



# ANNUAL REVIEW

2022-2023



# Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025

## MISSION

Standing with the community. Building capacity and influencing social change.

## VISION

Empowered. Connected. Achieving.



### DEAF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Deaf Connect celebrates Auslan and recognises all the Deaf leaders in Australia who have advocated for Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing communities. We are proud of everyone's contribution, whether big or small, in preserving our language, community and culture.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY



Deaf Connect acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.



### COMMUNITY

Working with individuals and the community to understand and meet their needs.



### LEADERSHIP

Developing Deaf Connect's influence and position to enhance the capacity of the Deaf community.

### INNOVATION & GROWTH

Driving improvements and new opportunities aligned with our Mission and enhancing our sustainability.

### CULTURE & CAPABILITY

Enabling organisational capability, capacity and readiness.

\*The Deaf community includes Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing Australians, and the families and allies who support them.

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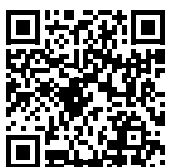
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Available in Auslan

# CHAIR & CEO REPORT

## Chair of the Board Ralph Collins and Chief Executive Officer Brett Casey

### Drawing the plans, and building the foundations to support sustainable growth

The decisions and directions of the Deaf Connect Board and Executive team, continue to be guided by the goals and initiatives set out in our Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

Reflecting on this year, it has been one where our commitment to each of our core pillars Community, Leadership, Innovation & Growth, and Culture & Capability has been distinct; from the work of our Information Services and Support Work teams in building individual capacity within the community, to driving new opportunities through national growth by welcoming our Western Australia team, to the work of our Impact Team in raising our profile to the community, Government and external stakeholders.

Undertaking our day-to-day work, we continue to live our mission of: Standing with the Deaf community, building capacity, and influencing social change.

As the NDIA has evolved, the Deaf sector landscape continues to change. Our strength as a leading provider ensures that we can continue to offer opportunities to partner and create a stronger community.

This year saw Access Plus WA Deaf and Deaf Connect come together to discuss collaborative ways to strengthen the national Deaf community and subsequently saw a transfer of the assets, services and programs of Access Plus WA Deaf to Deaf Connect. Being able to offer programs nationally leads to a stronger community and confidence that Deaf people can live anywhere in Australia and receive a value and consistent service of need. This growth moves Deaf Connect into a truly national organisation that serves the needs of the Deaf community. Whilst our reach stretches far and wide, our core business: the delivery of services that support Deaf Australians, continues to drive our activities. This Annual Review is a record of that. We continue to be the pivotal point for hundreds of Deaf community members to receive services and act as a conduit where needed.

This year Deaf Connect has strengthened the remit of our social impact agenda working with and alongside our community. The activities of our Impact team in the areas of Youth, Leadership, Deaf History, and the Deaf Ecosystem are paving the way for new innovations and programs that will build a

## Ralph Collins & Brett Casey

Chair of the Board and Chief Executive Officer



stronger Deaf community into the future. Our Board seek to understand better the concept of Deaf space and have prioritised Deaf space as a critical focal point for our organisation in the coming year.

This, coupled with many other initiatives we continue to design and deliver, looks to preserve and build on the hallmarks of the Deaf community.

Our Innovation and Growth pillar continues to offer opportunities for our community to self-direct their own innovative projects as we offer financial support of these community initiatives (our Deaf Connect Grants program) and our first-ever successful applicants for the Leonie

Jackson Memorial Fund this financial year has seen an array of individual projects commence. It has been a pleasure to watch the community tackle new ideas, shape its future, lead and control its own destiny.

Our capacity and reputation, as well as our investment in our partnership framework, have seen critical local, national, and even global partnerships take shape. Government and corporate partners continue to invest in Deaf Connect at various levels through contractual arrangements and our agreed outcomes. This work of creating our partnerships means our local and global Deaf community is in reach – for all Deaf Australians.



Auslan Immersion Weekend participants on the Sunshine Coast.

This year's report will showcase not just our services but our organisational capacity and resilience to invest in our staff, training and resources to ensure we remain contemporary and enhance our capacity to deliver. We have a highly skilled and quickly growing workforce across the organisation that continues to working seamlessly through hybrid workplace arrangements to ensure our best work can be given to the community we serve.

To our partners, our supporters, our community - your ability to come and contribute to shaping Deaf Connects future is always appreciated. Working together will not just strengthens outcomes but provides long lasting benefits for the community. For

this we thank you for your commitment.

To the Board and staff of Deaf Connect, a thank you is never enough. It is a privilege to watch our progression and work alongside likeminded individuals to ensure we deliver strategically and practically on our vision and mission.

Finally, during the next financial year, the organisation as a whole, will begin the process of crafting a new strategic plan and vision for Deaf Connect. One that converts the past five years of innovation and growth, our initiatives and service offerings to sets new goals for our organisation in support of the community. We look forward to sharing those goals in future updates to you all.

## CHAIR REFLECTIONS

This Annual Review for FY22/23 will my last as Chair, with my tenure on the Board of Deaf Connect set to end at the end of the 2023 calendar year.

During the past nine years on the Board I have seen a significant evolution from Deaf Services Queensland to Deaf Connect. In 2014 the organisation looked very different, with a compact service offering in Queensland, and poised for growth.

Nearly a decade later I'm very proud of Deaf Connect's national remit, and the range and quality of the services we are able to offer to the community.

I'd like to thank my fellow board members, both current and past for their support, particularly during my time as Chair, and thank the Deaf Connect leadership team for their hard work in ensuring the Deaf community have a strong organisation standing with them.



