

*Achieving the
full potential
for deaf people*

**Annual Report
2018 -2019**



Acknowledgement of First Peoples of Australia

Deaf Australia acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Deaf Australia is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

Acknowledgement of Deaf People and the Community

We acknowledge and respect the members of the deaf community in Australia, who preserve their rich heritage, culture and our language; Auslan (Australian Sign Language). We also acknowledge our custodians of Auslan, promoting awareness, equality and access through our sign language. Through Auslan, we inspire future leaders in our deaf community to continue our legacy and heritage.



Deaf Australia Incorporated

PO Box 1348
Blackburn North, Victoria 3130

ABN: 65 174 780 885

For the year ended 30 June 2018

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Further copies of this document can be obtained from Deaf Australia's Website: deafaustralia.org.au/about-2/about-deaf-australia/

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:

Achieving the full potential for deaf people.

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 video ->)

We are gratefully pleased to get some funding from the NDIS ILC Organisational Capacity Building grant, which will allow us to re-establish our organisation and focus on our future activities. Kyle Miers, our Chief Executive, is to be acknowledged for his hard work with applying for many grants, and despite not having some success initially, we now have a successful grant – hopefully the first of many more yet to come. The current environment we are operating in has been challenging, as we are just one organisation amongst many other disability-representative organisations who are now competing for the same pool of grant funding.

We hope to continue getting more project-based funding, even though this will mean we will need to change the way we operate. We now need to be focused on project-based advocacy activity and less on general or opportunistic advocacy activity. Deaf Australia will need to be more strategic with our future operations. Through this type of funding, we hope to be able to recruit additional staff and consultancy support to help Kyle with his workload, and help Deaf Australia achieve our future priorities.

Deaf Australia will need to be careful not to rely solely on grant funding though. We need to explore new partnerships especially with other businesses. This year we have developed a positive and beneficial business partnership with Huawei, a mobile telecommunications company, who developed a mobile app called “StorySign”. This mobile app is designed to provide deaf and hard of hearing children access to sign language, by translating their books into sign language. This gives deaf and hard of hearing children an opportunity to share learning sign language with their parents. This is a great example of “social investment” that a company can make, investing into the deaf community – we hope other companies will follow Huawei’s lead and invest further into our community.

Our partnership with Huawei has also led to other unique opportunities. With Huawei’s support, Kyle became the first deaf person to deliver a speech entirely in Auslan at the National Press Club address in Canberra. This was an incredible privilege to be provided a national stage to highlight the importance of access to language for deaf and hard of hearing children, particularly sign language in addition with spoken and/or written English. The discussion shifted the national viewpoint from an exclusive choice between English or sign language, instead encouraging an inclusive approach with both sign language AND English.

Huawei also gave Deaf Australia the opportunity to be the nominated charity for a Canberra Raiders NRL match. I was so proud to see Deaf Australia’s logo on the Raiders football jersey, along with the Auslan alphabet. We felt so honoured to be given this wonderful fundraising opportunity, and to receive direct donations from Huawei themselves. The money raised through these donations will lead to more book resources for the StorySign app and will also support our future activities which will benefit the Australia deaf community.

We thank Huawei for their wonderful partnership and support.

With our new strategy plan, it will be important for us to look at the intersectional diversity of our deaf community. This is where deaf people do not only identify themselves as being Deaf, but also have other identities which are as important – such as being Australian Indigenous, culturally and

linguistically diverse migrants, LGBTIQ+, and or gender diverse. It is important that we are fully inclusive of all members of our Australian deaf community, to be able to represent our community as a whole and ***Achieving the Full Potential of Deaf People.***

We also need to include our Pacific neighbours. I have met some amazing strong deaf leaders from Pacific nations, but their deaf community is significantly disadvantaged, especially when compared to the Australian deaf community. We fortunately have many privileges in Australia which our deaf fellows in Pacific nations simply do not have. With the support of the World Federation of the Deaf Regional Secretariat Oceania and its three member organisations – Deaf Australia, Deaf Aotearoa, and Fijian Association of the Deaf – we will work together to establish stronger deaf communities in the Pacific, and to provide them with access to their own human rights; access to their own language, interpreting and service support, and most of all, access to education.

I met these deaf people and many other international deaf people at the World Federation of the Deaf Congress in Paris, France. It was lovely to see many old and new faces there. I felt really proud that we received international support for Deaf Australia's motion to acknowledge and approve the international symbol of sign language. This symbol will make it easier for deaf people to identify inclusive places around the world where they will be able to communicate directly through sign language.

