

***Making  
an inclusive  
Australia for  
deaf people***

**Annual Report  
2016 -2017**





**Deaf Australia Incorporated**

PO Box 1348

Blackburn North, Victoria 3130

ABN: 65 174 780 885

For the year ended 30 June 2017

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[deafaustalia.org.au/information/reports](http://deafaustalia.org.au/information/reports).

# 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 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 process 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.

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

(Auslan: <https://vimeo.com/247927350>)

Last year at the inaugural National Auslan Conference, I had the incredible privilege of celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday of Deaf Australia (formerly known as the Australian Association of the Deaf), along with the Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA) who were celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

During this milestone event, I reflected on the great legacy of our deaf leaders and advocates. It is thanks to these selfless deaf leaders and advocates that Deaf Australia has endured for so long, and that it is still able to continue representing the best interests of the Australian deaf community and Auslan users.

It was a very sad and dark moment in our history when we were informed about the sudden and unexpected passing of Ann Darwin early this year. Ann was a huge part of Deaf Australia, being the longest serving Board Director for 20 years, two thirds of the entire existence of the organisation. Ann also led the organisation as President under two separate terms, and preceded my current term as Chairperson – she was the one that effectively “handed over the reins” to me. Ann’s fingerprints are still all over the organisation, as she was instrumental in building the legacy of Deaf Australia, and is still very much missed by us all.

Deaf Australia will ensure that Ann Darwin’s legacy will continue to be remembered and recognised. Our thoughts are always with Ann’s family – her husband Barry, her children Fiona and Andrew, and her sons-in-law Mark Ward and Paul Fleming, and her grandchildren Mitchell and Henry Ward.

Ann’s loving memory is forever cherished by us all at Deaf Australia.

One of my fondest memories that I cherish from my time working with Ann Darwin, was when we worked together (as current and former President) to find a replacement Chief Executive following Karen Lloyd’s retirement from her role. This was a difficult task as Karen had developed her role to such a high standard, and we had to find someone with strong skills to continue the legacy of the organisation. Fortunately, Ann and I, along with an independent interview panel member, all agreed that we found the ideal candidate for the role, which was Kyle Miers. Ann provided me with a lot of support and a huge vote of confidence when I managed the whole process of advertising, interviewing and reviewing all the applicants. I greatly valued Ann’s input during this process.

Speaking of Kyle, the Board is privileged to have him as our Chief Executive. Kyle has had to manage the operations of Deaf Australia on his own with limited support from other service providers and organisations. We are aware of how much Kyle has given to this organisation not only in his current Chief Executive role but also from his previous voluntary roles of Board Director, President and Treasurer for so many years. Sometimes this is a thankless task, nevertheless Kyle’s passion for the organisation remains undiminished. He is also supported by his family who accept his commitment to Deaf Australia – the Board would like to express our great gratitude to Kyle’s family as well.

Managing the organisation with limited resources has made it difficult for us to achieve significant progress with our strategy plan, however we have been able to achieve a few notable results – one in

particular being the launch of the national Auslan curriculum by ACARA. This achievement has been the result of many years of advocating from Deaf Australia and other stakeholders for a national approach to provide Auslan as a LOTE course in primary and secondary school.

In parallel, Kyle and the Board has had to focus on ensuring that the organisation receives sufficient funding to continue operating. We have received ongoing capacity development funding through our consortium agreement with Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), and Kyle has submitted several grant applications. We are hopeful of a favourable outcome for these grant applications, which will be project focused. This will help us better align future activities with our strategic priorities.

Continuing the theme of legacy in my Chairperson's Report, the Board and I are very excited with the launch of the Colin Allen Lecture. Establishing the Lecture will achieve several things – the first being to officially recognise the legacy of a former President and Honorary Member, Colin Allen. While it is difficult to recognise all the contributions of our past Presidents, Board Directors and Honorary Members, Colin's contribution is one that stands out, and is continuing in particular with his current roles as President of the World Federation of the Deaf and Chair of the International Disability Alliance.

