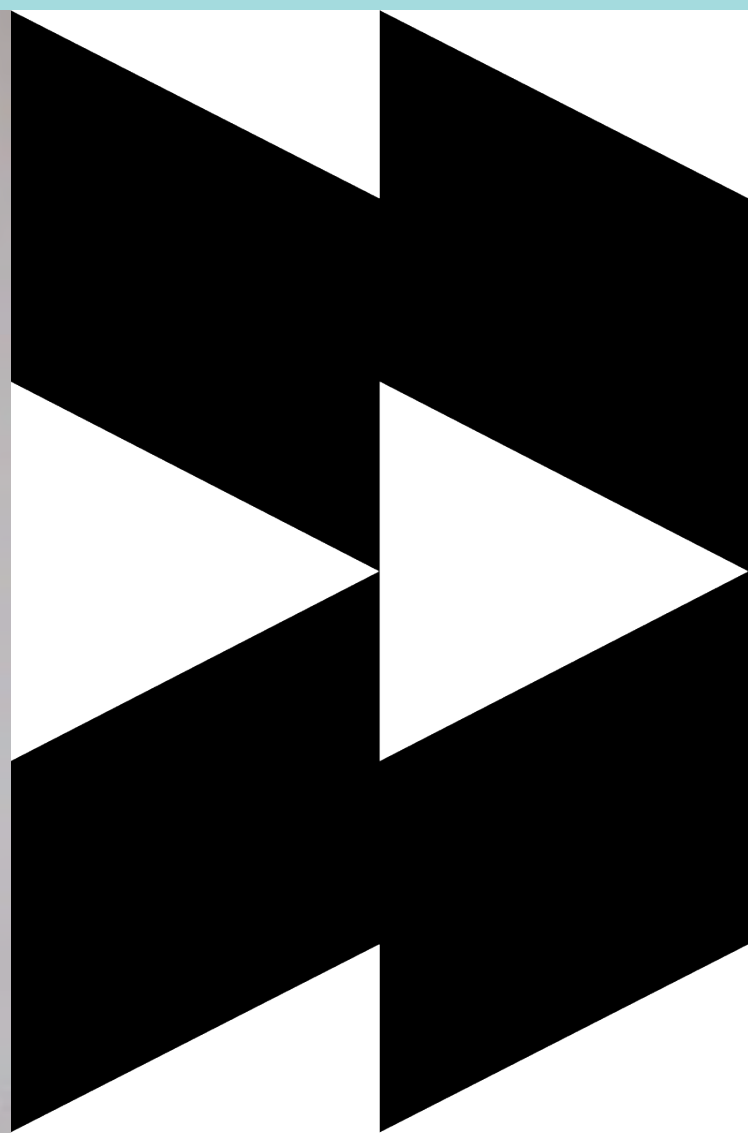


Guide Dogs.

2024

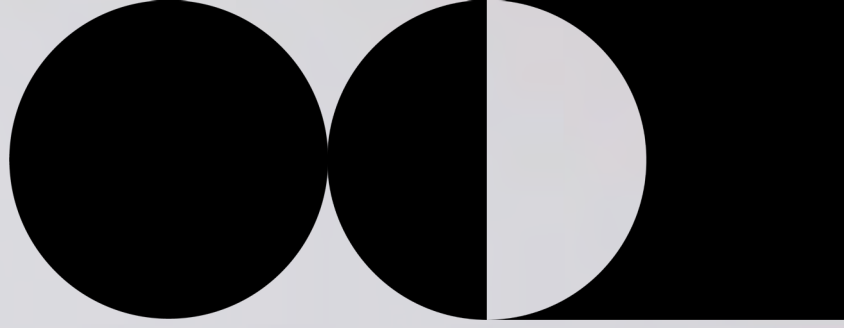
Victoria Annual Report.





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Overview.

Our vision and mission.

To be a leader in breaking down barriers so people can live a life of their choosing.

Our purpose.

To support a life without limits.

Our values.



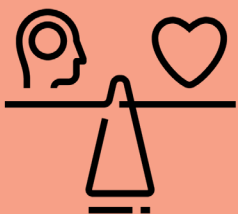
Walk the talk.

The buck stops with us. So we keep our word and keep going, no matter what.



Never stop exploring.

We're fearlessly creative. We've always asked and answered the tough questions and if there's a better way, we'll find it.



Lead with head and heart.

Forever focused on our purpose and mission, we combine care and careful planning to deliver successes worth celebrating.



Lift each other.

From a guiding hand to a high five, we unleash and acknowledge everyone's potential.

Report from our Chair and CEO.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Guide Dogs Victoria staff, we are pleased to present our 2023-2024 Annual Report, which highlights a pivotal year in the evolution of our organisation. Marking the culmination of a groundbreaking achievement for Guide Dogs Victoria – the completion of our \$33 million sensory Campus in Kew – we are honoured to reflect on the past year and share the remarkable accomplishments that have been made towards the services and support we provide to the low vision and blind Victorian community.

Throughout the year and with the completion of our Campus' transformational redevelopment, we have significantly expanded our range of services, enhancing our capacity to meet the diverse needs of those with vision loss. We are pleased to have strengthened programs and increased our ability to support more Clients and their specific needs, while introducing newer initiatives. The introduction of Disability Support Worker and Carer Training, and our Wellbeing and Employment services are just a few examples of new ways in which we are expanding our supports. Our physical presence is not the only thing that has been upgraded to world-class standards, we have simultaneously been working on the development of our holistic service offering to a broader range of Clients.

This growth also extends to our dog service programs. In addition to our ongoing high standards within our Guide Dog program, we have

undertaken a thorough restructuring and advancement of our Therapy Dog program in the last 12 months. We are delighted to report a record number of Therapy Dogs now actively bringing renewed access to joy and companionship to individuals living with trauma, neurodiversity, illness or isolation. These dogs play an invaluable role in fostering connection and support for those that need it. This initiative not only underscores our commitment to improving the quality of life of the wider community, but also allows our world-class dogs more diverse career choices that align with their individual temperaments and strengths. All the pups raised at Guide Dogs Victoria go on to have meaningful roles and contributions to the people they support, and we could not be prouder of the community of supporters and volunteers involved in achieving this.

After five years of meticulous planning and development to realise a ten-year vision, a significant milestone in our nearly-70-year history is the completion of our Campus redevelopment. This includes the finalisation of reception, Vision and Children's Services, and Client residential accommodations. Co-designed by experts and stakeholders with lived experience, our fully accessible, sensory Campus not only strengthens our ongoing service provision, but also serves as a community hub where Clients and their supporters, donors, staff and volunteers can come together to connect, and share support and resources.

Although the pandemic and ongoing construction work throughout the redevelopment saw many challenges to this building project and our service delivery methods, we are beyond energised to welcome the community back on-campus. The Campus is abuzz with workshops, school holiday programs, Guide Dog residential programs and events. We have a full calendar of these opportunities to connect and learn. There is also a variety of planned events for our wonderful volunteers and donors. When the facilities are not being used by Clients, we are excited to be offering venue hire and full-day or overnight experience packages for corporate partners, supporters and donors, enabling a more effective way for us to educate, advocate and enhance greater awareness of our cause within the Victorian community.