Although it was valuable to see many presentations at the Congress, I must say it was disappointing to see the same old issues faced by the deaf community being covered again in this congress and in previous congress. This showed that deaf communities still face the same problems all around the world, and underscores the importance of supporting the role of the World Federation of the Deaf and supporting Deaf Australia to continue their advocacy activities to remove barriers faced by the deaf community and to realise full human rights as a deaf person.

It was beautiful to see how Colin Allen AM, past WFD President, being acknowledged and praised for his past 8 years of leadership as he departed that role. It will be an exciting new era for WFD under the leadership of the new WFD President, Dr Joseph (Joe) Murray. The Deaf Australia Board would like to acknowledge our appreciation for Colin's support for WFD and for the Australian deaf community.

Thank you, Colin.

This year, we were pleasantly surprised to see another leader of the Australian deaf community, Alastair McEwin, to be awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (AM). This is the second year in a row that deaf people have been recognised at this level, and this means the Australian government has recognised that deaf people can be an important contribution to the community. Congratulations Alastair and thank you for your support! I hope this will mean many more deaf people being recognised and awarded by the Australian government as part of the Queen's Honours.

I would like to thank the Deaf Australia Board, including Debbie Kennewell who had to resign from her position earlier in the year due to other commitments, for their acknowledgement and support of my position on the Board. On behalf of the Board, I would also like to thank our Chief Executive, Kyle Miers, for his dedication and arduous support over many years. I sense that we have finally made a breakthrough with the funding and opportunities we were able to take up this year and I am confident it will lead us to many exciting things to come in the future!

Thank you all



Todd Wright
Chairperson

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT



(Auslan ->)

I wish to bring you with positive outlooks that has had happened in 2018/19 and am optimistic in going forward to 2019/20 and beyond. Throughout the year, Deaf Australia has put in several funding submissions and have learned the 'tool of the trade' of making successful grant applications.

We are pleased to advise that we have received Organisational Capacity Building grant that will allow Deaf Australia to undertake organisational review, develop communication strategy and roadmap that will take Deaf Australia beyond 2020. But our work is not done.

Access to Auslan (Australian Sign Language) as a right for deaf people to use has been the bedrock of our work throughout the year. We have achieved or are currently working on the following areas:

- **Census 2021** – agreed on draft wording in the census to include 'Auslan' in one of the questions that asks, 'Language used at home'. As the population of Auslan users is not high enough to be included in the top 5 languages, but in the 'other' section, it will ask 'if you use other language, for example, Auslan (Australian Sign Language), please write here'.
- **Deaf Jury Act** – The ACT government passed amended legislation on Jury Act in March 2018. We are working with South Australian and Western Australian Governments to amend the Jury Acts. They both expressed interest in amending the Act using the legislative framework set by the ACT government.
- **Deaf Education** – Several states are currently reviewing their Deaf Education policy (South Australia, Victoria, and Queensland) and we are pushing for New South Wales to do the same. Deaf people have been involved with these reviews and we congratulate these individuals in working to achieve better education outcomes for deaf and hard of hearing children.
- **Hearing Health Roadmap** – as the sole deaf representative in this large group of 'experts' we have strongly argued for Auslan to be part of the critical developments for deaf children and their families in the early intervention stage. We also discussed improvement of education, interpreting needs, technology resources and awareness and training. The roadmap is designed for both government and medical industry to improve level of service and support in the next seven years.
- **National Disability Insurance Scheme** – we have conducted community consultations in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria and prepared a comprehensive report on Community of Practice. Topics covers deaf children learning Auslan, supports for deaf children and their families, early intervention, technology and devices, interpreting and support services and deafblind. You can find this report [here](#).
- **International Symbol of Sign Language** – Deaf Australia is very proud that the Symbol of Sign Language has been adopted by members of the World Federation of the Deaf in Paris. The symbol will be used to recognise individual and/or organisations that provides support and services using Auslan. Deaf Australia will be providing member organisations with information so they can manage this initiative in their countries.