Brett Casey (CEO, Deaf Connect) and Gary Ware (Board Member, Access Plus WA Deaf) announce the transfer of services

## ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRANSFER OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BASED STAFF TO DEAF CONNECT

Deaf Connect concluded the financial year by announcing the transfer of staff and services from Access Plus WA Deaf to Deaf Connect in June 2023 - strengthening the existing support for the Western Australian Deaf community. At the time of writing, our new Western Australian-based staff are beginning to transition into their roles, and we welcome them to the Deaf Connect team.

When Deaf Connect was invited by the board of Access Plus to investigate working together we saw an opportunity to ensure the high level of on-the-ground service delivery in WA could be better supported by our national systems and processes.

We also identified future opportunities for service delivery to address gaps in service availability.

We'd like to acknowledge the lengthy history of Access Plus WA Deaf and are taking measures to preserve the legacies of both organisations, while also seamlessly integrating our systems. It represents a powerful union that strengthens our commitment to the Deaf community nationwide.

At the time of writing, the transfer of these staff and commencement of services has begun - but their contribution has not yet been reflected in this report.

# CHIEF IMPACT OFFICER'S REPORT

Chief Impact Officer Brent Phillips

**FY22/23 has been by far the biggest year in the short history of Deaf Connect's Impact team. The teams which make up Impact have delivered projects across several key areas: Community Engagement, Government Relations and Projects & Partnerships.**

Across the year the Impact team has grown significantly, with additional staff joining the team in new roles, largely to support specific projects. This growth has also included the secondment of the Auslan Translations department, which has operated as part of the Impact team for much of the past financial year.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Over the past year, the Impact team have successfully facilitated a range of activities aimed at engaging the Deaf community and supporting the growth and development of Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing individuals in Australia. These initiatives have been instrumental in creating opportunities for this community and fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion.

One of our landmark achievements for the year was the successful revival of Deaf Festival Sydney at the Sydney Olympic Park in November 2022, which gathered an impressive turnout of over 1,500 attendees. More about the Deaf Festival available on page 19.

Previous page: Deaf Connect grant recipients pose in Jeju, South Korea at the XIX World Federation of the Deaf World Congress.

In addition, we led Deaf Connect's continued commitment to building up the Deaf Ecosystem through initiatives such as Deaf Business Networking Events, providing valuable networking opportunities for Deaf individuals to connect and exchange ideas.

In April 2023, we provided significant support to Deaf Australia to host the Crossing Borders Youth Camp for 13-17 year olds held in Brisbane. 45 participants attended from all over Australia to form new friendships and strengthen their cultural and linguistic identities, in a highly successful event.

Our work on developing skills within the community that support the Deaf Ecosystem was also aided by the launch of two video series titled 'Life as a Deaf Board Member' and 'Life as a Deaf Business Owner.' These series feature interviews with various Deaf leaders and owners, offering insights into their experiences and perspectives.

Another core focus for the Impact Team this year has been the shared history of the Australian Deaf community and supporting that into the future. Deaf Connect's Deaf



## OUR IMPACT

Chief Impact Officer Report

## Brent Phillips



### Chief Impact Officer

History Project has continued to deliver initiatives across the country to collate our historical documents, stories and photos, which included the establishment of an Adelaide working group to explore and preserve South Australian Deaf History, leading to the restoration of a Grandfather Clock at our Mile End office. We look forward to ongoing collaboration with this group in 2023/2024 to honor and commemorate our history.

Continuing our commitment to community engagement and building on last year's National Roadshow, Deaf Connect has delivered 12 additional morning tea events across Australia to 215 members of the Deaf seniors' community, providing information on the free interpreting and live captioning service available to them funded by the Federal Department of Health and Ageing.

### GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Throughout the last financial year, we have successfully responded to a range of parliamentary and government inquiries and acted proactively in alignment our advocacy agenda representing the Deaf community's best interest as the largest service provider and social impact organisation. Our submissions and engagement have included:

Presentations at or submissions to:

- The Disability Royal Commission's Public Hearing #29 and provided a supplementary submission;

- The NSW Inquiry into Auslan interpretation for broadcasting;
- The ACT Inquiry into access to services and information in Auslan and met with several ACT Ministers and policy officers, as well as DeafACT; and
- The Inquiry into the Capability and Culture of the National Disability Insurance Agency – this resulted in an invitation to provide evidence at a hearing

Official advice or commentary provided on a range of issues including:

- The NDIA's "Would We Fund It" guidelines;
- The Department of Social Services' review of the accessibility of mainstream and specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services for women with disability;
- The NDIA's Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy co-design;
- The Employee Assistance Fund rate increase;
- Cochlear mapping concerns in Adelaide and Townsville, supporting families and individuals affected;
- The Department of Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications potential training for TTY users to engage with infrastructure; and
- National Relay Service consultation.



The Deaf Connect team celebrate Auslan Day at Brighton Primary School & Centre of Deaf Education in Adelaide.

### PROJECTS AND GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The Impact Team have seen the expansion in the project space off the back of successful government grant submissions and has successfully seen further investment into projects as key government agencies have funded several projects already in development. These include:

#### National: Auslan Resource Information Hub Information Linkages & Capacity Building Project

*Funded by the Federal Government Department of Social Services (DSS)*

Delivered in consortium with Expression Australia, the Auslan Resource Information Hub

project has seen further investment from the Department to continue this national program of work which aims to identify the information needs of the Australian Deaf community.

#### South Australia: South Australia Health Information Linkages & Capacity Building (ILC) Project

*Funded by the Federal Government Department of Social Services (DSS)*

This project has developed an online Deafness Awareness Training (DAT) program specially targeted to frontline medical and administrative staff. The training allows medical staff to understand the communication needs of Deaf and hard of hearing patients that present at Government based health services across the state.