In addition to our exceptional new Campus and expanded offerings, we are so pleased to work alongside and be colocated with other organisations. Advanced Vetcare has now been operating for 18 months on the Kew Campus and has grown to offer 24/7 emergency veterinary care on-site to the public, as well as being the veterinary provider for the Guide Dogs community of canines. In June 2024, we welcomed the Vision 2020 Australia team, the peak body in Australia for vision health, to share our office space. We have a goal for our Kew Campus to become a hub for the low vision and blind community and are eager to collaborate closely with more partners in our sector for the betterment of our work and community members. We look forward to sharing further announcements about collaborative efforts in the near future.

We have much to celebrate and it is important to acknowledge that our progress has not come without its challenges. Navigating the complexities of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and its reforms has at times tested our organisation, but we remain steadfast in our mission to make our support as seamless as possible for our Clients. We recognise that while the NDIS is an important funding source, it represents only a small portion of our overall funding and will never cover all our Clients' needs. As a not-for-profit, we continue to rely heavily on the generosity of our donors and supporters to ensure our work is personalised to meet our community's complex needs and this means our donations are crucial. We acknowledge with deep appreciation the ongoing support from our community outside of government funding to maintain these services. To our many donors, we say a big thank you for your reliable support and unwavering commitment in continuing your generosity.

Like our donors, we can't exist without the lifeblood of all our volunteers, from our Puppy Raising community to our volunteer support for events, administration and advocacy efforts. Also, to our high-profile and lived experience ambassadors – we are eternally grateful to the over 500 of you who support us each year. You are a joy and huge support to our team.

It is also important we thank the outstanding staff of Guide Dogs Victoria for their continuing commitment – you make us the wonderful organisation we are, and it is only because of your skills, professionalism and care that we can provide the quality, valued services that we do.

Finally, we have one more stage of our Campus redevelopment to complete and we will provide more details of this in 2025. We are excited to announce our plans to upgrade our dog facilities to complete the vision for our entire Kew Campus. For now, we are proud to affirm that our Client service spaces and foundations are in place and with your ongoing support, our future is set up to become the leading provider of vision loss services in Victoria. We welcome all of you to join us in looking ahead. Please do visit us on-site at our new sensory Campus to enjoy the garden, spaces, meet for a catch-up in our community hub, explore our new retail shop and meet with our wonderful team of employees to learn about their expertise. All of it represents an investment in the future of our Clients and the community that is inspired to support them, while ensuring Guide Dogs Victoria continues the vital work we do. A testament to and a clear reflection of our collective, shared vision for people who have low vision or are blind: empowering a life without limits.



**Dr David Cochrane,
Chair, Board of Directors**



**Nicky Long,
CEO, Guide Dogs Victoria**

A message from our Patron.

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of visiting Guide Dogs Victoria's redevelopment and gaining a deeper understanding of the benefits provided by the new residential accommodation, education hub, and world-class training centre of excellence.

As Patron of this organisation, I am pleased to see that Guide Dogs Victoria is proudly stepping into a new era of empowering Victorians with low vision or blindness to live life without limits.

This new chapter of the organisation's story will enrich the lives of more Victorians than ever before, enabling them to live the full and independent lives we all deserve.

**Professor the Honourable
Margaret Gardner AC**

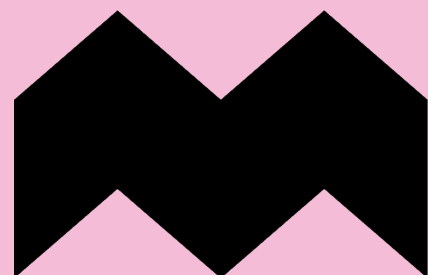
Governor of Victoria





Our Clients.

**At Guide Dogs Victoria,
we exist to provide choices
to empower people with
low vision or blindness and
equip them with the skills,
tools and support to live
confidently. We are proud
to share this report, outlining
our impact over the past year,
while celebrating the efforts
and achievements of our
Clients and their families,
staff and volunteers.**



Our services.

When social, physical and digital environments are not accessible or inclusive, people with low vision or blindness can face barriers to living the life they strive for. We work with Clients, their families and caregivers to increase their skills, confidence and access to support, giving them more choice for how they go about their day-to-day lives and get out and about. Our work is not government funded. While some services are supported by the NDIS, much of the work we do is supported by community fundraising. This is achieved through the following services and supports:

Access Consulting.

Ensuring workplaces, private buildings and community spaces are accessible for people with all abilities, specialising in blindness and low vision.

Adult Mobility Training.

Learn to move confidently and safely through any community.

Assistive Technology.

Support to identify and use the right technology to make life easier at home, at work, at school and in the community.

Children's Mobility Services.

Giving children aged 0 to 18 with low vision or blindness the skills to reach their potential and build independence.

Early Childhood Services.

Supporting parents and carers of children aged zero to seven with low vision or blindness and working with those children to reach developmental goals.

Employment Services.

Assisting students and adult job seekers in securing and retaining employment, gaining work experience, and ensuring job readiness through support with CV preparation, application processes, personal presentation, and disclosing vision loss.

Group Programs.

Learn skills, connect and share experiences with members of the community in a fun and relaxed group setting.

Guide Dog Services.

Supporting Clients to partner with a Guide Dog to access the community with confidence.

Occupational Therapy.

Practical skills for everyday living, regardless of age or level of functional vision.

Orthoptic Low Vision Services.

Supporting parents and carers of children aged zero to seven with low vision or blindness and working with those children to reach developmental goals.

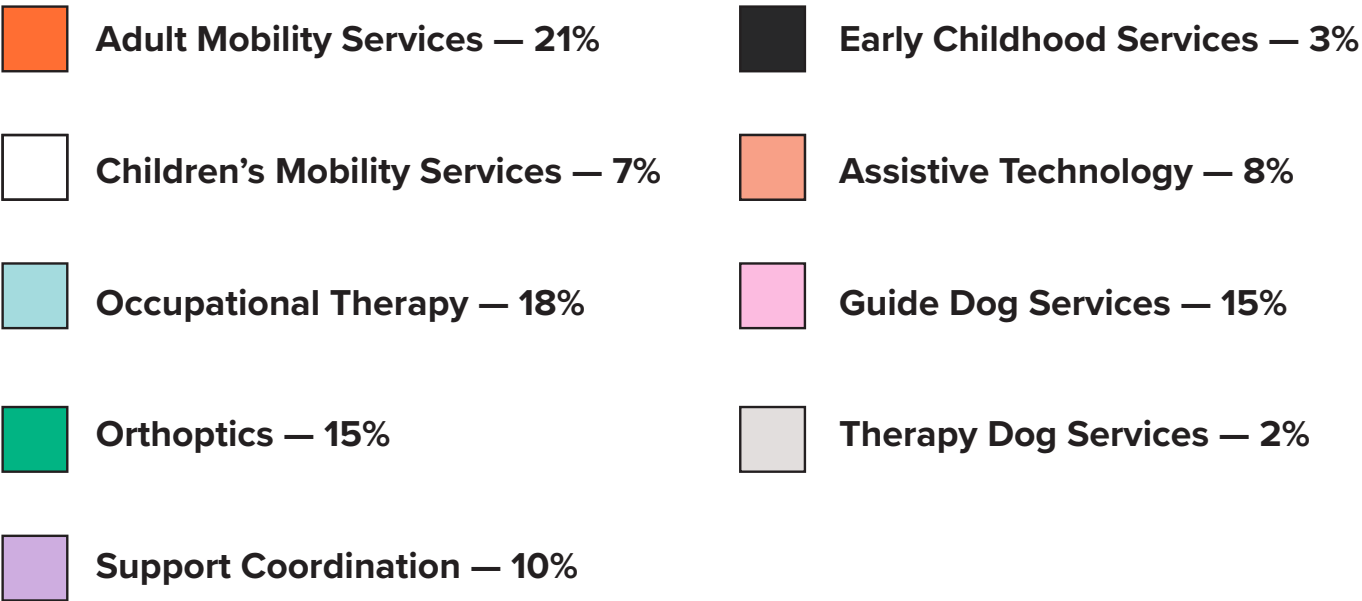
Support Coordination.

