

*Making an
inclusive Australia
for deaf people*





Deaf Australia Incorporated
PO Box 1348
Blackburn North, Victoria 3130

ABN: 65 174 780 885

For the year ended 30 June 2015

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About us

Our Organisation:

Deaf Australia is the deaf-led peak organisation representing deaf and hard of hearing people in Australia. We promote the advancement of human rights and equality for deaf people by collaborating with our members and stakeholders to influence governments in implementing the United Nations Conventions and the National Disability Strategy.

Our Vision:

Strengthening deaf diversity

Honorary Life Members:

Dr Robert Adam
Mr Colin Allen
Dr Breda Carty
Dr Phil Harper
Mrs Ann Darwin
Ms Janelle Ravlich
Mr Kyle Miers
Ms Karen Lloyd (AM)

Our Guiding Principles:

Language:

Deaf Australia believes it is a human right for every deaf and hard of hearing person to acquire and express themselves in Auslan and English.

Perception:

Deaf Australia must work to change the perception of deaf and hard of hearing people who use Auslan to recognise ourselves as a unique community with our own language and culture, and that a 'one size fits all' approach is not an effective solution.

Self-Determination:

Deaf Australia believes that our society must accept our organisation as an integral part in any decision-making processes that affect deaf and hard of hearing people. Deaf Australia believes and adheres to the philosophy: **"nothing about us without us"**.

Management:

Deaf Australia is committed to achieving our objectives through effective management of our people and resources, and through collaborative work with 'like-mind' organisations.

Chairman's Report

Reflecting on the past year, the first thing that comes to my mind is "change". Change is constant, and Deaf Australia had to transform itself to remain relevant in the Australian community, so that it could continue to represent the Australian deaf community.

Early on in the year there were significant changes in how the Federal Government funded many not-for-profit organisations in the disability sector. With over 80% of our funding coming from the Federal Government, the decision to cease funding our organisation has had a dramatic effect on the focus and direction of Deaf Australia.

The first thing that the Board decided was that there would still be the need to be able to provide specific advice and lobbying on behalf of the Australian deaf community. Through years of experience, our members, and our strong community connections, Deaf Australia is unique with the insight and expertise it can provide to other organisations and governing bodies. To be able to remain viable as an organisation, we had to make several changes.

One of the first things we had to do was to downscale, and sadly that meant letting go of our wonderful staff - Rachel Byrnes and Bec Payne - which was a very difficult decision we had to make. The Board acknowledges the many years our dedicated staff have put into Deaf Australia, and would like to thank our staff for their service. We hope to be back in a position to hire staff once again in the future.

I would also like to acknowledge the many volunteers that make Deaf Australia possible - the Board Directors, the volunteers who help run the Auslan Shop and other areas of Deaf Australia, and our wonderful ambassadors - Drisana Levitzke-Gray, Andy Dexterity, and Colin Allen.

We also had to close our office in Brisbane to reduce our rent and to save more money. The large reduction in income for the organisation had to be replaced by something else - and our Chief Executive and the Board Directors have been focusing on developing capacity through new partnerships, including working with Jeenee Mobile to offer deaf consumers something that the large telcos still refuse to offer - a text-only mobile plan. We will continue to explore other innovative ways to provide Deaf Australia with an income, so that we can continue our advocating for the rights of deaf and hard of hearing people in Australia.

This has been a very challenging transition for Deaf Australia, but has been very well managed due to the very capable hands of our Chief Executive, Kyle Miers. Kyle always has Deaf Australia in front and in centre of himself every day, and his passion for the organisation is incredible. I am thankful to work closely with Kyle to lead Deaf Australia in the right direction.

Another significant change achieved over the past year was a positive one - changing our constitution. The reasons for changing our constitution was to strengthen our Board and to better represent our members in the deaf community, by being more inclusive. Any deaf or hard of hearing person who believes in and supports the vision, purpose, mission and values of Deaf Australia can become a life-long member of the organisation - after all we are always deaf or hard of hearing for life. We no longer differentiate between deaf and hard of hearing people, as the distinction can be very hard to quantify after all. Auslan is the common factor that connects us all into one community - and that is what defines our membership.