The Colin Allen Lecture will also help us develop an invaluable resource of information, by mapping the journey of our Australian deaf community through the words and signs of those selected for the privilege of delivering the Lecture each year. As Colin's contribution covers several areas of the community, this will ensure that the Lecture will deliver a variety of topics and sources. We hope this will prove invaluable for future generations, especially as a resource in the language of Auslan. The Lecture will also act as a call for action, to celebrate the identity of the Australian deaf community and to focus our collective effort towards particular issues that must be addressed.

The Board expresses our deepest gratitude to Colin Allen for his support of this initiative, and we look forward to work with Colin to ensure the Colin Allen Lecture series becomes an iconic feature of Deaf Australia.

In closing, I would like to thank Ramas McRae for his support as Board Director of Deaf Australia and as our nominated Board member for the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO). It is disappointing to see him leave the Board, however we would like to wish Ramas all the best with his new family and career, and hope to see him return one day in the near future.

I must also recognise that it takes a community to support and manage Deaf Australia – I would like to express my profound thanks to all our members, staff, volunteers, supporting organisations, the government, and our extended community for their wonderful support. Without their support, we would not have been able to have built a legacy of 31 years – and still counting!

Thank you all.

**Todd Wright**  
Chairperson



## CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

(Auslan: <https://vimeo.com/248084089>)

Deaf Australia wish to share with you our report with highlights.

Most of you may be aware that Deaf Australia has been operating at a very minimal capacity in the last couple of years. Much of the time in 2017 has been focusing on reviewing the organisation's capacity and to undertake strategies that will strengthen Deaf Australia in 2018 and beyond.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has contributed many challenges and opportunities across the disability sector and for Deaf Australia to position itself as a prominent voice of the deaf community. We have participated in many meetings with the NDIS and wrote a submission to the NDIS's Productivity Commission on NDIS Costings – highlighting many discrepancies with interpreting costing (e.g. travel, qualifications) and need to access Auslan for family with newly diagnosed child who are deaf.

NDIS's Information, Linkage and Capacity (ILC) has offered plenty of opportunities for Deaf Australia and others to undertake capacity building activities throughout the year. We have conducted a Member Survey 2017 through cooperation with Australian Federation of Disability Organisations to find out what members think and want from Deaf Australia in going forward. The results were not surprising for Deaf Australia and strengthen our resolves to explore in how we can better meet deaf and hard of hearing people's needs. The survey report is enclosed in this report.

The National Disability Strategy (2010-20) has also been reviewed by the Commonwealth Government. Deaf Australia has written a comprehensive submission to the Government and attended to a public hearing with the Commonwealth's Parliament. Deaf Australia believed that the National Disability Strategy has poor delivery record for deaf and hard of hearing people due to lack of effective policy changes and strategies from the government. A final report has been released and it contained 17 references from Deaf Australia.

One of the key recommendations from Deaf Australia is that Auslan to be legally recognised as a language for Deaf people to use it.

Deaf Australia also put in a comprehensive written submission into Hearing Health and Wellbeing advising the Parliamentary Committee that access to Auslan must be achieved for every deaf/ hard of hearing person so that their wellbeing can be improved. We also attended to public hearing with the Parliamentary Committee.

Auslan curriculum for primary and secondary schools are now being provided in several schools throughout Australia as Language other than English (LOTE) program. Deaf Australia is proud to see this program being implemented after many years of advocating the Commonwealth Government to develop this curriculum.

Auslan Training Package for TAFE has also been reviewed this year. The Australian Industry and Skills Committee has recently approved the training package which will be taught under Public Sector stream. It is with disappointment that the Committee have rejected that the Auslan Assessors must

be deaf and to have Auslan as the primary language. We will continue promote that Auslan Assessors must be deaf.

The National Relay Service (NRS) is currently being under review for new funding contract from 1 July 2018. It is not clear what Commonwealth Government is planning for the NRS but we believe that the NRS will continue but is uncertain whether or not if there will be improved access to Video Relay Service (VRS) nor if there will be additional fund to ensure NRS operates at full capacity.

Deaf Australia has attended to a number of reference groups to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing people can access range of support and services. Australian Electoral Commission, Australian Banking Associations, National Relay Service, National Disability Insurance Agency, Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association, and more.