**National: Building Employer Confidence (BEC) Information Linkages & Capacity Building (ILC) Project**

*Funded by the Federal Government Department of Social Services (DSS)*

The Building Employer Confidence Information Linkages & Capacity Building Project focuses on identifying the barriers and challenges faced by employers and through the development of an evidence-based toolkit, provide employers with strategies and tools to increase their confidence and ability to retain, upskill and advance the employment opportunities for Deaf and hard of hearing employees.

**Northern Territory: Inclusive Education Support Grant (IESG)**

Working alongside the Northern Territory Government, the Northern Territory Education Department and Melbourne based and Deaf owned business Auslan Hub, the Inclusive Education Support Grant (IESG) project is investing in upskilling, training and supporting NT Education staff working with Deaf and hard of hearing students in primary and secondary schools.

**New South Wales: Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP)**

*Funded by the New South Wales Government's Department of Communities & Justice*

The Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP) aims to deliver self-advocacy resources to meet the needs of the New South Wales Deaf Community. Resources developed will be based off feedback from Deaf Connect's Community Access team (under Information Services) and through focus groups with members of the New South Wales Deaf community.

**TRANSLATION SERVICES**

Throughout the FY22/23, the Translations Services team made substantial strides in providing Auslan translations to a diverse array of clients. This dedication culminated in the creation of 693 videos across 287 projects, illustrating their unwavering commitment to enhancing information accessibility in Auslan.

The crafting of 693 Auslan videos has yielded significant enhancements in information accessibility for the Auslan-using community. This impact encompasses heightened comprehension of government policies, more effective communication for non-government organisations, and increased interaction with educational content.

As we anticipate the year ahead, we remain committed to refining our processes, expanding our service offerings, and sustaining our commitment to inclusivity for the Auslan-speaking community.

Next page: Brett Casey and Roberta Cordano (President, Gallaudet University) sign an Memorandum of Understanding in Korea.



# OUR INNOVATION

Special Projects



# SPECIAL PROJECTS

## THE SIGN NAME PROJECT

In recognition of Auslan Day 2023 Deaf Connect, supported by nearly 200 members of the Deaf community, were proud to launch the Sign Name Project. Throughout this financial year the team attended events across the country, collecting videos from community members in which we asked them to share their sign name and the story behind it.

The result was the first stage of our online Sign Name gallery, a permanent archive of sign names around the country which will be added to and developed over time.

This stage of the project was partially funded by Commonwealth Bank of Australia. You can view the gallery on the Deaf Connect website.



## DEAF CONNECT AND GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY JOIN TO EMPOWER INTERNATIONAL DEAF COMMUNITY

This year, during the XIX World Congress

of the World Federation of the Deaf, Deaf Connect and Gallaudet University were proud to announce a groundbreaking partnership.

The announcement was made public at a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signing ceremony at the Gallaudet University alumni event, on 13 July, 2023 at Parnas Hotel Jeju, South Korea. Through this multi-year partnership, Deaf Connect and Gallaudet University will work together on several key initiatives:

**Education and Training:** The institutions will collaborate on Immersion educational programs and training opportunities to equip Deaf individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in various fields to gain the “Gallaudet University experience”.

**Policy and Awareness:** Both organisations are committed to raising awareness about the challenges faced by the Deaf community and advocating for their rights.

**Community Engagement:** Deaf Connect and Gallaudet University recognise the importance of community engagement and will collaborate on initiatives that foster social connections and support networks within the Deaf community through organising opportunities for employees and students.

**Technology and Innovation:** The partnership will leverage technology and innovation to develop accessible solutions that enhance



Onstage presenters at the World Congress.

communication, education, and employment opportunities for the Deaf community.

**Global Leadership Events:** The parties began their partnership at the XIX World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf by Co-hosting a global leadership event prior to the 2023 WFD Congress in Jeju, South Korea, and follow-up events will be delivered.

## XIX WORLD CONGRESS OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) has held the World Congress every four years since 1951.

For the 2023 World Congress, in Jeju, South Korea Deaf Connect proudly sponsored 35 community members including youth and Deaf Connect staff to attend the Congress and associated events.

The investment in our community has been an important focus for Deaf Connect in FY22/23 and the feedback from attendees and the learnings and relationships developed in South Korea will hopefully

support valuable developments within the community locally.

We also co-hosted a global Deaf Leadership workshop with Gallaudet University just prior to the commencement of the WFD Congress. Over 50 participants from 20 countries attended, and topics delivered included Networking & Partnerships, Sign Language Rights and Emotional Intelligence & Transformative Change.

## OUR RESEARCH

In 2022 Deaf Connect in partnership with Deaf Australia released three research reports addressing the economic value, and optimal timing, of Auslan intervention for Deaf Australians.

The reports, collectively titled A Culturally Affirming Way Forward provide recommendations to address issues faced by Deaf and hard of hearing people as well as the economic and social benefits of Auslan, and the optimal timing of Auslan intervention.

The reports are:

- Our Culture, Our Value: The Social And Economic Benefits Of Auslan
- Our Culture, Our Value: The Costs Of Hearing Loss In Australia, and;
- Exploring The Benefits Of Auslan In Early Intervention Approaches For Deaf Children

The reports are some of the most in-depth research into the value of Auslan acquisition in the language's history, and provide an essential picture of benefits of Auslan both for community members, and to the wider Australian economy,

## GRANTS AND SPONSORSHIPS

Each year Deaf Connect provides up to \$300,000 in grants and sponsorships to Deaf individuals, community groups and projects that support Deaf Australians. The Deaf Connect community grant program is one of the initiatives funded by the Deaf Lottery – directly funding a range of projects and initiatives within the community.