Deaf Australia also launched an exciting new initiative - the Deaf Friendly scheme. The aim of this scheme is to strengthen the position of Auslan in the Australian community, by encouraging other companies and organisations to employ deaf staff and to make their services accessible to the deaf community. This scheme has been refined and improved to better suit our members based on feedback from the community, and is being launched at a critical time in Australia with the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. By reinforcing the importance of accessible and inclusive services provided to the deaf and hard of hearing community, we will ensure that we are to make fully informed decisions about the services that we receive. This scheme will also increase the profile of Auslan as a language of Australia.

This year, Auslan has taken centre stage in our media, as we had our first deaf person awarded the honour of being the Young Australian of the Year, Drisana Levitzke-Gray. It was a privilege to witness Auslan being signed right in front of the Australian Parliament House in Canberra. There was such a positive buzz in the media afterwards about deaf people like Drisana, proud Australian people who communicate in Auslan and do anything they wish to aspire to become. It was the best opportunity to deliver our central message, that deaf children should be educated in Auslan along with English.

The Deaf Friendly Scheme has this in the very heart in its initiative - that Auslan should be valued and taught to our deaf children, our future generation, so they can be given the very best opportunity in life.

Because with Auslan rights, deaf children can be who they want to be!

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge our longest serving Board Director who has been a constant presence on the Deaf Australia Board since 1993. Mrs Ann Darwin has been a valuable member of the Board, having served as President for two terms and served as Secretary for several terms. During her time on the Board, she has helped guide Deaf Australia through challenges and to grow from strength to strength. Mrs Darwin has created a legacy in Deaf Australia and the community that has certainly left a big footprint, and her commitment and contribution to make Australia a better place for deaf and hard of hearing people will be difficult for anyone else to match. On behalf of Deaf Australia and the community, we thank you for your guidance, knowledge and contribution to Deaf Australia and the community.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd James Wright". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Todd Wright,
Chairperson**

Chief Executive's Report

For the first time in 22 years, Deaf Australia was challenged with financial uncertainty after the end of the 2014 financial year due to the Department of Social Services' "New Way" funding change.

The new funding arrangement was made in favour of cross-disability organisations who would provide government with streamlined policy advice, which we believe would not necessarily represent the views of our constituents.

The new funding arrangement forced Deaf Australia to conduct an internal review and determine its organisational capacity and sustainability. We regret that some programs we provided had to be placed on hold, staff had to be made redundant and the office had to be relocated to Melbourne.

This review also provided Deaf Australia with an opportunity to reassess our capacity, which led to changes in the constitution to allow inclusion of hard of hearing members, fee structures and governance.

In November, we launched the 'Deaf Friendly' Scheme which aims to recognise organisations who employ a person who can use Auslan in the workplace and to promote them as 'Deaf Friendly' service providers to enable better access for deaf individuals to their services.

In February, we attended a Senate Hearing on captioning issues (amendment to Broadcasting Service Act) that ensured that broadcasters must continue to provide annual reports and ensure captioning is of good quality.

In April, we conducted an appeal for the deaf people serving on juries issue and raised a little over \$1,400 to support Gaye Lyons' case in Queensland.

In May, Deaf Australia entered a partnership

with Jeenee mobiles that offers text/ data plan only for deaf and hard of hearing people.

In June, Deaf Australia sent a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Health (Privatisation of Australian Hearing) and attended to a hearing of the Committee in July.

Deaf Australia continues to raise access and equity issues across four of our key priorities as well as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

We are proud that Deaf Youth Australia has been formed and is formally endorsed by World Federation of the Deaf – Youth Sector. The youth leaders will be the leaders of tomorrow.

We continue to work with World Federation of the Deaf – Oceania to ensure deaf people in the Pacific Region are empowered with human rights and dignity.

There is still significant work to be done for deaf people as we still experience challenges in education, employment, and communication. We, as a community, need to come together to present a united voice so that we all can live equally and enjoy life, just like everyone else.

I wish to express gratitude to my previous colleagues, Rachel Byrnes, Janelle Ravlich and Rebecca Payne for their dedication to Deaf Australia.