Find the right information, support and services to help Clients navigate the NDIS with a personal guide by their side.

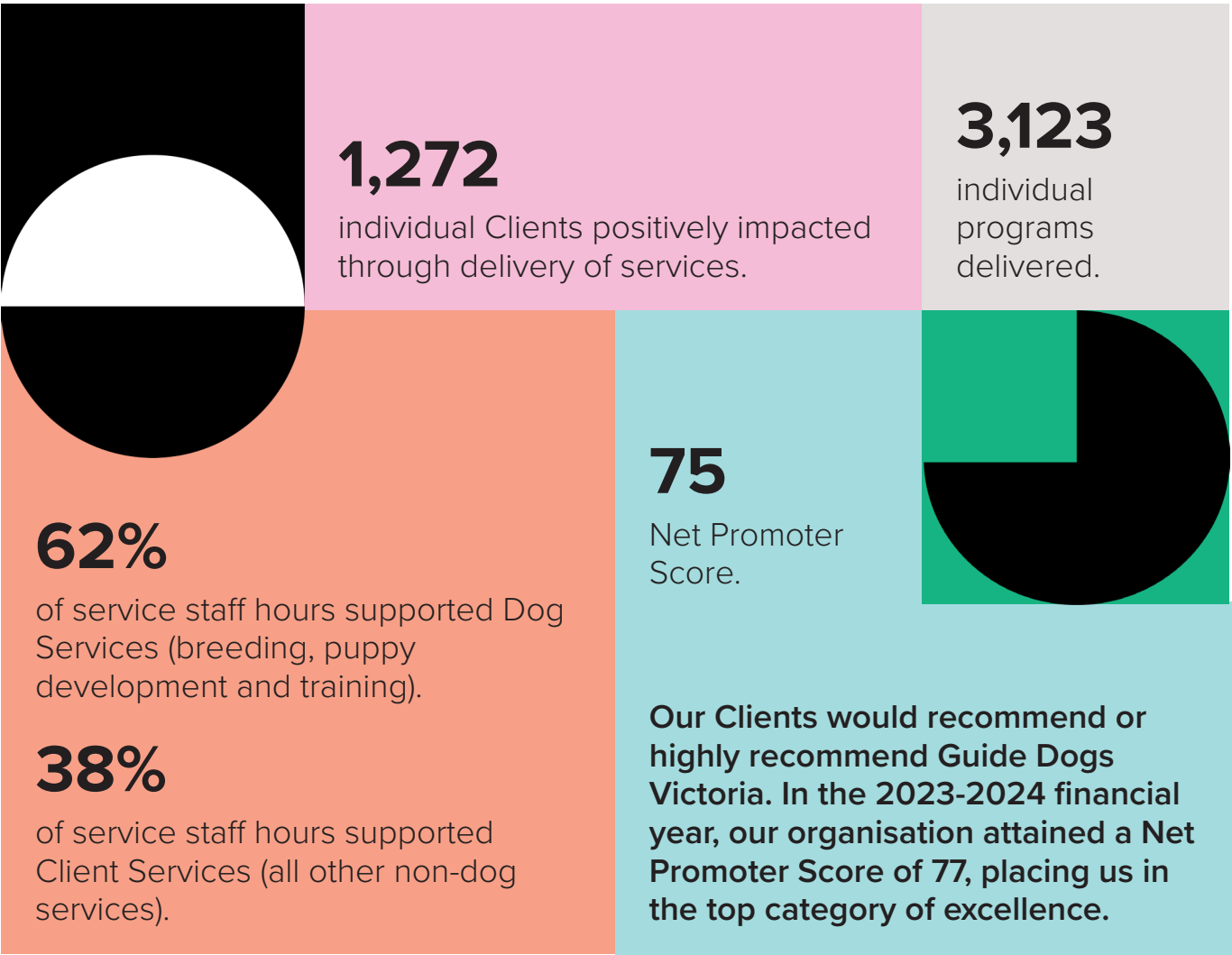
Wellbeing and Psychology Services.

Offering opportunities to connect with others with low vision or blindness, access psychology support tailored to the community, and develop new skills and relationships to promote personal wellbeing.

Service breakdown by type



Our impact.



Group programs.

Our group programs offer opportunities for Clients and those in the broader low vision and blind community of all ages to share experiences and make real connections with like-minded people.

With the completion of our new Campus, we look forward to relaunching programs that ceased during our Campus' redevelopment and anticipate the launch of new programs to empower all our Clients.

This year we supported 51 Clients to greater independence and connection through:



Spotlight on Regional Rangers.

Supported by Perpetual Impact Philanthropy and taking place in September 2023, 'Regional Rangers' was a three-day camp attended by 12 senior school-aged students who connected with their peers in an adventurous environment. Through planned activities, students had the opportunity to build on core social, personal, and orientation and mobility skills in a recreational setting that fostered independence and the confidence to try new skills. Activities included Blind Tennis, surfing and an insightful and inspiring meeting with world champion surfer and Australian Paralympian, Matt Formston.

Held in Geelong and surrounding areas, the camp included Occupational Therapy as part of the program, with students being supported to be independent in daily living skills and preparing meals. When students come together, it is a pleasure to witness friendships develop and peers supporting each other throughout the different stages of their experience with vision loss and independence. For some, this is the only opportunity to meet with peers who also have vision loss. We value all the feedback we receive, especially from students and participants of our youth group programs, as it aids development of future programs, while improving learning opportunities, the experiences to be had and shared, and chances to connect.

Regional Rangers group program success:

- “The opportunity to be independent and make my own breakfast was amazing.”
- “The activities were fun, I loved learning to surf and swimming in the ocean.”
- 100% of attendees participated in a bounce activity to learn different skills associated with moving their bodies through space.
- 100% of participants reported feeling more confident when walking/navigating the beach and its sounds.
- 50% of participants participated in surfing and swimming activities in the ocean. For some, it was their first opportunity having some independence with ocean swimming.
- 90% of participants had never participated in Blind Tennis activities, and 100% of them reported that they learnt new skills associated with playing tennis.



Social impact.

Our award-winning Social Impact Measurement Framework enables us to understand where we are contributing to positive impact, where we can increase our impact, and where we can work with others to advocate for change.

We work with Clients to increase their skills and confidence, as well as their access to accessibility tools and person-centred, tailored support through our Guide Dogs and Client and Vision services. This enables more choice for how people go about their day-to-day lives and get out and about.