All the activities are about ensuring that deaf and hard of hearing Australians are equal members of the Australian society, which reflect our vision – *making an Inclusive Australia for deaf people*.

Deaf Australia has our 31<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting on 28 October in Sydney. It was a small meeting; however, a quorum was sufficient for the AGM to proceed as usual. Western Australian Association of the Deaf proposed that Deaf Australia to develop an Accessible Social Media Policy which we will undertake and propose to Members at the next AGM to be held in Canberra ACT.

#### Deaf Australia Board

- Todd Wright (NSW) – Chairperson/ Treasurer
- Debbie Kennewell (SA)
- Adrian Doyle (Vic)

The board plays a vital role in ensuring that our focus and activities are aligning to the member's wishes and aspirations. We work closely with Deaf Youth Australia (DYA) to support deaf youth activities and they successfully hosted the World Federation of the Deaf's Youth Junior Camp in Phillip Island. Deaf Australia commends DYA on their outstanding work.

#### Deaf Youth Australia Board

- Shirley Liu (Vic) – President
- Vanessa Alford (WA) – Treasurer
- Annabel Beasley (Vic) – Secretary
- Tahlia Barry (Vic)
- Joshua Doe (NSW)

It is with sadness that our longest serving board member of Deaf Australia (formerly known as Australian Association of the Deaf) has passed away so suddenly. Mrs Ann Darwin has served Deaf Australia for 21 years and was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in 2006 for dedication to Deaf Australia over the years. Our thoughts are with Mr Barry Darwin and his family.

Going into 2018, Deaf Australia are now able to represent the community in a formal capacity after regaining the funding we have lost in 2014. We are currently waiting for more details of the fund; however, we will continue seek for opportunities for Deaf Australia to represent deaf and hard of hearing people throughout Australia.

Deaf Australia wish to express appreciation and thanks to individuals and organisations in working together to address challenges and issues. We look forward in continuing this relationship in 2018.

As 2017 is closing, we thank you for your ongoing support. It is important that your issues are being heard and we work with you to make sure that issues can be resolved for you and other deaf Australians. We look forward in continuing working with you in 2018 and beyond.