Lastly, I would like to thank our volunteers and members for their support in the last 12 months, particularly in difficult times, in anticipation of renewed hope and a better future for Deaf Australians.



**Kyle Miers,
Chief Executive**

Key Activities

Goal 1: Families

Deaf Australia will ensure that families of deaf and hard of hearing person/s are provided with adequate information, support and are included for the best interests of deaf persons.

- Established Early Intervention Working Group to develop Position Statement on requirements of early intervention for deaf and hard of hearing children in Australia.
- Wrote submission to Senate Select Committee on Health (Privatisation of Australian Hearing) and attended inquiry hearing of the Committee.

Goal 2: Youth

Deaf Australia will ensure that deaf youth are equipped with knowledge and skills, and to prepare them to be lifelong leaders.

- Deaf Youth Australia formally recognised by World Federation of the Deaf Youth Sector.
- Advisory member of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in the development of Auslan curriculum for K – Y10.

Goal 3: Community

Deaf Australia will ensure that the community is enriched, diverse and inclusive.

- Advocated for better access to interpreters in NSW Hospitals.
- Active member of accessible working group with Australian Subscription Media (e.g. Foxtel) to increase captioning on subscription channels.
- Objected Australian Railways Association's request for exemption for accessible transport for disability with the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- Active member of Australian Electoral Commission Disability Advisory Group to ensure information is accessible for deaf/hard of hearing people.
- Liaised with UBER Australia and successfully requested National Transport Commission to undertake a review on the Commercial Drivers License guidelines to remove barriers for deaf / hard of hearing people obtaining commercial license.
- Wrote submission on the Broadcasting and Other Legislation Amendment (Deregulation) Bill 2015 and attended inquiry hearing of the Committee.

Goal 4: Services

Deaf Australia will actively promote an inclusive society and services are accessible, responsive and responsible.

- Initiated discussions with Australian Bureau of Statistics to ensure better promotion of Census 2016.

- Partnered with Jeenee Mobiles to offer text/ data only mobile plans for the deaf/ hard of hearing community.

Goal 5: Members

Deaf Australia will be the leading agent for social inclusion, and our members are empowered, consulted and included.

- Established the Ambassador Program to generate better awareness about Deaf Australia and its members.
- Implemented the Deaf Friendly Scheme, which recognises organisations employing people with Auslan skills in the workplace.
- Partnered with University of New South Wales on the Deaf Jury research project.
- Active member of Australian Federation of Disability Organisations and its consortium.
- Communicated with members throughout the year on:
 - JobAccess Program
 - NDIS Survey
 - Royal Commission into Responses to Child Sex Abuse
 - ASLIA National Conference – Perth
 - Changes to EAF Guidelines
 - Privatisation of Australian Hearing
 - Social Security Legislation Amendment Bill
 - Captioning Deregulation
 - Young Australian of the Year
 - NT Disability Minister mocks Sign Language
 - Joint Statement with National Ethnicity with Disability Alliance on Detention of People with Disabilities
 - Jeenee Mobile Plan
- Community consultation on the Deaf Friendly Scheme
- Facilitated strategic planning workshop with WAAD

Social Media

Facebook – 2014 – 572 likes, 2015 - 1,890 likes

Twitter – 2014 – 1,102 followers, 2015 – 1,653 followers

World Federation of the Deaf

Deaf Australia attended to World Federation of the General Assembly and WFD Congress in Istanbul, Turkey in July 2015.

Awards and Achievements

2014 YOUNG AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR –

Drisana Levitzke – Gray (WA)

2014 NATIONAL DISABILITY AWARD –

Winners

- Jordanna Smith (NSW) – Emerging Leaders Award in Disability
- Vicdeaf (SLC) and Emergency Management Victoria – Improving Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Award

Acknowledgement

- Opera Australia (Vic) – Improving Inclusive and Accessible Community Award.