Projects throughout the year included:

### [Spring Jam 2022 Championship](#)

Deaf Connect proudly sponsored the inaugural Spring Jam Basketball tournament for Deaf, hard of hearing and CODA (Children of Deaf adults) community in September 2022, held at Brisbane State High School. Congratulations to the winners, team Deaf Gain.

### [A head start on a business career](#)

A passionate teenager with the desire to pursue a career in business and have a positive impact on the Deaf Community, received a grant from Deaf Connect to study a Diploma in Business in Year 11 and 12. They aim to continue on to university, contributing to the Deaf Ecosystem and encouraging a bilingual workplace for all to succeed in.

### [Providing access to Pride](#)

In March 2023 Sydney WorldPride hosted the largest LGBTQIA+ Human Rights Conference in the Southern Hemisphere. The three day event was an exploration of LGBTQIA+ human rights. Deaf Connect supported the event by providing a grant to cater for the provision of Auslan interpreters across the event, ensuring it was accessible and inclusive for all abilities.



The Goannas in Crete before the World Deaf Basketball Championships.

### [Imagined Touch](#)

Deaf Connect provided a grant to film makers Sofya Gollan and Jodee Mundy to travel to New York City to represent their documentary IMAGINED TOUCH. The film was selected as part of the Reelabilities Film Festival 2023, at the prestigious Lincoln Centre of Performing Arts in celebration of their 15th Anniversary.

### [Representing on the world stage](#)

Deaf Connect provided grants to support Deaf athletes performing in both the World Cup Rugby 7s, and the World Deaf Basketball Championships 2023.

## DEAF FESTIVAL

The Deaf Festival Sydney is a long-standing tradition in NSW, which most recently was supported by the NSW Deaf Society before the creation of Deaf Connect. Following a hiatus due to the Pandemic (during which Deaf Connect hosted the first Deaf online arts festival – VIBE FESTIVAL), the NSW Deaf Festival was back this year in a new home at Sydney Olympic Park.

Over 1,500 Deaf community members attended on Saturday the 16th of November, supporting over 40 stalls linked to the Deaf ecosystem and enjoyed our stage show including a guest performance from Emma Memma and Elvin Melvin.

The Deaf Festival has traditionally been a community-driven event, and Deaf Connect is proud to be acting as a sponsor, advisor and support team for the growing and enthusiastic group of Deaf community

members who make up the Festival Committee. We thank all those volunteers for their time in making the festival possible, and look forward to working with you again for the Deaf Festival Sydney 2023.

Thanks to our sponsors: eWAY, Full Life, Sweeney Interpreting, NextSense, PAH! and Concentrix.



Celebrations at the 2022 Sydney Deaf Festival.



## OUR SERVICES

Chief Operating Officer Report  
Ageing Well  
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# CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER'S REPORT

## Chief Operating Officer Craig McDonald

**At the close of the financial year, Deaf Connect is in a strong position, as a stable and consistent provider for the community, poised for further service growth and expansion based on community need.**

This year, Deaf Connect has provided over 250,000 hours of services and training nationwide across a highly diversified set of services and funders.

It is our diverse service offering, across all stages of life which sets Deaf Connect up for a bright future in supporting the Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing community.



Throughout this period of exceptional growth, and continued high standards of service delivery we have been working behind the scenes to ensure our teams are structured in the most efficient manner, and in a way which is clear to the clients they support. We have seen some changes at our General Manager, and senior manager levels as well as the integration of staff from other organisations into services throughout the business. We are learning from the experience of the new staff groups that are joining Deaf Connect and building service teams which are primed for innovation for the community.

These restructured service teams continue to focus on operational efficiency – particularly as we integrate new staff and learn from our first year of operations in South Australia. Over the year, our teams have successfully completed all financial and quality audits and maintained our relationships with funding providers nationally.

Focusing on the next 12 months, we will continue to identify areas in which we can

## Craig McDonald

Chief Operating Officer



Participants at a Deaf Connect Auslan Immersion Weekend event.

support the community through growing much-needed services. Importantly we will be welcoming Access Plus WA Deaf into the Deaf Connect family in the next financial year, and working closely with local staff and community to ensure services that meet local need.

Service delivery remains the core business for Deaf Connect, and continuity of delivery is paramount to provide certainty for our community. We look forward to seeing our hard work this year provide dividends for the community in the future.

# AGEING WELL

## General Manager Ageing Well Service Dr Leena Vuorinen

**The Ageing Well team is committed to supporting our Deaf seniors to remain healthy, informed and independent. Over the past year the team has provided this support for over 100 clients to live in their own home for as long as possible, and delivered more than 9,000 one-on-one visit hours across our Ageing Well client group.**



Trina Wilson (Deaf Connect) presents to seniors at Moorooka.

FY22/23 was a year of firsts for Ageing Well in our journey to provide this support, each signifying a considerable milestone in the development of our service.

These included the department's first full site audit by the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, and our first desk assessment by ACQSC – which granted full compliance for the next three years.

Based on these reviews a new assessment and support planning tool was developed – another first for our team, and every client's support plan was reviewed and updated.

Ageing Well has also focused on improving its communication with clients. Following the pandemic, and extensive training from our support workers many of our clients have become more comfortable with

## Dr Leena Vuorinen

General Manager, Ageing Well Service



communication via video call in Auslan which has become a core communication channel for the first time. We have also simplified our text-based messages and focusing on this clear communication has increased satisfaction amongst consumers.

Capitalising on a greater understanding of video platforms among our clients the team also delivered 150 online support sessions across the year.