Clients pursue meaningful activities that are important to them and build and maintain strong relationships and connections, all of which are important parts of feeling good. Over time, these changes compound to enable Clients to live the life they want.

Understanding our impact helps us to better support our Clients and their unique, individual life goals. This year, we are proud to say that we have maintained our impact levels across all areas. However, there is always more work to be done, and we look forward to working with our Clients and their families, volunteers, donors, staff and other organisations to create a more inclusive and accessible society.



Day-to-day life.	77% of Clients say they are more independent when doing daily activities around the home or online.
Getting out and about.	78% of Clients say they are more independent when getting out and about.
Meaningful activities.	68% of Clients say they do more of the things that are important to them.
Relationships and connections.	73% of Clients say they have made or maintained social connections and relationships.
Feeling good.	71% of Clients say they feel more positive about the future.
Living the life you want.	73% of Clients say they are more able to live the life they want.

In addition to these impressive results from our *Working Together for Change 2024 Impact Report*, Guide Dog Handlers report increased autonomy and improved quality of life. Specifically, 94 per cent of Guide Dog Handlers feel more independent in their daily activities, while 93 per cent engage more frequently in activities they value. Additionally, 84 per cent of Guide Dog Handlers find it easier to maintain friendships and networks, and 82 per cent enjoy more quality time with their families.

Voices of our Clients.

Day-to-day life.	"I feel safer in the home, and I feel like I can contribute to the household more."
Getting out and about.	"I never dreamt I would be catching public transport and venturing out alone. It was a really big step."
Meaningful activities.	"I would not be able to study if I had not had Guide Dogs' services."
Relationships and connections.	"I don't need to rely on others. I get out for coffee with the guys, visit the grandkids and play hide and seek, or visit a friend."
Feeling good.	"I know I will have continued assistance as my sight deteriorates further. It gives me confidence to face the future. It is less frightening and frustrating as I am no longer alone."
Living the life you want.	"I feel empowered! There is so much to say – to sum it up, I can just be me!"

Maysoun's story.

Maysoun is a 17-year-old who has been receiving a range of services from Guide Dogs Victoria since 2023. Living with low vision due to multiple eye conditions, Maysoun was experiencing trouble with daily tasks such as getting safely to and from school and participating in her favourite activities. Despite her vision loss, Maysoun has been ineligible for NDIS funding as she and her family were waiting to be granted permanent residency after moving to Australia from Iran.

Through a referral from her school, Maysoun connected with an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialist from Guide Dogs Victoria who provided her with long cane training. She learnt how to travel by herself in her local area, crossing busy roads and getting home from school. In addition to learning personalised travel routes, Maysoun has participated in our school holiday camps, day programs and has made strong connections and friendships with other teenagers living with low vision.

Maysoun's favourite activity is ice skating, which provides unique challenges to someone with low vision. Guide Dogs Victoria has helped ensure that she can continue to participate in this sport through support from our physiotherapist and learning how to travel to a large ice skating rink in Docklands. Learning to travel to Docklands has required Maysoun to learn bus, train, and tram travel skills, utilise assistive technology, and learn how to navigate walking

through busy areas of Melbourne, as well as travelling at night. Through O&M training, Maysoun can now travel by herself after school to the ice rink and has even used her new-found knowledge of the city to meet up with friends during the school holidays.

With the help of Guide Dogs Victoria, Maysoun has developed many skills that have supported her to live a life without limits. She is now looking to the future and is considering transitioning to training with a Guide Dog after she finishes school to assist with her tertiary education goals.



Connected together.

Connected Together is a Guide Dogs Australia project that aimed to support community and peer support activities for people living with low vision or blindness, carers, family members and their support networks.

Completed in June 2024, the project was funded by the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Social and Community Participation Grants, Department of Social Services, Australia Government. The project was a post-COVID-19 initiative, delivered from June 2021 to June 2024.

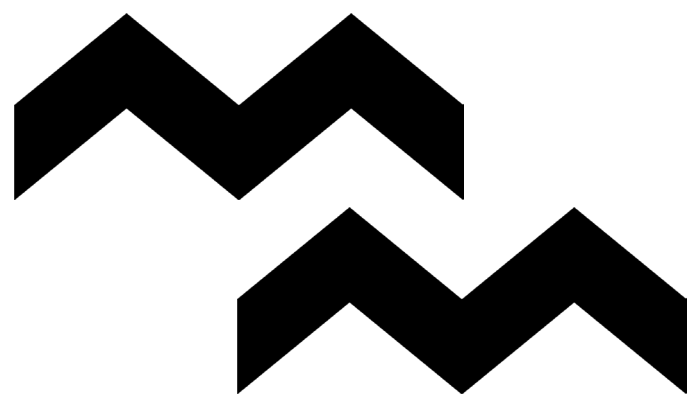
Over the life of the project, Connected Together has engaged with and supported 52 peer support groups across Australia, representing over 2500 people living with low vision or blindness. It has also enabled participation of over 4000 people inclusive of support networks, in accessible activities such as adaptive sports try-outs, peer meetups, accessible arts and cultural activities, health and wellbeing classes, trivia nights, walking groups, audiobook clubs and digital literacy.

To promote ongoing connections and linkages of the national peer support network beyond the life of the project, a Community and Peer Group Directory was developed in collaboration with the peer groups. The directory provides information on peer groups across Australia engaged in art and culture, sport and recreation and social and community initiatives. The resource is available on all Guide Dogs websites.

Other positive short-term impacts of the project include:

- increased opportunities for sharing experiences and information among groups
- increased access to diverse social networks, activities or experiences
- increased participation of people living with low vision or blindness in peer groups
- increased access to, and availability of, information and activities
- and increased sustainability of peer groups and national peer group network.

Lastly, the Connected Together project team wish to acknowledge and celebrate the individual and collective expertise of peer groups with lived experience across Australia. Their drive, leadership and ongoing commitment was pivotal to the design and the impact of the project.



Disability support worker and care training.

Guide Dogs Victoria is proud to offer upskilling to disability support workers and carers in 2024, to share resources and educate people that support individuals living with low vision or blindness. Participants can learn the practicalities that help a support worker provide the highest standard of care to a person with vision loss. Many Clients use support workers; typically, this will be either a professional booked through formal channels or informal support by family members. Clients often report that their support worker does not always understand how best to support them, which can limit the standard of care individuals may receive.

From understanding the most common causes of vision loss and the functional challenges to Guide Dog etiquette, human guide training and busting communication myths, these nuances are essential to promoting confidence and independence in the daily lives of those living with low vision or blindness.

It is our pleasure and honour to provide this training in addition to our diverse range of supports and services, all housed under the roof of our brand-new, fully accessible, sensory Campus.

Access consulting.

Ensuring that workplaces, private buildings and shared public spaces comply with Australian Disability Access Regulations contributes to a safe, inclusive community for people of all abilities. Access appraisals are valuable and applicable at any stage of building development, whether in the early design phase, within the construction phase, or housed within an existing structure.

Guide Dogs Victoria has had a demanding year in providing access appraisals, advice and consultation to several key stakeholders on a wide range of projects including playgrounds, public transport infrastructure and public buildings.