DEAF AUSTRALIA'S AWARDS –

2014 Deaf Australian of the Year

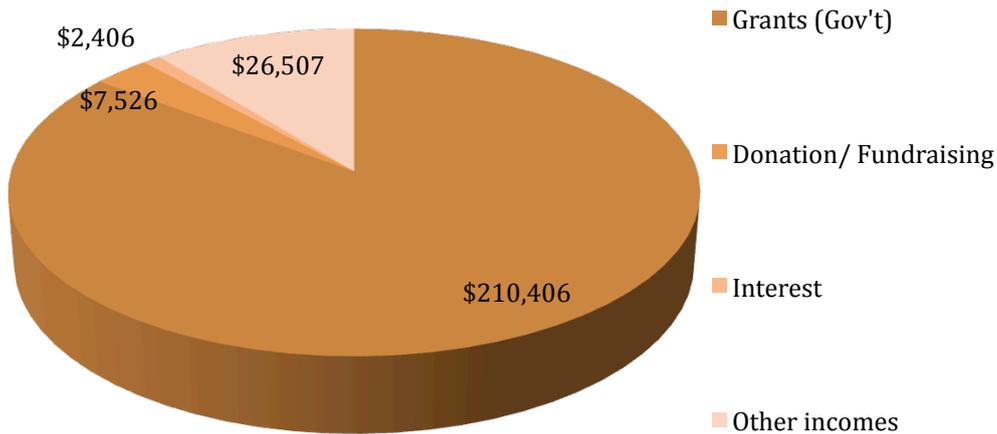
Anthony Hastings (NSW)

2014 Fair Go Award

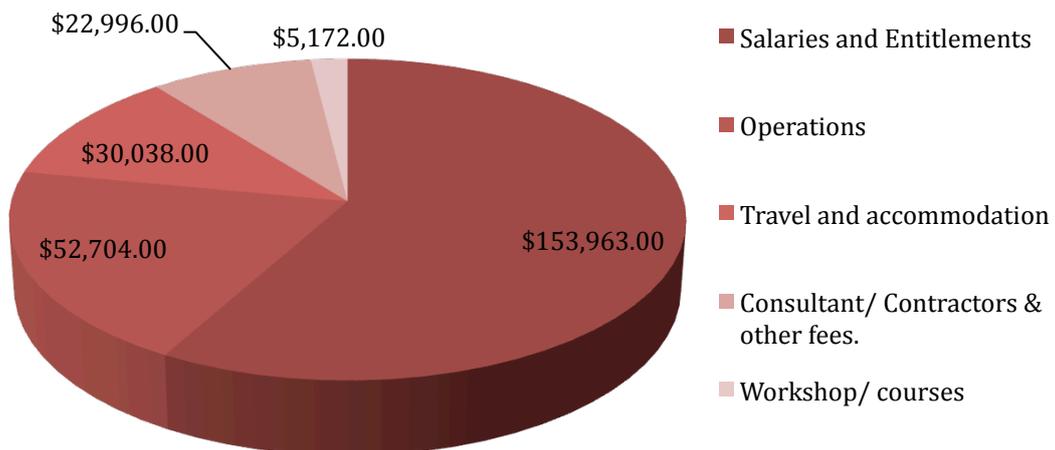
Communication Republic (SA)