Ageing Well actively seeks partnerships and collaboration with external stakeholders to increase awareness on healthy ageing and other age-related topics. Ageing Well worked together with Wellways Australia to offer access to 'Carer Support' for carers of Deaf people. Resources were developed and published on Deaf Connect's website, and information sessions were held to inform the community about services available for them.



A seniors event at the John Pierce Centre in Melbourne.

**Ken, an Ageing Well client has asked his support worker Elizabeth to pass on his extreme happiness with Ageing well and how well supported he is by Sandra Carroll, Elizabeth O'Neill and Tania Corless. He tells his friends and family how happy, thankful and blessed he is to have Ageing Well support him and his wife with various tasks that he does find difficult to do on his own.**



# EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

## General Manager Education Kate Matairavula

**This year marks my first as General Manager of the Education Team, having previously managed Deaf Connect's Registered Training Organisation (RTO), and I am particularly proud to share the progress achieved by the team.**

FY22/23 has been another year of strong enrolments across in-person and online courses; demonstrating an increasing demand to learn Auslan and understand the language and community.

Both our community classes and accredited training options continue to be popular entry pathways for learners. Over 4,000 students completed accredited and non-accredited courses in the past year, and we look forward to seeing these students become the next generation of interpreters, allies, and workers in roles supporting the Deaf community.

A focus for the team has been integrating our South Australian office and welcoming of those team members to Deaf Connect. We have been really pleased to see the benefits of that collaboration shown through a 100% increase in enrolments for non-accredited courses in South Australia.

Beyond entry level study, demand for our Diploma of Interpreting offering has prompted the implementation of a new admissions testing process and the



introduction of an Interpreting Bridging course. These measures were taken to ensure that potential students are well-prepared for the rigors of interpreting – and are completing their study with a thorough understanding of Auslan and prepared to flow freely between languages in a professional setting.

Deaf Connect's partnership with YouthWorx in the Northern Territory, now in its second year, has shown Auslan scholarship students

### Kate Matairavula

General Manager, Education



progressing from Certificate III in Auslan to the Diploma of Auslan – bringing the Territory one step closer to bolstering its workforce of interpreters to support the community.

Through an additional funding contract with the Western Australian Government, we will be able to deliver subsidised training for our Diploma of Interpreting courses reducing the fees that students need to pay and supporting the future availability of interpreters in Western Australia.

The team also have secured a funding

contract with the Northern Territory government in partnership with Auslan Hub to deliver inclusive education training for staff in NT schools who work with deaf and hard of hearing children.

The growth and achievements in the Education Department are a testament to our collective dedication to increasing access to Auslan across the broader community in Australia. Our role is an important step in the education of new interpreters, the introduction of Auslan skills among the workforce and greater language acquisition in families.

“It was such an enjoyable experience, the teacher was fantastic, I felt very supported in my learning, the learning materials were high quality, the assessments were a great way to test my knowledge & skills, I improved so much over the course and got so much out of it.”

- Accredited Student



“I genuinely enjoyed every week and was so amazed by how much I learnt! There were sections of the class where repetition for phrases or certain signs helped me cement what I'd learnt before leaving which really helped.”

- Accredited Student

“I have loved having the opportunity to do this course. I hope we can continue to learn Auslan. Thank you.”

- Auslan Short Course Student



# INFORMATION SERVICES

## General Manager Information Services Andrew Wiltshire

Over the past financial year the Information Services team has continued to deliver its core business of NDIS support coordination and in-person and virtual community access services – ensuring this longstanding staple of community support remains accessible across the country.

### Andrew Wiltshire

General Manager,  
Information Services



In FY23/24, we provided over 13,210 hours of support to NDIS participants, received 92 requests for support from new consumers, and witnessed an average of 15% of community access being allocated for literacy support.

As the organisation has grown, the team's remit has continued to expand, including other specific services and regions.

Particularly in FY22/23, the team recruited additional Support Coordinators in Newcastle and Central Coast regions and Community Access staff for the Darwin, Sunshine Coast, and Townsville regions. These efforts brought fresh talent and

perspectives to the team while increasing service delivery for local communities.

Through the Information Services team Deaf Connect now provides Auslan Storytime sessions in both the City of Sydney and the City of Ryde. Auslan Storytimes are fun interactive storytelling sessions, aimed at supporting early literacy development in Auslan and written English. These sessions also foster community within local families with Deaf children.

Through reviews of our customer feedback the team formed a new collaborative working group in February 2023 – this diverse team focuses on customer service enhancement, resource review, local community engagement, compliance measures, and refining work targets.

Our journey this year has been one of growth, unity, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. We look forward to building on these achievements in the coming year.

# INTERPRETING SERVICES

## General Manager Interpreting Services Rebecca O'Brien

The work of our interpreting department – our interpreters, customer booking staff and leadership team are the conduit between our community and their lives. Across FY22/23 we're proud of the teams ability to continue to grow our workforce, and deliver more hours of interpreting than ever before to ensure Deaf Australian's can participate as equal citizens across the country.

The start of this financial year saw Deaf Connect commence service delivery in South Australia with a warm welcome from both community and interpreters alike.

A 10% growth in booking numbers in South Australia since commencing delivery there has necessitated engaging an additional Bookings Officer based in Adelaide to cover the increased workload.

Across the year our Customer Bookings Team have continued to adapt to new ways of working collectively and collaboratively as they expanded to work across three offices and multiple time zones. These process, and the dedication of our interpreting workforce resulted in continued growth of our service in all states and territories while at the same time strengthening our fulfillment rate with an overall growth of 9% for delivered bookings.