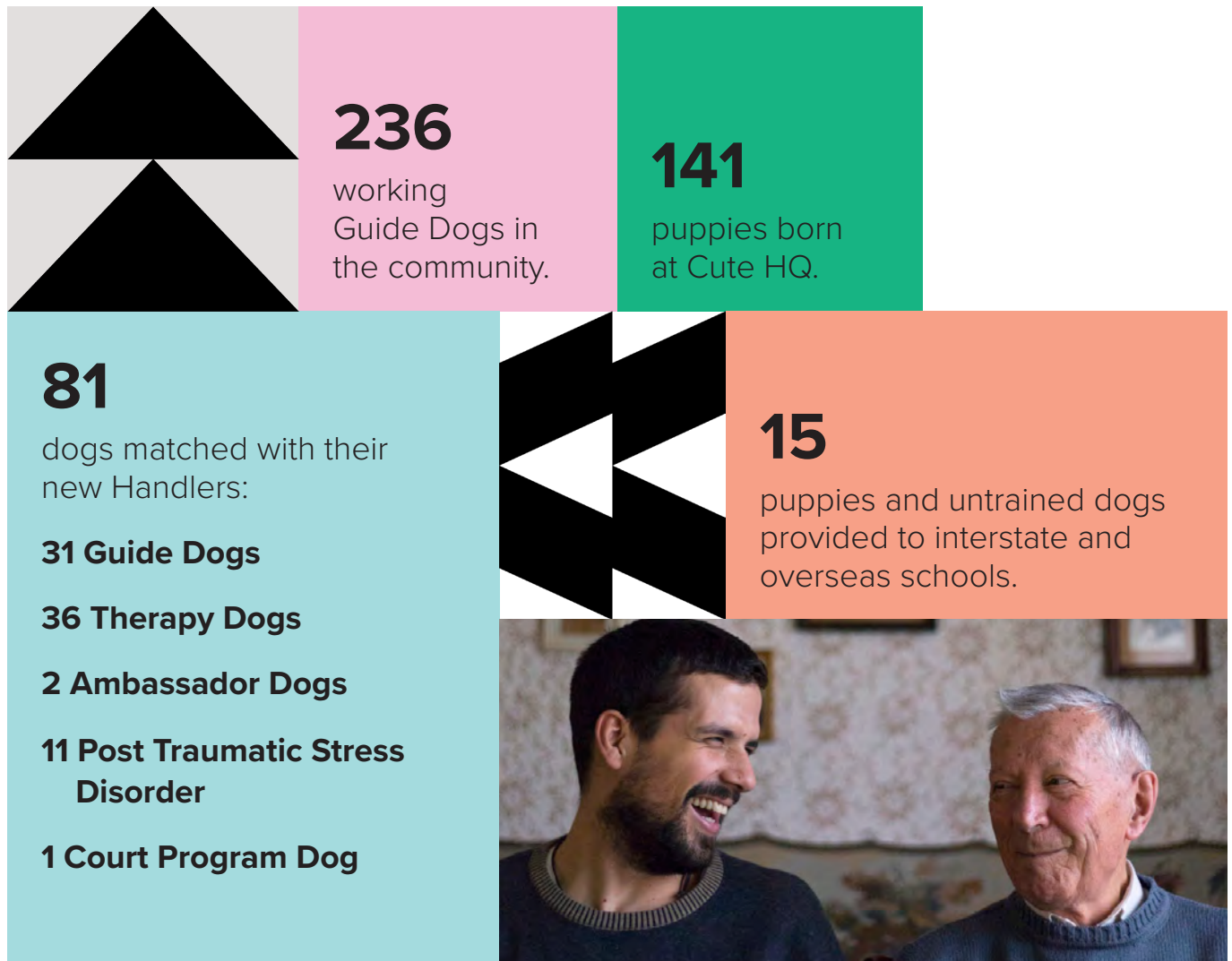
One highlight from the last financial year was being re-engaged by a local council to provide an access appraisal of a newly-completed playground in Melbourne's east. Guide Dogs Victoria originally appraised the playground during its initial design phase several years ago at the request of the playground's architectural firm.

A follow-up appraisal upon completion of a project ensures that the environment and spaces provide equitable and dignified access for all users, demonstrating the impact and role the community must play in ensuring accessibility is front of mind during any design process – regardless of if designing playgrounds, play areas, or other community hubs.



Our dogs.

Connected together.



Dogs are our heritage and a significant part of our Client support. Approximately 23 per cent of services provided to Clients in the 2023-2024 financial year was via our Dogs Team. Our Guide Dogs make a profound difference to the lives of their Handlers, their families and support network, making it safer, easier and more comfortable to get out and about – as well as being a calming and positive presence in their lives as companions.

Further to our Guide Dog program, our Therapy Dog program has grown immensely this year, with Therapy Dogs now placed with a diverse range of individuals and facilities. We are deeply proud of the advances we have made with our Therapy Dog program and the positive waves of change they are creating in the community.

Veterinary services.

This year, Guide Dogs Victoria was thrilled to launch new on-site veterinary services at our Kew campus, operating out of the state-of-the-art Advanced Vetcare specialist clinic. This initiative marks a significant milestone in our commitment to providing comprehensive lifelong care for our dogs and puppies from birth to retirement, regardless of their career path.

Our on-site veterinary services are available three days per week, offering convenient and accessible care for our on-site dogs and puppies, as well as consultations for our dedicated Puppy Raisers. We are grateful to have Dr Ann Hansen, a highly experienced veterinarian who has worked with Guide Dogs Victoria for over 10 years, leading our veterinary service. Dr Hansen now performs all routine surgeries and consultations on-site, ensuring our dogs receive the best possible care.

Being collocated with Advanced Vetcare means we can access the expertise of their specialists in surgery, medicine, and oncology. This collaboration enhances our ability to provide top-tier veterinary care, leveraging the advanced skills and knowledge of specialists to address complex medical needs.

This new service underscores our dedication to the health and wellbeing of all our dogs, ensuring they receive the highest quality care right on our campus. We look forward to the positive impact this will have on our dogs, their Handlers, and the broader Guide Dogs Victoria community.



Therapy and Wellbeing Dogs.



Over the past year, our Therapy and Wellbeing Dogs have taken on a variety of roles supporting individuals living with disability, illness or trauma. The emotional support, encouragement and unconditional companionship they provide make a profound impact on individuals and communities alike.

While not every dog from our Puppy Raising and Guide Dog training programs goes on to become a Guide Dog, some find their true calling as Therapy Dogs,

changing lives in equally meaningful ways. In the last year, we successfully placed 48 Therapy Dogs and two Ambassador Dogs into their new roles.

Our Therapy Dogs are placed with individuals of all ages with disability, illness, or social isolation, providing them with emotional support, encouragement, and unconditional companionship.

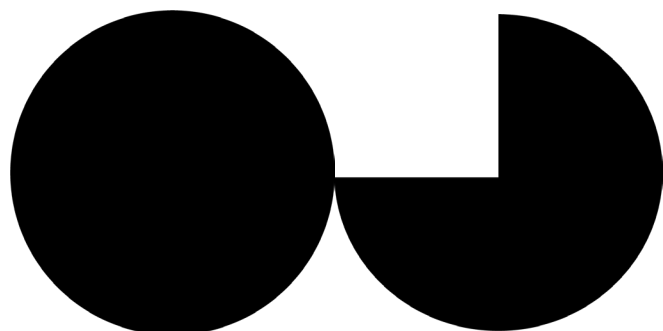
“Our Therapy Dog has changed the life of our two autistic children. She instinctively knows what to do when our son is upset by bringing him a toy or licking him, or with our daughter by lying next to her for gentle pats and has brought our family closer together.”