- **StorySign (partnership with Huawei)** – Deaf Australia is pleased to enter partnership with Huawei in the delivering the StorySign App that provides technology solution for families of deaf children between 0-6 years of age in learning Auslan while reading popular children book. There were two television launches that attracted a high level of interest in both Australia and international levels and Emma Watkins (Yellow Wiggle) is a StorySign Ambassador.
- **Huawei / Canberra Raiders** – In August, we partnered with Huawei and Canberra Raiders for the Canberra Raider’s Charity Match where a specially designed match jersey was used by Raiders players. The jersey prominently displays the Deaf Australia and StorySign logos. Proceeds from match day donations, jersey sales and charity auctions will go to Deaf Australia.
- **Huawei / National Press Club** – In August, I became the first ever deaf person to present at the National Press Club on the topic ‘Does Listening Help? The Impact of Deaf Children’s Literacy’ which was broadcasted live on ABC TV. The presentation covered the challenge of accessing Auslan in educational settings and how it breaches the human right of these children through deprivation of access to sign language.

This year is also an election year for the Federal government. The disability organisations have sought with the government to amend the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) however, the government does not see the importance of this activity and considers it as ‘low priority’. We will continue to work with the government in amending the legislation to remove legal barriers that prevents deaf community in accessing certified interpreters.

2019/20 also brings challenges that we hope will improve in the coming years. The Department of Communication and the Arts conducted a tender process for the National Relay Service and have contracted Concentrix to provide the new contract which will begin transitioning into effect on 1 October 2019 and to completely manage the service by 1 February 2020.

The National Relay Service must be seen as an ‘essential service’ for deaf and hard of hearing people (and people with speech impairment) who see this service in equal footing as accessing other essential services such as electric, water and telephone services. The government and/or providers must not play with our essential communication needs. We continue to work with all parties to ensure our access to this service is essential.

Looking ahead in 2019/2020, Deaf Australia will be sending submissions to the Royal Commission on Disability highlighting many examples of negligence, abuse or violence that deaf people have endured throughout their lives and we will continue working with various governments, agencies and stakeholders to address the needs for everyone to access Auslan as a human right and to improve level of access to services.

I wish to express sincere appreciation and thanks to the Board of Directors, volunteers, consultants and my family for continued support in ***‘Achieving the Full Potential of Deaf People’***.

Deafinitely Yours,

Kyle Miers
Chief Executive



POPULATION OF SIGN LANGUAGE USERS

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics)

Census 1996 – signers not recorded.
 Census 2001 – **5,306** Signers
 Census 2006 – **6,944** Signers (increase of 30%)
 Census 2011 – **9,723** Signers (increase of 40%)
 Census 2016 – **11,682** Signers (increase of 20%)

MEDIA/ SOCIAL MEDIA

Media

- **Media Release** – Hearing Health as National Health Priority not Supported.
- National Week of Deaf People – video
- ACMA announces appointment of Kyle Miers to Consumer Consultative Forum
- Open Letter to Mitch FiField about the National Relay Service
- Livestreaming of Deaf Australia’s 32nd Annual General Meeting
- Channel 9 – Huawei launches StorySign and donation of \$20,000 to Deaf Australia
- **Media Release** – Launching of StorySign
- Channel 9 – Launching of StorySign (with Emma Watkins – Yellow Wiggle)
- National Relay Service (an update)
- **Media Release** – Deaf Acknowledgement
- Announcement of Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities, Mr. Al McEwin on being the Royal Commissioner.
- Public Hospital and Interpreting issues (South Australia)
- Ms. Oliva Beasley for leading the Victorian Youth Parliament
- Mr Colin Allen AM – receiving Dr Liisa Kauppinen Human Rights Award

Social Media

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	
	1,894	2,784	3,700	4,581	5,666	DeafAustraliaInc
	1,668	2,148	2,570	2,987	3,135	@deafaustalia