**Kyle Miers**  
**Chief Executive**

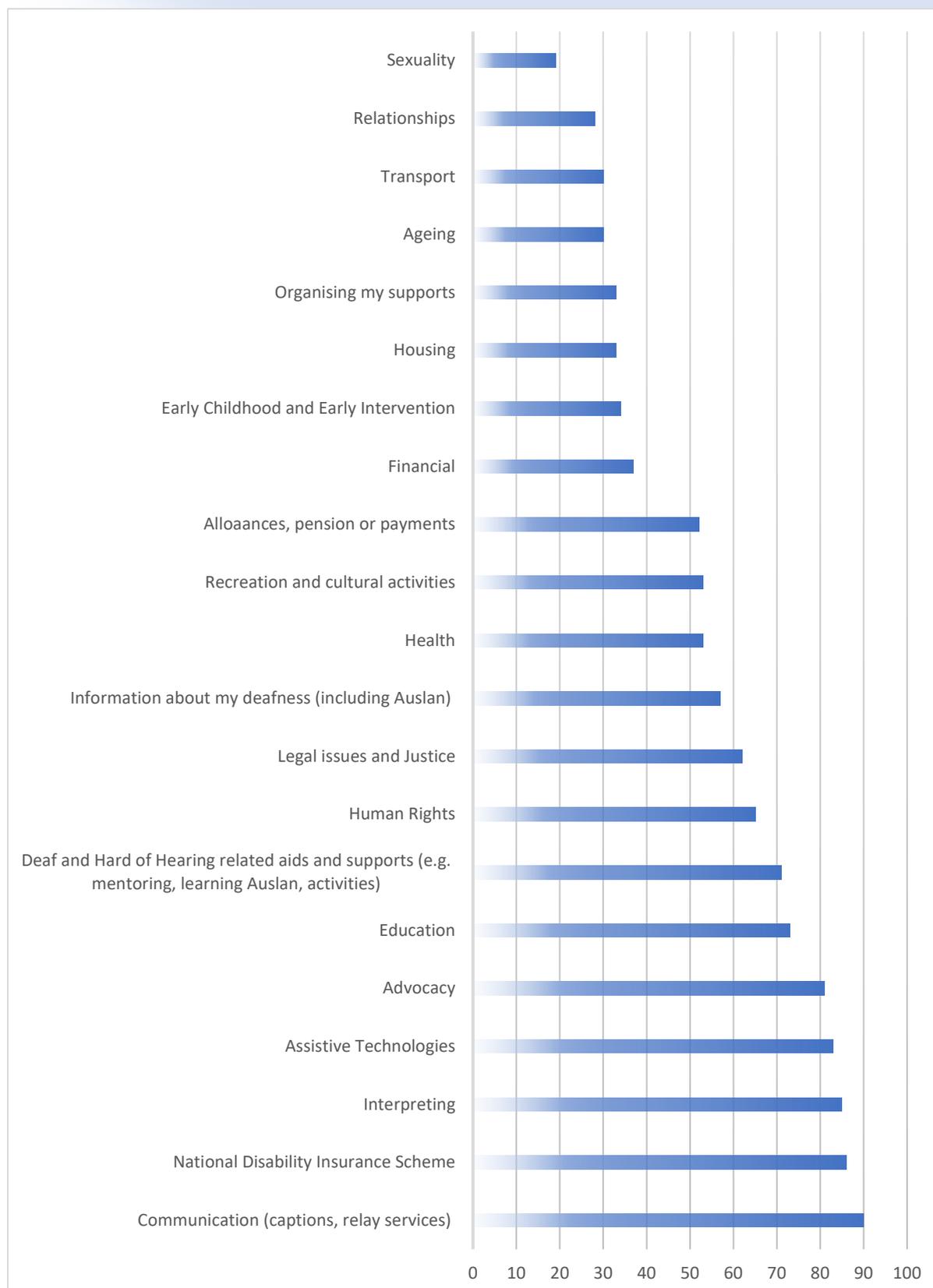
## Outcomes from Membership Survey 2017

A total of 148 respondents was received, and 120 (81.1%) have completed fully.

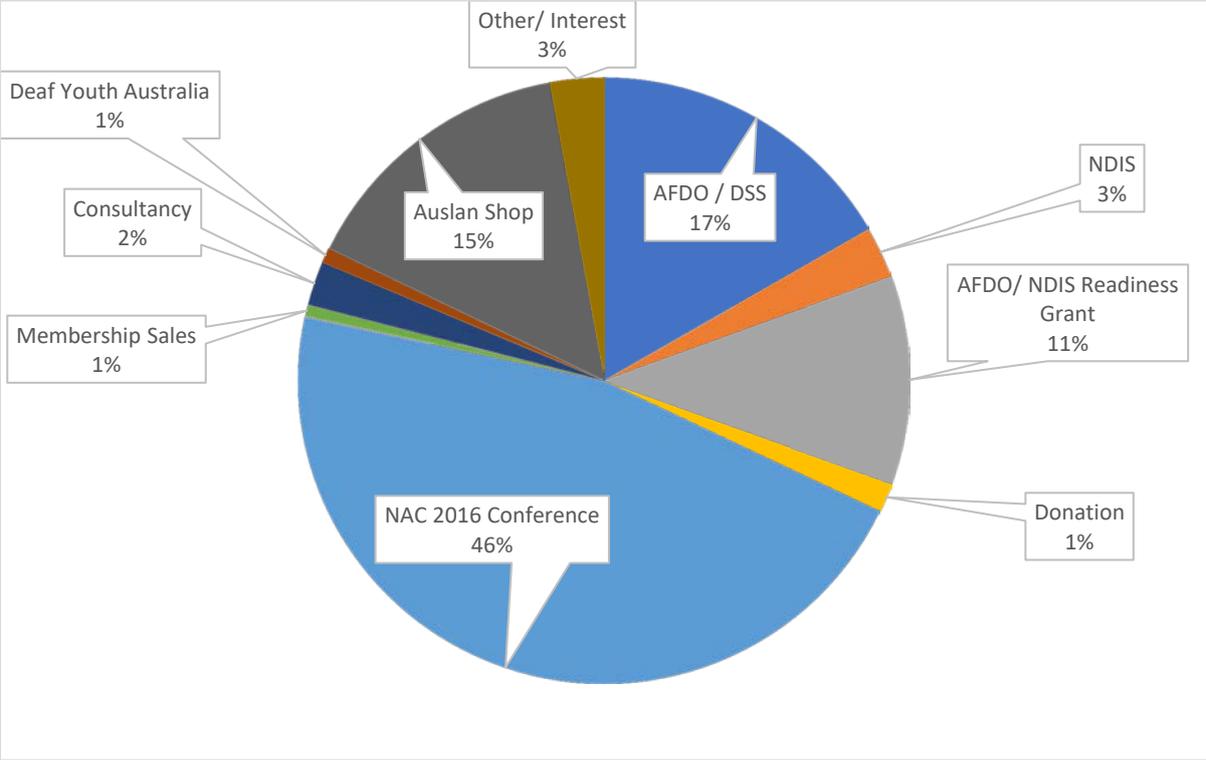
Key Summaries:

- 72.3% of respondents said they are deaf / hard of hearing and 17.6% says that have members of the family who are deaf/ hard of hearing, 64.9 are female and 29.7% are male, 5.41% are transgender or did not supply information), and 96.62% are not Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islanders.
- Largest age group is 40-49 (28.3%)
  - Children and youth (under 10 to 29) = 14.7%
  - Adults (30 – 59) = 72.3%
  - Seniors (60 +) 12.8%
- 47.97% uses Auslan at home and 43.24% uses English. 8.78% says they use both Auslan/ English.
- 79.73% lives in the capital cities
- 75% follows Deaf Australia on social media/ 17.1% check website regularly and found that 49.3% information is helpful, 32.9% said it was not applicable and 14.3% said it was not helpful.
- 52.6% said Deaf Australia should do more with providing accessible information on website and social media, 7.1% on direct support (e.g. phone to phone), 12.6% on members events (e.g. workshops), 12.9% on peer support (e.g. mentoring).
- Most receive current and good information about deaf or hard of hearing from (in order) – social media, deaf / hard of hearing friends, other friends, Deaf Australia, service providers, workshop/ forums, Google, international websites, family, blogs, media, books or other publications, government websites, and doctors.
- Most want to receive information from Deaf Australia from (in order) – social media, website, email newsletter, face/face, video, printed copy and SMS.
- Information topics that members want to get (in order) – communication issues (captions, relay service), NDIS, interpreting, assistive technology, advocacy, education, aids and supports (mentoring, learning Auslan), Human rights, legal and justice, info about deafness (including Auslan), health, recreation and cultural activities, allowances, financial, early childhood, housing, organising my support, ageing, transport, relationship and sexuality.
- Top barriers that stops you (in order) – interpreters, attitudes, assistance to communication, hearing related equipment, employment, income, public transport, safety concerns, physical access (e.g. ramp).
- 57.6% to 84.3% said they sometimes or always have trouble using the mainstream services and 22.5% deal directly with the provider, 17.8% discuss issue with members of deaf community on social media, 13.8% did nothing about it and 12.8% did not know what to do. Only 9.6% made formal complaint.
- 49.5% was able to resolve the problem themselves while 51.5% needs assistance.