“Transitions to and from school were incredibly challenging for my daughter prior to us being matched with our Therapy Dog. Previously she would panic, cry, run and hide. Now she happily walks her dog into school at the start of the day, and back to the car at the end of the day.”

“My Therapy Dog has helped me get on with life after the sudden death of my wife of 56 years. She gets me up in the morning and gives structure to my day. People smile and talk to me when we are out walking, and she helps greatly to ward off depression.”

Beyond individual placements, Therapy Dogs also serve on a broader scale in facilities such as schools, hospitals, funeral homes, psychologist's offices, and rehabilitation clinics, where they contribute to the wellbeing of many. This year, our Therapy Dog program expanded to include the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia's Melbourne registry, where Poppy was appointed as their first trained Court Facility Dog. Poppy offers calming support in courtrooms, waiting areas, mediation rooms, and during interviews. Her presence not only transforms the court experience for those dealing with trauma but also helps create a more compassionate and supportive environment, enhancing the administration of justice.

Additionally, we continue our close collaboration with Integra Service Dogs in Canberra, supplying dogs for further training to become Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Assistance Dogs for Veterans and First Responders across Australia. Some of our dogs also serve as the face of Guide Dogs Victoria, taking on the role of Ambassador Dogs. Our mission is to place our dogs where they can make the greatest impact, bringing comfort and joy to people in countless ways.



Bee and William's story.

In 2000, Bee was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, a mental health condition including schizophrenia and mood disorder symptoms, which also affects her paternal side of the family. Living with this diagnosis and the accompanying anxiety proved overwhelming and Bee was encouraged to apply for a Therapy Dog from Guide Dogs Victoria.

While waiting for her Therapy Dog match, she went through a particularly challenging time when a close relative fell seriously ill. Finding herself overwhelmed with the need for comfort and stability, Bee's life was transformed when she got the call to say her perfect match was found: William, a handsome, long-legged boy with a gentle spirit and compassion that only a Therapy Dog can provide.

The joy that William has brought to Bee's life is indescribable. Their morning routine together is a source of stability and comfort; his snuggles on the couch never fail to ease her anxiety and bring joy to moments when it's needed most. William is Bee's rock through tough times, from family challenges and late-night emergency visits to work-related stress and even her own health issues. William's uncanny ability to sense Bee's emotions and comfort her before she even realises that she needs soothing makes her feel safer and more connected to her community.

As someone who experiences paranoia, one of the symptoms of schizophrenia, it is heartwarming for Bee to be welcomed by others with a smile and a kind word when she is out and about with William. The eager and well-behaved boy always greets the world with a smile, with the benefits of this community connection flowing through to all aspects of Bee's life.

Now, Bee cannot imagine her life without William, their many adventures, and delightful sunny morning walks.



Anita Goldsborough's story.



Our Puppy Raisers are dedicated volunteers who take on a vital commitment to nurture our Guide Dog puppies so they can have the best chance at becoming working Guide Dogs for people with low vision or blindness.

Their contribution to each puppy's Guide Dog journey is invaluable, and we could not provide our life-changing Guide Dogs to Clients without them.

Anita Goldsborough is one of our Puppy Raisers providing this integral support. She has raised five of our gorgeous puppies, including her current puppy, Rajah, who is nearing his assessment for the Guide Dog training program.

Aware of Guide Dogs Victoria from a young age, Anita's mother was a

supporter, frequent donor, and lover of the iconic Guide Dogs tea towels— but it wasn't until a leg injury left her unable to work that Anita considered becoming a Puppy Raiser to motivate her through her recovery process.

After battling social isolation throughout recovery and needing motivation to get up and about to help her injury heal, Anita attended a Puppy Raising information session and one month later she took in her first Guide Dog puppy, Corby.

Corby, along with Anita's following two puppies, Fritz and Suri, all became working Guide Dogs, providing companionship and independence to people living with low vision or blindness. Her fourth dog, Brydie, was reclassified as a pet due to a leg joint injury.

Anita says, "I discovered how enjoyable it was to raise a puppy and have your best friend with you at all times."

She enjoys taking them everywhere, to the shops, doctors, hairdressers, and on public transport and expresses that the positive impact on her health and life overall makes her wish she started earlier.

Taking the puppies she raises somewhere different every day, and being able to share with people what she does, is something Anita takes extraordinary pride in.

"I never realised how much I would love doing this and I work very hard with each puppy I get," she says. "I hope I can do this for many years to come."



Our people.

Our impact.

Guide Dogs Victoria operates with the support of:

580
volunteers



136
Puppy raisers



1 Million
volunteer hours



142
employees



Including

48
new starters



Staff service recognition.

At Guide Dogs Victoria our Clients come first in everything we do, and our core values are underpinned by our focus and dedication to those who need us the most.

To celebrate staff and volunteers who go above and beyond to live out our values, each quarter we present Reward and Recognition Awards.

Mathew Gay, Customer Service Officer, is just one of our recent Reward and Recognition Award recipients. Mathew received a nomination in early 2024 in recognition of his uplifting attitude, exemplifying our “Lift Each Other” value by going beyond to support each person he comes across during his day.

Whether that is going out of his way to assist someone in need or putting a smile on his colleagues’ faces through his engaging coffee van arrival announcements, Mathew proves that it is the small details that make an enormous difference.

“He is creative, spontaneous, and funny. He brings a smile to many faces,” says his nominator.

Mathew says he loves helping people and likes to focus on the small details, a smile and a moment of happiness each day is important to him. As a new dad, Mathew enjoys the special moments, laughing and smiling even during times when things do not necessarily go quite right.

“At work, lending a hand to a teammate, listening and offering support is what I strive for,” he shares. “Lifting each other up and enabling people with low vision or blindness to succeed and be happy is what it is all about.”



Congratulations to the following team members who have been recognised with a Reward and Recognition Award for exemplifying our values over the last 12 months.

Aaron Pitt

Alex DiPalma

Alex Hecker

Alice Maffei

Alicia San Martin

Bev Harris

Brett Chapman

Chelsea King

Darlene McIntosh

Elisa Phillips

Erin Goedhart

Evan Gordon

George Karkak

Grae Channels

Haven English

Jaime Nyberg

Janet Prentice

Kerryn Bousfield

Khoa Nguyen

Kristen Toullos

Leanne Blandford

Lily Downs

Marita Baker

Mathew Gay

Melaine Robinson

Peter Tomlins

Richard Chen

Stacey Ashdown

Susannah Jepson

Thomas Edwards

Yvonne Pearse

Our volunteers.

Our volunteers are vital to ensuring we can continue to support people with low vision or blindness to live the life of their choosing.

Their generous gift of time, care, experience, and dedication is invaluable to the vital work we do supporting the Victorian low vision and blind community. Each year in May, we celebrate National Volunteer Week and use this as an opportunity to show our appreciation for all the ways our volunteers support us.