This growth has been supported by our successful recruitment campaign to increase workforce numbers nationally. Joined by our CEO, Brett Casey, I was



Deaf Connect interpreters at the 2023 AFL Gather Round.

pleased to have the opportunity to meet some of our team in person at our Meet and Greet events in Melbourne, Hobart and Perth and to hear from our staff firsthand, why we are an employer of choice in the industry.

We are meeting consumer demand by delivering in-person interpreting in each state and territory and we thank each and every one of our staff for the effort they put in each and every day and the continuing flexibility and professionalism they show in their work.

In FY22/23 we were pleased to partner with Deaf Connect's Education Services

## Rebecca O'Brien

General Manager, Interpreting Services



Team to provide the Student Observation Program to the Diploma of Interpreting students. Students were offered a number of opportunities to shadow an experienced interpreter mentor for a day.

Through the program our students can understand what a day in the life of an interpreter really looks like, and the standard of support expected among the community. The feedback from students was extremely positive and they have started to build their network of colleagues.

Our signature John Ferris Mentor Program was delivered again following a pause during the Covid-19 pandemic, this time on a national scale for the first time. The program was delivered both onsite and online to allow regional interpreters the opportunity to participate. The mentees who participated this year gained valuable insights into their work that will enable them to provide improved access to our community. The John Ferris Mentor Program



Deaf Connect interpreters at Sydney World Pride in 2023.

supports the continued development of interpreters after they pass their NAATI exam and transition from classroom to real-world interpreting or to upskill to Certified Interpreter level (formally Level 3) and beyond.

These fabulous opportunities for our students and interpreters would not be possible without our interpreter mentors and the booking officers involved in scheduling and planning and we appreciate their commitment to the industry and their fellow colleagues.

The hard work of both the Customer Service Team and Interpreters alike, has seen Deaf Connect receive multiple contracts with Government in the past year. We continue to receive funding from the NT Government to provide a Certified Level interpreter in Darwin who has now been providing access to the Northern Territory community for 18 months. They will soon start supporting the next generation of NT interpreters who are about to commence their Diploma of Interpreting.

We are also pleased to continue contract delivery for the Commonwealth Department of Health for our community over the age of 65. Almost 500 people have now registered with us to receive free interpreting under the scheme, and it is wonderful to be able to deliver for our senior community and to see them enjoying this time in their lives accessing a variety of activities and services.

# SUPPORT WORK SERVICES

## General Manager Support Work Services

**In the FY22/23, the Support Work Services team achieved significant progress by providing personalised daily living and social community participation support to NDIS Participants communicating primarily through Auslan. Our goal of empowering the Deaf and hard of hearing communities has driven us to foster independence and self-determination among our clients.**

### Kristen Mason

General Manager,  
1:1 Support Work



Over the course of the year, the team delivered 52,700 hours of individual service, representing a 3.7% increase on the previous financial year. Over support workers spent the year working closely with over 250 individual clients, tailoring activities and day-to-day support to meet their goals and needs.

One participant organised a movie outing on a public holiday, enhancing community relationships while enjoying captioned films. Another group planned an Australia Zoo visit, highlighting collaborative decision-making. These stories showcase newfound empowerment and shared experiences among participants.

In addition, our clients came together for nearly 200 group activities across the year; each focused on providing valuable skills in a fun or educational environment.

Working closely with our client base to understand their needs and feedback, the team introduced streamlined communication channels, including a central contact for SMS, emails, and Skype, enhancing accessibility. This accessibility has also been demonstrated in the transition to Easy Read documents for improved information sharing.

Looking ahead, we are committed to expanding our services to include the Northern Territory and Western Australia, translating our expertise to support to even more communities. These new services will benefit from our process of continuous improvement and the insights of our participant committee.

Our team is focused on client outcomes and, in closing, our successes this year are best summarised in participant stories.



# THERAPY AND FAMILY SERVICES

## General Manager Therapy & Family Services Jen McKee

**This is my final report as the General Manager of the Therapy and Family Services team, formerly known as Hear for Kids, and I am pleased to share the significant progress we have made over the course of this financial year.**

One of the most notable advancements has been the robust growth in our participation under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). We observed a substantial increase in the average number of NDIS participants per month from 212 in FY21/22 to 254 in FY22/23. In addition, the Hear for Kids in School program has seen growth in therapy hours provided.

In FY22/23 we have successfully renewed and extended our contracts with Children's Health Queensland for the Healthy Hearing Monitoring program, and the Department of Communities and Justice in New South Wales for Targeted Early Intervention, underscoring our dedication to early intervention strategies.

This year the team have expanded our psychology services, with a full-time psychologist now available to cater to the evolving needs of our clients – deaf children and their families. Additionally, our introduction of a counseling allied health assistant program in Townsville and the incorporation of a social worker in Adelaide support our capacity to address mental health concerns effectively.

In response to escalating service requirements, we have increased the hours for our Auslan Allied Health Assistant to full-time capacity. This strategic move ensures that we continue to deliver the highest quality of service to our clients, meeting their needs comprehensively.

### PARENT OF CLIENT

"Right from the beginning, the allied health team understood and accepted my son exactly as he was. They were guided by his choices, rather than any predetermined pathway. They embraced his preference to use Auslan and specifically learnt Auslan signs and phrases to use with him so they could share in his special interests and build a strong connection with him."



## Jen McKee

General Manager, Therapy & Family Services

In May our team hosted our first Mentor Night in the Deaf Connect offices at Parramatta. The event kickstarted a project launching in the new financial year (FY23/24), which brings together families of Deaf children and community mentors with lived experience of Deafness. Dr Breda Carty presented at the event, which was also an excellent opportunity to network for parents to meet and discuss the value of social capital and community connection.