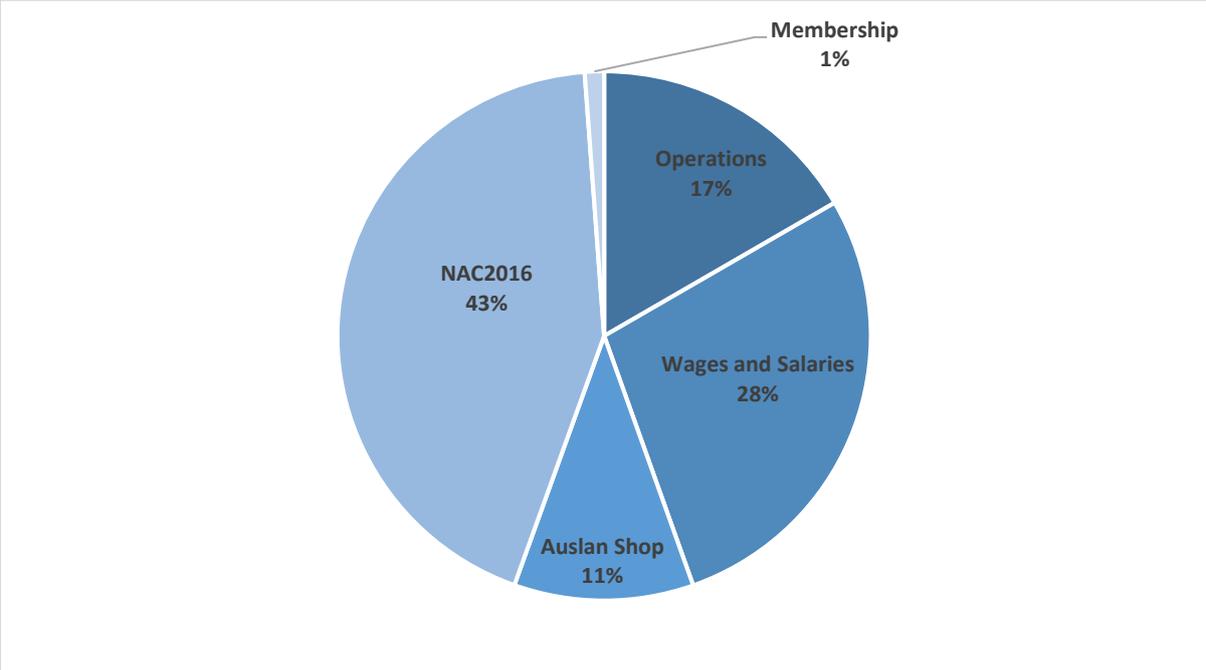
## Important issues: (lowest to highest)



Income: \$360,392



Expenses: \$362,653



## Board Directors

**Todd Wright** (2009 - ) – Chairperson  
**Debbie Kennewell** (2015 - )  
**Ramas McRae** (2015 - 2017) - resigned  
**Adrian Doyle** (2016 - )

## Staff

**Kyle Miers** – Chief Executive  
**Felicity Evans** – Communications  
(contractor)  
**Alfia Dipalma** – Book Keeper  
**Margaret Salter** – Auditor

## Honorary Members

**Robert Adam**  
**Colin Allen**  
**Breda Carty**  
**Phil Harper**  
**Ann Darwin**  
**Janelle Ravlich**  
**Kyle Miers**  
**Karen Lloyd**

## Past Board Members (\* denotes President)

### Founding Board Member

Breda Carty (2 years)  
Merrill Cook (2 years)  
Ken Donnell (2 years)  
Bruce Muller (3 years)  
\*Dorothy Shaw (4 years)

### 20 Years

\*Ann Darwin

### 15 Years

\*Robert Adam

### 10 Years

\*Kyle Miers

### 9 Years

\*Colin Allen

### 8 Years

Karen Lloyd

### 7 Years

\*Bobbie Blackson  
Danni Wright

### 6 Years

Elaine Marcia  
Carole Noonan

### 5 Years

Elaine Girke  
Kimberly Pickering

### 4 Years

Carol-lee Aquiline  
Brett Casey  
Daniel Shanahan  
John Wade  
Ida Rogers

### 3 Years

Mac Adam  
Anne Bremner  
Eleanor Foster  
Katrine Lancsaster  
Kevin McKenzie  
David Morgan  
Philip Waters  
Amy Watson

### 2 Years

Paul Bartlett  
Kim Curtis  
Peter Davies  
David Hamilton  
Irene Holub  
Berna Hutchins  
Patricia Levitzke-Gray  
Ramas McRae  
Carol O'Rilley  
Brent Phillips  
Freda Sandon  
Barry Priori

### 1 Year

Julia Allen  
Meg Augman  
Peter Bailey  
Rod Chapman  
Cathy Clark  
Margaret Grimes  
Stephanie Linder  
Gaye Lyons  
Alastair McEwin  
Natalie Mundy  
Gavin Rose-Mundy  
Robyn Whitney  
Alastair McEwin