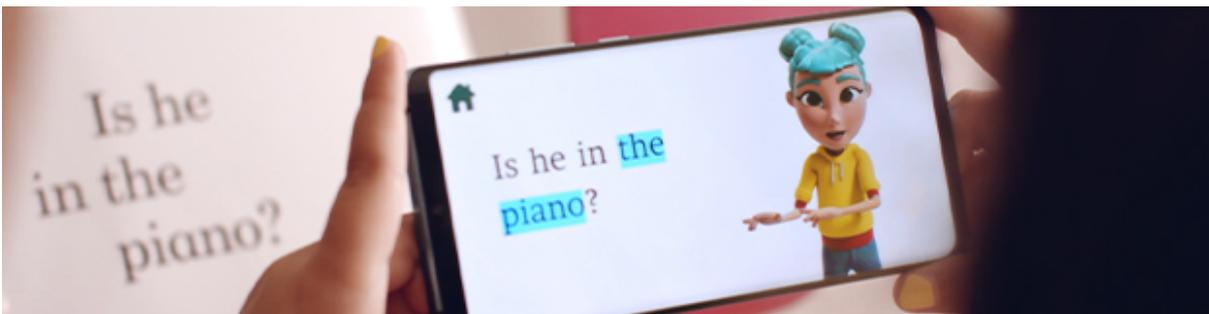
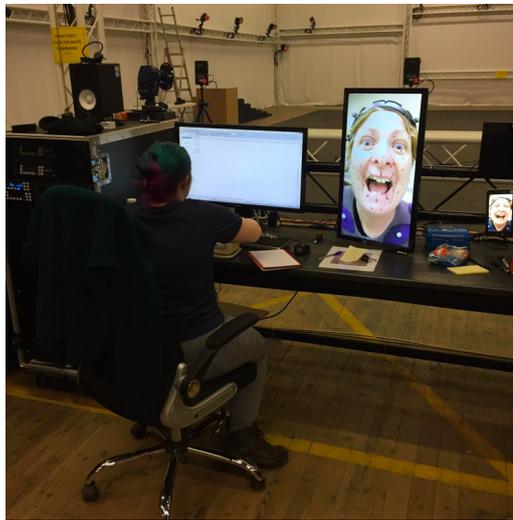
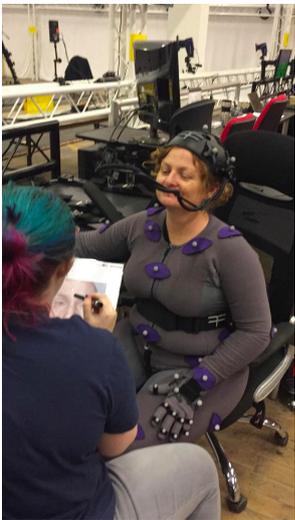


Websites:

www.deafaustalia.org.au (primary) – auslanshop.deafaustalia.org.au (Auslan Shop)



In December 2018, Deaf Australia entered partnership with Huawei to deliver StorySign App that will help deaf children and their family to learn Auslan using Huawei's Artificial Intelligent (AI) that reads text of children's popular stories into Auslan.



StorySign is a free mobile app that aims to help deaf children read by translating the text from selected books into sign language. Through the power of AI and augmented reality, StorySign brings these books to life and helps deaf children enjoy storytime as every child should.

www.deafaustralia.org.au/information/storysign





Presentation of Official Canberra Raider's Charity Jersey to President of National Press Club (sponsored by Huawei)



Sabra Lane (ABC and President of National Press Club) with interpreters (Ryan Gook and Julie Judd)



Presentation on 'Does Listening Help? The Impact of Deaf Children's Literacy' at the National Press Club on 21 August 2019.



Group photo with Canberra Raiders mascots (Chloe Nash, Daniel Shannon, Tamara Hone, Kyle Miers and Jacob Clarke) on 25 August 2019.

Technology triumphs at deaf speech

It was a formidable combination of technology and determination that brought the first ever address at the National Press Club in Canberra when Kyle Miers, Chief Executive, Deaf Australia 'spoke' in Auslan to the issue 'Does listening help? The Impact of Deaf Children's Literacy'.

Kyle Miers is deaf.

He was born deaf to a deaf family but it hasn't stopped him making a formidable contribution for deaf Australians.

It was humbling and impressive considering the way the technology had to be organised and fascinating when we realise that Miers and his team had worked hard to make it work – and it all looked so easy to those observing.

The ABC had cameras to catch Miers signing, close up on the translators and the audience of many deaf people held in awe of how interesting it was in a room not renowned for quiet among the guests.

Miers spoke of the Huawei development of the Story Sign technology which is a free mobile app that helps deaf children read by translating text from selected books into sign language, such as our local Auslan.

And watching Miers and listening to his translators was both fascinating and a realistic look at the possibilities for the deaf when all the aspects of technologies that we who hear take for granted but can and should be used for something so pleasurable as reading together.

It was an address that opened up all manner of possibilities for the deaf, the hard of hearing and the marvels of technology to find new ways to make life so much easier.

And fluttering your fingers high in the air is such a lovely way to show applause.

Deaf Australia chief executive Kyle Miers delivers National Press Club address in Auslan | The Canberra Times



Deaf Australia chief executive Kyle Miers, Picture: Janelle Todoran

The Caption device developed to help deaf counterparts understand what's happening on the screen requires users to look down to read what people are saying, then look back up to try and catch up on the action.