As I conclude my ten years as General Manager, leading a passionate team, I

am confident that the Therapy and Family Services department is poised for even greater accomplishments in the years ahead – and significant growth to ensure children nationally are provided with the support they deserve to thrive. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each member of our dedicated team, our invaluable partners, and, most importantly, the families and individuals we have had the privilege to support.



Learning through play at the Yeerongpilly Therapy & Family Services office.



# OUR PROGRESS

Chief Financial Officer Report  
Chief People & Culture

# CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

## Chief Financial Officer Sarah Page

In FY22/23 the focus of the Finance and IT teams has been progressing projects to improve efficiencies across the organisation and developing cyber security parameters to ensure we stay ahead of the game.



Callie from Deaf Connect Information Services presents to a group in Cairns.

Our work in continuous improvement of internal processes in the corporate services area is important to ensure the staff at Deaf Connect spend less time on administrative activities, more time planning services and supporting clients directly. This year, we have also improved our capability for data analytics to ensure we have the information to optimise services delivery to clients.

### SERVICE DELIVERY

We continue growth geographically and work further to optimise our service delivery models to provide community support more effectively and adapt to community needs. For FY22/23, Deaf Connect supported the community by financially supporting the provision of Information Services, including walk-in community access. Government

## Sarah Page

Chief Financial Officer



grant funding in this area ceased, and NDIS funding was not able to provide the same level of coverage. Deaf Connect elected to continue this support as it's a vital program for the community.

In addition, we further funded the expansion of Ageing Well services into South Australia as the need is identified and client numbers grow.

### IT

Cyber security has been a significant focus for this team. We have developed training and awareness campaigns for all staff, and proactively organised an audit against one of the higher standards in Cyber Security ISO 27001 (an international standard to manage information security) to benchmark our status against best practice for large organisations, and identify opportunities for improvement.

### PLAN MANAGEMENT

Our Plan Management services area achieved significant growth in 2023 as we introduced new software directly connecting to the NDIS portal, providing live access to balances and expenditures for our clients and anyone in their support team that they authorise to enable better visibility and management of support services. These changes have been crucial in maintaining our clients' engagement with, and control of, their finances.

### INNOVATION

The culture of innovation is thriving within Deaf Connect with continuous improvement activities developed in all departments, and engagement by staff with our Discovery Grants and Lottery Grant Programs. Through Discovery Grants Deaf Connect staff have the opportunity to take an aspirational community outcome and fund the development of a project to meet that need. This year we have seen this play out in our new mentoring program for families – which started as a discovery grant application and will launch as a service offering in the new FY23/24.

2024 is looking to be another growth year as we extend our remit to supporting clients in Western Australia with the transfer of services from Access Plus WA Deaf, and organically grow in the other states we provide services in.

The community is recognising Deaf Connect as a leader in our space, and we continue to focus on our person-centric service initiatives to ensure we invest in the gaps where the government does not support and fulfil our mission and vision and serve our community and share our culture.

# CHIEF PEOPLE & CULTURE OFFICER'S REPORT

## Chief People & Culture Officer Isabelle Swanston

**Deaf Connect began the financial year well underway with the process of onboarding our South Australian office following the transfer of services from Deaf Can:Do in April 2022. This involved setting up a new office and community space in Mile End, Adelaide and ensuring both our team and the space were geared up to serve the community.**

Following the onboarding on our Mile End staff, the People and Culture team have been focused enhancements to these processes and making sure Deaf Connect has the necessary support to deliver high-quality services to our clients and our community.

### SUPPORT AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

A standout improvement is the implementation of Donesafe, a central online hub for our staff to report hazards, incidents, near misses, compliments, feedback and complaints, as well as hosting our Continuous Improvement Register and allowing us to drive and track continuous improvements organization-wide. This system makes reporting and actioning things like incidents and complaints across

the business a streamlined and trackable process and has supported further embedding our safety and quality culture at Deaf Connect.

We provided training to all staff on hazard and incident identification and complaint resolution. This was one of many fresh or updated courses made available through our Go1 online learning platform. We take pride in offering training in both English and Auslan, tailoring modules to suit everyone's language preference.

To equip our workforce with essential skills, we conducted a thorough internal training review in consultation with leaders and subject matter experts. We looked to both current and future workforce needs including areas of service expansion and sector gaps.

## Isabelle Swanston

Chief People & Culture Officer



From this review, a key initiative emerged: De-escalation training to ensure all staff are skilled in defusing high-tension situations, avoiding unsafe situations and supporting our colleagues and clients in challenging moments. Eighteen staff members completed a comprehensive "train-the-trainer" course, with plans to deliver this training nationally in the new financial year.

### RECRUITMENT

This year has been a period of significant staff growth for Deaf Connect – and our overall workforce increasing monthly across both permanent and casual staff. Teams across Deaf Connect have welcomed new staff into the unique experience of working at a bilingual organisation. We saw growth across all states and territories including significant growth in our Melbourne office, and early in the new financial year we will welcome our new team in Western Australia.

### ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Amidst this growth, maintaining a cohesive office culture has been crucial. We introduced Connection Days to bolster our existing flexible work policy. These monthly gatherings encourage all staff to come together in their local office, engage in structured activities, and foster connections and collaboration (and sometimes competition) across teams and locations.

A highlight of our Connection Days was our December 2022 Holiday Contest, culminating in a hotly contested festive office decoration competition. All the pent-up energy from lockdowns was unleashed into the office decorations and Parramatta emerged as the winner showcasing impressive creativity. Every office brought humour and heart to their decorations.

### OUR VALUES

Another significant addition this year was the launch of our values awards, recognising staff who embody our core values: Heart, Courage, and Discovery. These awards are ongoing, with quarterly recognition ceremonies honoring staff who exemplify our values.