Financial Report

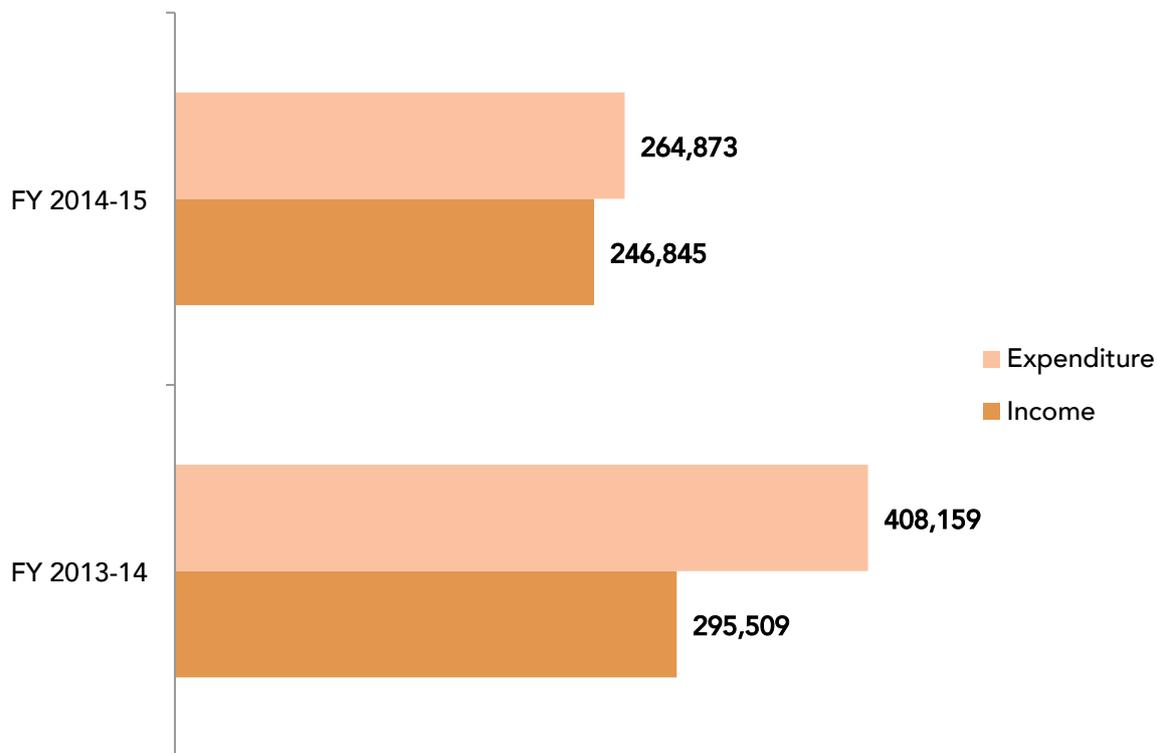
Income 2014-15 \$246,845



Expenses 2014-15 (\$264,873)



Financial Performance



Operating Result

	2014-15	2013-14
The Auslan Shop	\$20,244	\$8,876
Deaf Australia Operations	\$(18,028)	\$(112,650)
Operating Surplus	\$2,216	\$(103,774)
Retained Surplus	\$170,715	\$168,499

Board Members

Todd Wright – Chairperson
John Wade – Treasurer
Ann Darwin
Debbie Kennewell – co-opted
Ida Rogers
Danielle Wright

Chief Executive



Kyle Miers

Acknowledgement of Volunteers

Yvette Abraham
Colin Allen
Tony Bonfiglio
Rachel Byrnes
Colin Campbell
Helen Campbell
Brett Casey
Donovan Cresdee
Ann Darwin
Barry Darwin
Andy Dexterity
Geoff Donovan
Adrian Doyle

Felicity Evans
Ryan Gook
Sandra Hale
Paul Heuston
Leonie Jackson
Lachlan Keating
Debbie Kennewell
Damian Lacey
Katrina Lancaster
Amanda Li
Julie Lim
Karen Lloyd

John Loutitt
Gaye Lyons
Maree Madden
Christine Mathieson
Melissa McCarthy
Rachel Miers
Gavin Rose-Mundy
Rachel Noble
David Parker
Rebecca Payne
Ann Porter
Janelle Ravlich

Ida Rogers
Trudy Smith
Ben Souter
Merie Spring
Amber Venner
John Wade
Philip Waters
Danni Wright
Kathy Wright
Susan Wright
Todd Wright
Demetrio Zema

Appreciation of support from Organisations

Auslan Services
Australian Deaf Blind Council
Australian Federation of Deaf Societies
Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
Australian Human Rights Commission
Australian Sign Language Interpreting Association
Communication Republic
Creative Minds Design
Deaf Australia (NSW)
Deaf Australia (SA)
Deaf Children Australia
Deaf Victoria
Jeenee Mobiles
John Pierce Centre
Media Access Australia
National Transport Commission
Parents of Deaf Children
Purpose Law
Royal Institution for the Deaf and Blind
Sara Lederman Charitable Foundation
Sheppard Centre
UBER Australia
Vicdeaf