This year, we held two events dedicated to recognising and acknowledging the fabulous contribution of our volunteers across all areas of Guide Dogs Victoria. At both events, Guide Dogs Victoria applauded the magnificent and selfless contributions of Guide Dogs Victoria volunteers, while volunteers got the chance to mingle with each other and with staff from different departments

Volunteers who reached five-plus years of service in the last 12 months (in increments of 5 years) were acknowledged for their amazing support. In the last 12 months, two of Guide Dogs Victoria's long-standing volunteers reached milestones of 50-years and 40-years of service respectively, displaying such incredible examples of passion for volunteering and our cause.

Whether Puppy Raising, supporting our dog facilities, administration, events, transport, or maintenance, volunteers are embedded in every area of the work we do and every corner of our Campus. We could not do it without their support. For that, we thank you.



Our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

At Guide Dogs Victoria, we are committed to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion organisation-wide.

Each year we take steps towards ensuring that Guide Dogs Victoria remains at the forefront of providing inclusive, accessible, and equal opportunities for everyone. This past year we have introduced several initiatives led by Guide Dogs Victoria's internal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to ensure we are striving towards this goal. These include:

- accessible meetings guidelines
- cultural awareness online training

- hidden disabilities online sunflower training
- inclusive language online training
- mandatory online training on delivering accessible content and presentations.

We have also begun developing a program appointing 'Accessibility Champions' across the organisation. Accessibility Champions are people who advocate for and actively work towards making Guide Dogs Victoria a more accessible and inclusive environment for everyone.



NAIDOC Week 2023.



Each July, we recognise NAIDOC Week, a time for Australians to honour the history, culture, and accomplishments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC Week is an opportunity for us all to learn about the rich cultures and histories of First Nations people and join in celebrating the world's oldest, ongoing living cultures.

The theme of NAIDOC Week 2023 was 'For Our Elders', which acknowledges the significant role Indigenous Elders play in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families.

To commemorate NAIDOC Week, Guide Dogs Victoria staff were invited to attend a guided walking tour with the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne.

This experience brought connection to the environment and provided valuable insights into the history and significance of the cultural Birrarung site.

As we continue to develop our 'Innovate' Reconciliation Action Plan, this opportunity highlighted our focus on ensuring Guide Dogs Victoria is a safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Supporting practitioner development.

Meet Hannah and Hilary, two Occupational Therapy (OT) students from Monash University.

Earlier this year, Hannah and Hilary spent seven weeks at Guide Dogs Victoria as part of their practical placement, giving them the opportunity to gain experience towards becoming qualified OTs, while exploring different areas of the organisation.

Throughout their time here, they observed practitioners in the Vision Services Team and Client programs. They learned how to be a supportive and effective human guide for someone with low vision or blindness and helped facilitate core developmental Client programs at Guide Dogs Victoria.

Hannah and Hilary shared that they felt very welcome and enjoyed their time with us, just as we enjoyed having them on-campus. We wish them all the best for their evidently bright futures and look forward to supporting the development of advocates and supporters of the low vision and blind community in 2024 and beyond.



Building tomorrow's Guide Dog trainers.

The Guide Dogs Victoria Guide Dog Cadet Traineeship is a vital program that equips cadets with the skills and knowledge needed to become qualified Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDMI). The program and course content are continuously updated to reflect best practice and the latest training methodologies and dog welfare standards, ensuring the development of highly skilled professionals to meet the growing demand for Guide Dog trainers in Victoria and worldwide. This investment in training supports Guide Dogs Victoria in maintaining a strong pipeline of trained staff, addressing the international shortage of specialist trainers and mobility instructors.

Cadets undergo comprehensive training during their two- to three-year programs, including practical and theoretical assessments, under the guidance of experienced professionals. Successful completion results in an International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) endorsed qualification, enabling graduates to deliver high-quality mobility programs for people with low vision or blindness to the standard recognised by the IGDF.



In the last financial year, the Guide Dog Cadet Program has proven instrumental in developing the next generation of skilled professionals. With the successful graduation of Meg and Stacey as Guide Dog Trainers, and the onboarding of new cadets Haven and Priyanka, we are confident that the program will continue to support Guide Dogs Victoria's mission to provide exceptional services to our Clients and dogs. These achievements not only enhance our training capabilities, but also ensure we have the expertise to meet the growing demand for Guide Dog services, both now and in the future, ultimately improving our ability to deliver world-class services for years to come.



Celebrating our volunteers – Chris Feehan.

A lifetime of love.

Chris' story with Guide Dogs Victoria began 53 years ago when her neighbour, who at the time worked in the kennels at Guide Dogs Victoria, visited her home to ask if Chris' family would consider raising a Guide Dogs Victoria puppy. Not long after came Jolly, the family's first pup.

After being diagnosed with hip dysplasia, which meant Jolly was no longer suited to the career of a Guide Dog, the gentle pup became Chris' loving and loyal best friend, confidante, and permanent member of the family for 16 years.

Since Jolly, Chris and her family have raised, loved, and bonded with seven more gorgeous puppies – Colonel, Wenda, Ultan, Veelos, Ojay, Valdez and Finbar.

Before becoming a Puppy Raiser, Chris knew little about Guide Dogs Victoria, but "the more [she] learned about the work of Guide Dogs Victoria, the more involved [she] became."

"Following a conversation with the Handler of Colonel, I gained a clearer understanding of what a difference the beautiful dog had made to his Handler's life...I was hooked for life."

Chris' work with Guide Dogs Victoria has since evolved far beyond Puppy Raising. Her journey with Guide Dogs Victoria involves many volunteering roles from temporary and respite care for the organisation's dogs in training to

office admin and even assisting with submissions for grants and government funding. Chris' dedication also extends to the events space at Guide Dogs Victoria where her welcoming presence lends to the electric atmosphere. She volunteers her time, setting and packing up, managing attendee registrations, selling beautiful Guide Dogs merchandise, serving tea and coffee; all the while sharing her impactful story.

Chris explains that she has enjoyed every minute of it. "Sharing time with a variety of like-minded people from an eclectic mix of experience and background has been rewarding, as well as leading to a lifetime of treasured friendships and relationships with other volunteers and Handlers. Volunteering has no ownership on duties or roles, it is about assisting where and when needed and in whatever role needed at the time," she proudly shares.

Since retiring from full-time work, Chris now enjoys the privileged role of puppy nurturer in the puppy nursery every Tuesday afternoon, assisting the events team when available.

“

I remain a very proud and privileged volunteer, always in awe of the wonderful work done by Guide Dogs Victoria and enjoy being around the many other amazing team members and contributors that surround my roles,” says Chris. “Who would have dreamed that what started out so simply as a love of dogs, would continue to develop into a lifetime of joy and commitment.”

It is because of people like Chris that Guide Dogs Victoria can continue the work we do to support the low vision and blind community.