"We call it Captionix," Deaf Australia chief executive Kyle Miers said, through an interpreter.

"It's accessible."

It's also what happens when a solution is developed without talking to the people who are supposed to rely on it, and it happens far too often for members of Australia's deaf community.

"The Captionix device developed to help deaf counterparts understand what's happening on the screen requires users to look down to read what people are saying, then look back up to try and catch up on the action."

"We call it Captionix," Deaf Australia chief executive Kyle Miers said, through an interpreter.

"It's accessible."

But there are more insidious ways members of Australia's deaf community are being locked out of society than missing a movie.

In the first address delivered entirely in Auslan to the National Press Club on Wednesday, Mr Miers laid out a myriad of ways deaf Australians were being disadvantaged.

Deaf children were being encouraged to sit out of NAPLAN testing because of a perception their results would be "detrimental to the school", he said.

People who used Auslan exclusively to communicate could only make phone calls between Bam and Gern since the National Relay Service was pared back from a 24-hour service.

No regulations about the quality of closed captioning also meant people were missing out on news and other information.

"Deaf people would drive to an Auslan on the news bulletin, for example," Mr Miers said.

The deaf were also being forced to download apps or purchase other resources to communicate at the same level as their hearing peers.

"I feel a regulation, a policy, or a law, some mandate [is required so] when products are produced, that they are accessible for everyone, at the start," Mr Miers said.

Steve Lewis

Kyle Miers, CEO of Deaf Australia, becomes the 1st person to deliver address to @PressClubAusd using Ausd sign language in the Club's 56 year history. #auslan

Newspaper articles:

Left: Public Sector News, 26 August 2019.

