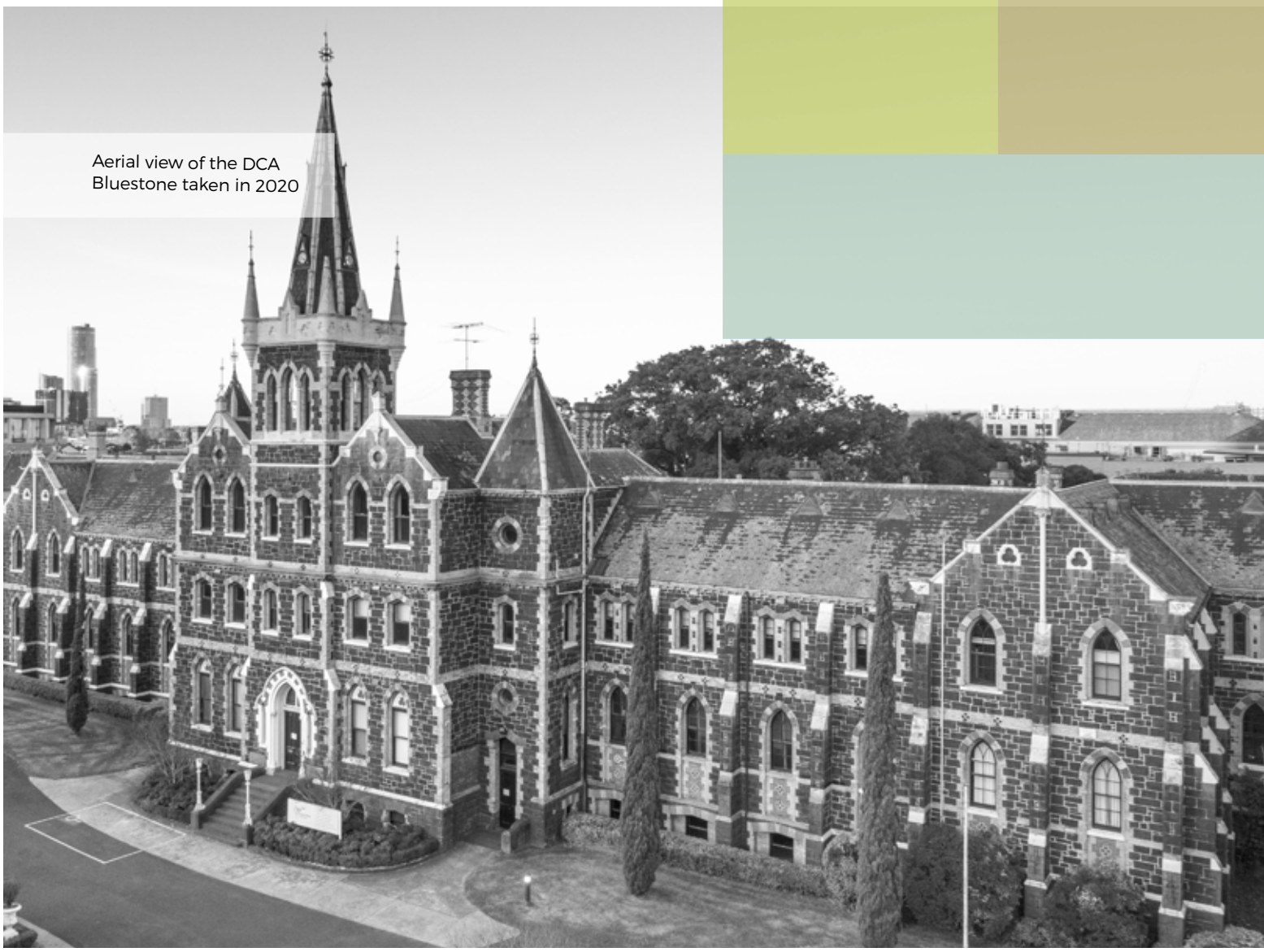


Stained glass mural installed in 1866





Aerial view of the DCA Bluestone taken in 1914



Aerial view of the DCA Bluestone taken in 2020

HOW YOU CAN HELP

LEAVE A LEGACY
A gift in your will.

DONATE
Your donations help change lives.

VOLUNTEER WITH US
We offer a range of volunteer opportunities across our organisation.

WORKPLACE GIVING
Get your work colleagues involved.

FUNDRAISING FOR DCA
Do something amazing big or small, host a community event.

BECOME A REGULAR DONOR
Help support deaf and hard of hearing children, young people and their families.

Deaf Children Australia.

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DCA is a not-for-profit organisation and is a registered charity.