In 2023, we've witnessed a remarkable surge in new staff acquisitions and role expansions, steering us through a period of substantial growth and achievement. Throughout this exciting journey, our People & Culture team has remained dedicated to refining internal processes, addressing training requirements, and upholding our high standards in our audits. We're embracing process and celebrating our successes as Deaf Connect continues to serve our community.

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

## INFORMATION SERVICES

**8% increase** in hours of support to NDIS participants

**17%** increase in clients accessing support across Community Access and Support Coordination

## AGEING WELL

**100+** clients supported to live independently at home at July 2023

**9,000+** one on one visit hours provided

**Four** online health information sessions delivered to seniors

**25** clients received aids and equipment to live independently



Auslan Storytime at City of Ryde Library

## INTERPRETING

**400+** interpreters in every state and territory around the country

**2% increase** to interpreter bookings year on year

**1,706** bookings delivered through the free seniors interpreting program

**National** interpreter engagement roadshow events delivered

## FAMILY & THERAPY SERVICES

An average of **254** participants receives Family & Therapy Services monthly

We have added **three** more professionals to the allied health team.

Launch of **Parent Mentor Program** in Sydney

Funding via the Deaf Lottery enabled additional **Psychologist resources** to meet community demand

## SUPPORT WORK

Delivered **52,697** hours of 1:1 Support Services (3% increase from last year)

**194** 1:1 support group activities

**54% increase** in participants receiving 1:1 Support Services

## EDUCATION

**4,000+** students learned Auslan via accredited and non-accredited training pathways

**62% increase** to Auslan at Home service hours



A Seniors Morning Tea in Melbourne

## IMPACT

**1,500** attendees at Deaf Festival Sydney in 2022

Launch of Sign Name Project and Gallery with over **100** unique sign names

**170** registrations for Deaf Seniors Information Sessions and Morning Teas

Filed **11 submissions and position statements** across a range of issues.

## TRANSLATIONS

**47% increase** in Auslan videos produced in F22-23

**287** projects completed for a variety of clients including government bodies, not-for-profits, companies and individuals.



# STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Revenue	46,424,630	43,495,224
Other income	1,622,348	1,806,239
Employee benefits expense	(28,169,621)	(24,772,873)
Depreciation and amortisation	(1,148,587)	(1,036,810)
Other interest expense	(243,397)	(210,238)
Travel and motor vehicle expenses	(1,040,078)	(747,735)
Occupancy expenses	(339,307)	(358,336)
Printing and postage	(370,554)	(349,491)
Insurance expense	(529,251)	(438,723)
Advertising and promotion	(2,127,958)	(1,919,870)
IT and telecommunications	(2,445,681)	(2,853,429)
Contractors	(755,241)	(1,104,473)
Professional fees	(214,449)	(261,642)
Other supplies and services	(10,433,704)	(9,619,177)
Gain/Loss on disposal of non-current assets	(19,910)	(379,554)
<b>Surplus for the year</b>	<b>209,240</b>	1,249,112
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>		
<b>Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to surplus or deficit</b>		
Revaluation of land and buildings	1,803,355	-
<b>Equity investments - net change in fair value</b>	<b>2,758,381</b>	(4,018,000)
<b>Total other comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>4,561,736</b>	(4,018,000)
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>4,770,976</b>	(2,768,888)

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 30 JUNE 2023

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
<b>ASSETS</b>		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	4,135,467	3,603,462
Trade and other receivables	2,582,579	3,273,608
Other assets	1,222,700	1,067,802
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>7,940,746</b>	7,944,872
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	10,983,501	10,152,842
Intangible assets	23,628	39,380
Financial assets	46,799,262	42,810,838
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>57,806,391</b>	53,003,060
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>65,747,137</b>	60,947,932
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	1,989,027	1,861,379
Other liabilities	4,908,901	4,427,944
Lease liabilities	823,187	732,959
Employee benefits	2,589,163	2,540,182
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>10,310,278</b>	9,562,464
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Lease liabilities	3,245,211	3,956,102
Employee benefits	270,070	278,764
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>3,515,281</b>	4,234,866
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>13,825,559</b>	13,797,330
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>51,921,578</b>	47,150,602
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Reserves	25,090,020	26,847,986
Retained earnings	26,831,558	20,302,616
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>51,921,578</b>	47,150,602

### HEAD OFFICE QUEENSLAND

915 Ipswich Road, Moorooka Q 4150  
PO BOX 465, Moorooka Q 4150

✉ [info@deafconnect.org.au](mailto:info@deafconnect.org.au)

☎ 1800 893 855

### HEAD OFFICE NEW SOUTH WALES

4/69 Phillip St, Parramatta NSW 2150  
PO Box 1300 Parramatta NSW 2124

✉ [info@deafconnect.org.au](mailto:info@deafconnect.org.au)

☎ 1800 893 855

### HEAD OFFICE VICTORIA

49 Agnes St, East Melbourne VIC 3002

✉ [info@deafconnect.org.au](mailto:info@deafconnect.org.au)

☎ 1800 893 855

### HEAD OFFICE SOUTH AUSTRALIA

200 South Rd, Mile End, 5031

✉ 1800 893 855

### HEAD OFFICE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Harry Geise Building, Suite 2, 1 Willeroo Street  
Tiwi NT 0810

✉ [info@deafconnect.org.au](mailto:info@deafconnect.org.au)

☎ 1800 893 855

### HEAD OFFICE PERTH

44A Kings Park Rd, West Perth WA 6005

✉ [info@deafconnect.org.au](mailto:info@deafconnect.org.au)

☎ 1800 893 855



Serving our community.  
Sharing our culture.

To view this annual review in an interactive format, with Auslan included scan the code.

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