Right: Canberra Times, 22 August 2019

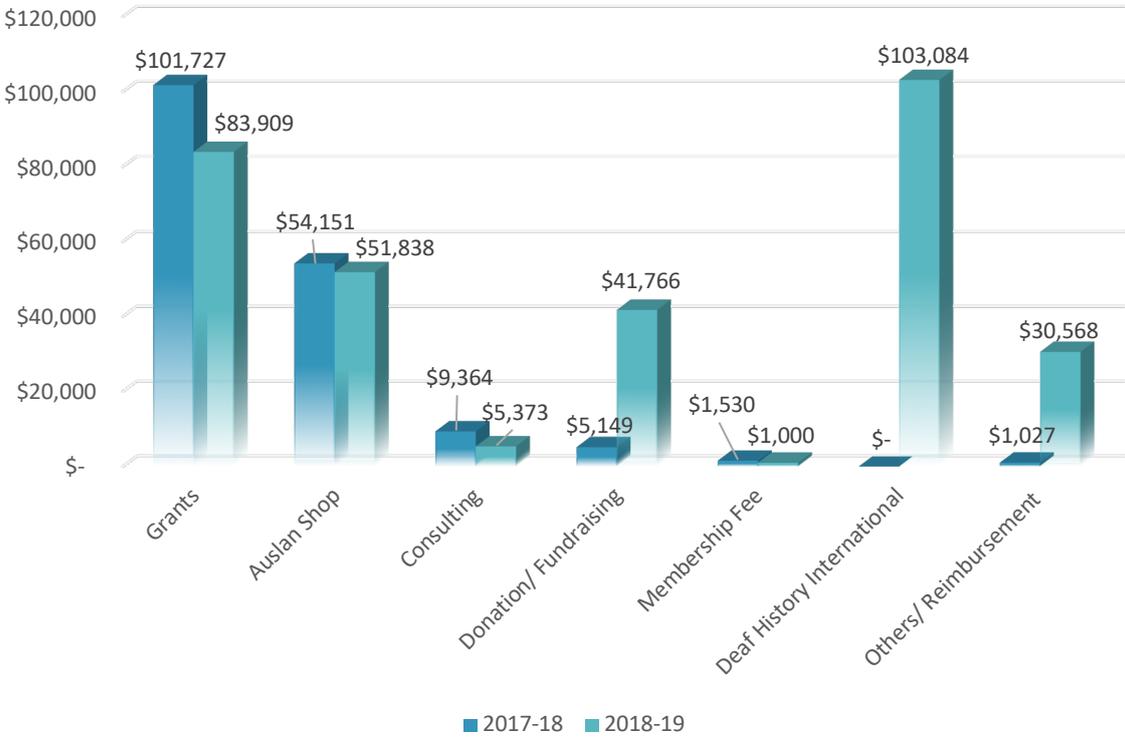
Activities for the Year

- 
- July 2018**
 - Discussion with Australian Bureau of Statistics (Census 2021)
 - WASLI – Oceania Conference in Nadi Fiji
 - August 2018**
 - Initial meeting for Hearing Health Roadmap
 - National Deaf History Conference
 - NDIS – CEO Forum
 - September 2018**
 - National Week of Deaf People
 - October 2019**
 - Hearing Health Roadmap
 - NDIS – CEO Forum
 - Australian Electoral Commission Disability Advisory Council
 - November 2019**
 - ACMA – Consumer Consultative (CCF)
 - TAFE NSW (Auslan Courses)
 - 32nd Annual General Meeting
 - December 2019**
 - NDIS – CEO Forum
 - Snapshot Factsheet for NDIS
 - Partnership with Huawei
 - StorySign launched on ‘Channel 9’
 - January 2019**
 - Proposal to WFD re: Sign Symbol and IWDeaf submitted
 - Hearing Health Roadmap
 - February 2019**
 - Hearing Health Roadmap
 - ACMA – Consumer Consultative Forum (CCF)
 - NDIS – CEO Forum
 - March 2019**
 - Launch StorySign (Book 1) on Channel 7 (with Emma Watkin)
 - National Broadband Network – consumer network
 - NDIS – Community of Practice Consultation
 - Pacific Disability Forum – Regional Disability Conference, Nadi Fiji
 - April 2019**
 - NDIS – Community of Practice Consultation (Perth, Sydney and Melbourne)
 - May 2019**
 - Meeting with South Australian Government
 - Deaf Jury
 - Medical Interpreting
 - Deaf Education
 - Board Retreat
 - June 2019**
 - NDIS – Community of Practice Report submitted
 - Australian Communications Consumer Action Network Disability Advisory Forum
 - July 2019**
 - Organisational Capacity Building (NDIS) begins
 - World Federation of the Deaf – Deaf Youth Camp and General Assembly
 - World Federation of the Deaf – General Meeting and Congress
 - World Federation of the Deaf – Oceania General Meeting
 - August 2019**
 - National Press Club Presentation
 - Charity Game at Canberra Raiders (vs Manly Sea Eagle)
 - Launch of StorySign (book 2 and 3)

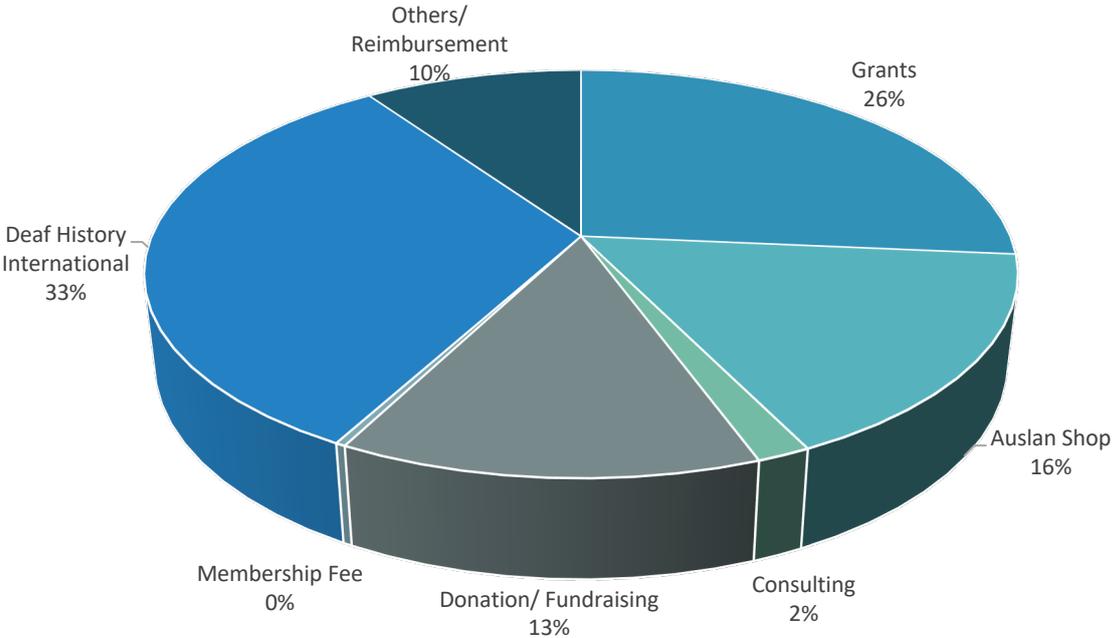
FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME

(2017-18 - \$172,948)
(2018-19 - \$317,238)



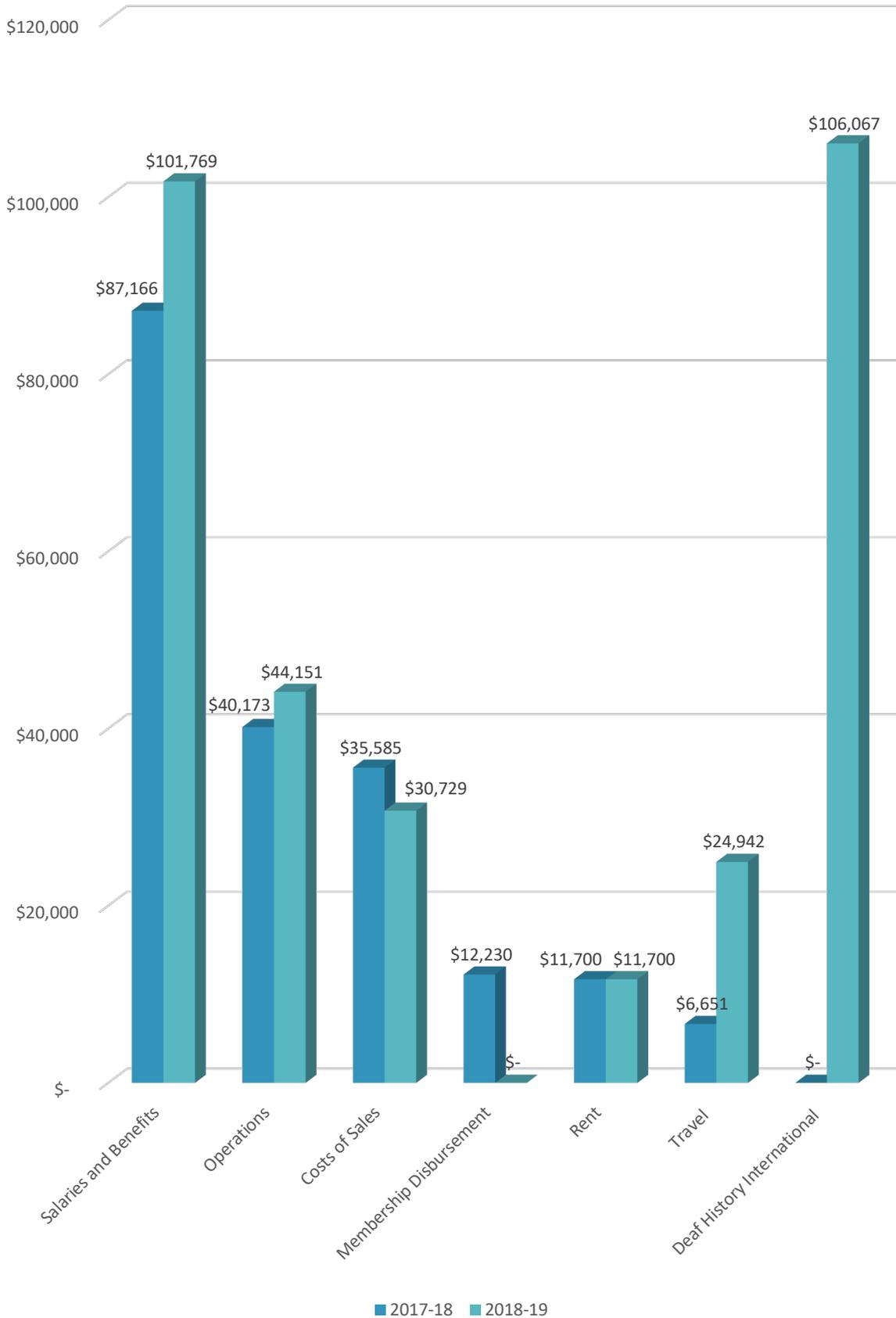
Income Source



EXPENSES

(FY 2017-18 - \$193,505)

(FY 2018-19 - \$319,358)



Board Directors

Todd Wright (2010 -) – Chairperson
Adrian Doyle (2016 -)
Rodney Adams (2018 –)
***Debbie Kennewell** (2015 - 2019)

*Elected for term 2016-19, resigned in May 2019.

Staff

Kyle Miers – Chief Executive
Alfia Dipalma – Bookkeeper
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

Debbie Kennewell

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

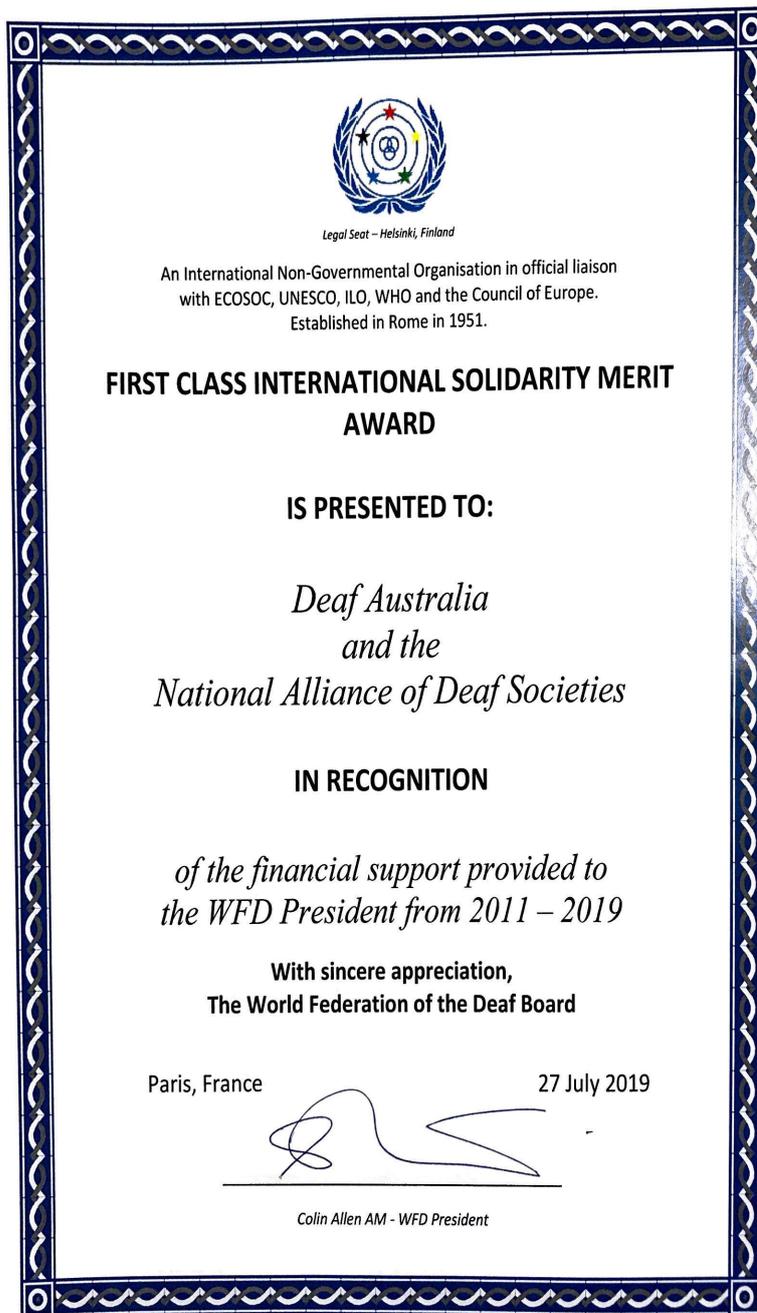
Paul Bartlett
Kim Curtis
Peter Davies
David Hamilton
Irene Holub
Berna Hutchins
Patricia Levitzke-Gray
Ramas McRae
Rachel Miers
Carol O'Rilley
Brent Phillips
Freda Sandon
Barry Priori

1 Year

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

(* denotes President)

(** denotes Board Member and former (or retired) Executive Officer)



Paper Certificate in Appreciation of Deaf Australia and Deaf Societies (AccessPlus (WA) Deaf Society (NSW), Deaf Can:Do (SA), Deaf Services (Qld) and Expression Australia (Vic) contribution to assist Mr. Colin Allen AM to undertake his duties as WFD President between 2011 and 2019.



Glass plaque

Financial Contributors (funding and in-kind)



Australian Government



National Alliance of
Deaf Societies