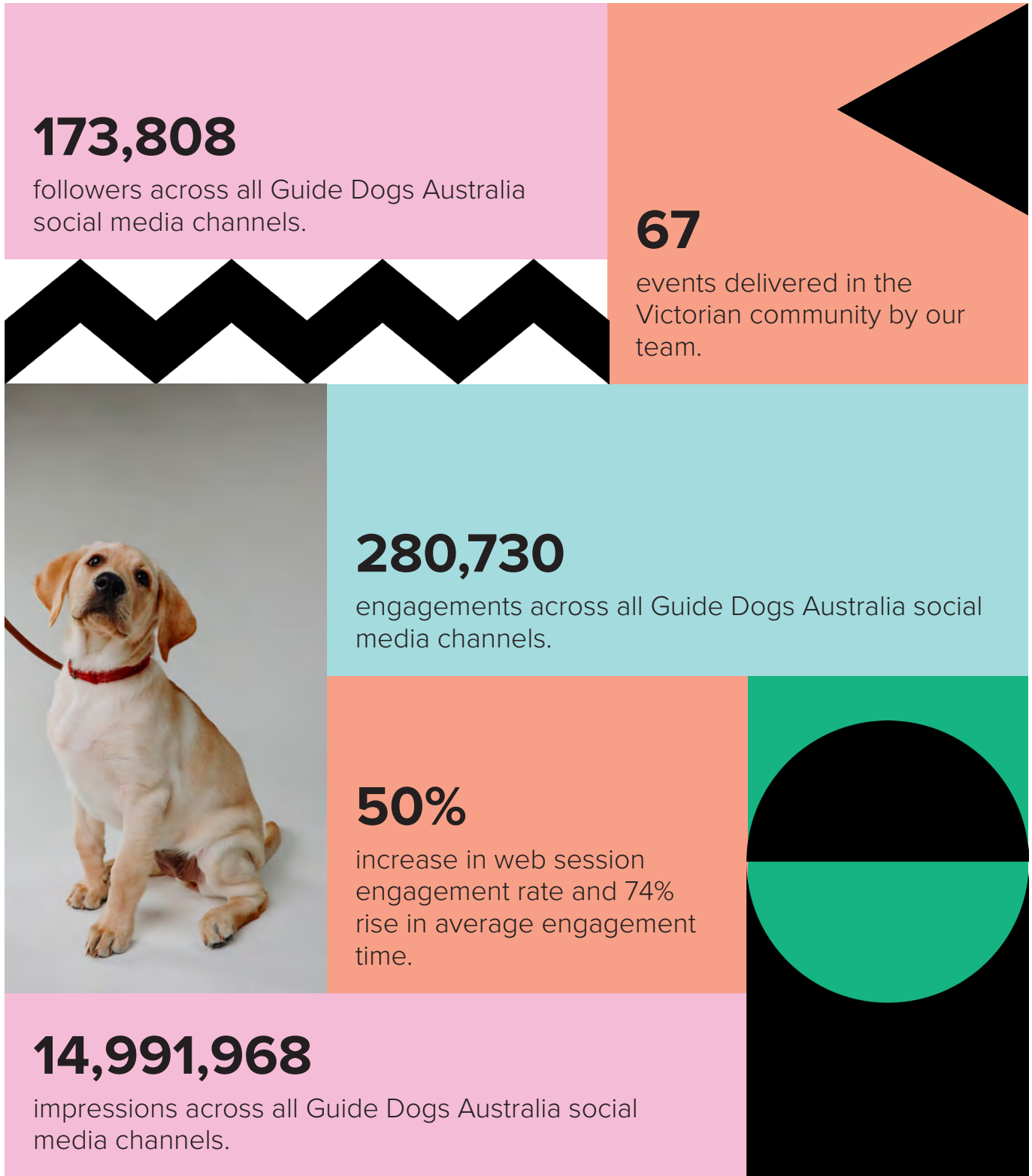
“If and when it fits into life, I encourage everyone to experience the joy of contributing in some small way to make a difference in supporting all people achieve equal opportunities and access in life.”





Our reach.

Using our voice and platform to advocate and educate in Victoria and beyond.



International White Cane Day 2023.

On International White Cane Day (IWCD), we celebrate the achievements of people with low vision or blindness who choose to use a white cane. This day of significance is always an important day on the Guide Dogs calendar, as the white cane is the mobility tool of choice for most of our Clients.



The 2023 theme for IWCD was, 'Clear the Way.'

'Clear the Way' is about tapping into the literal and figurative to not just remove physical obstructions, but also the non-physical barriers like stigma and discrimination to allow for better access and inclusion.

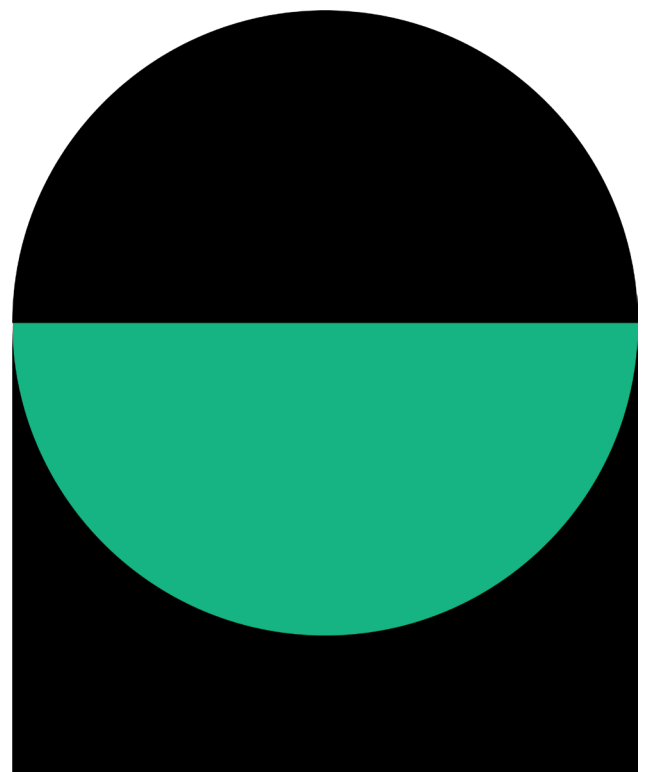
Early in 2023, the Guide Dogs Australia-commissioned Ernst & Young report surveyed 622 people with low vision or blindness to understand inclusion barriers. It found over 80 per cent faced regular challenges in public that significantly impacted their confidence and participation in society, ranging from physical barriers on footpaths to inaccessible workplaces and voting stations. Additionally, the report found:

- More than four in five people with low vision or blindness have experienced challenges in public places or while using public transport in the past two years.
- Only 31 per cent of non-Guide Dog Handlers report feeling very or extremely confident when accessing their communities.
- Nearly all (96 per cent) respondents have experienced challenges with footpaths in the past two years, with overhanging branches proving the most problematic issue.
- More than half of non-Guide Dog Handlers report feeling not at all confident or only slightly confident when crossing a road.

The 'Clear the Way' campaign encouraged the public to be more mindful of how their actions in public places directly affect people who use a white cane to navigate the community. Together we can make our streets safer and more accessible for the more than 575,000 Australians with low vision or blindness by being more conscious and aware of our actions and their consequences.

To honour the day, we welcomed around 20 Clients to our Kew Campus to take part in a walk along the Yarra river, with Guide Dogs Victoria CEO Nicky Long participating in the walk blindfolded to gain a greater understanding of challenges faced by the community.

Thank you to all Clients and employees who were involved, including our Orientation and Mobility Team for raising awareness and facilitating our beautiful walk in the sun.



International Guide Dog Day 2024.

On International Guide Dog Day (IGDD), we celebrate the important role Guide Dogs play in supporting people all around the world with low vision or blindness to achieve their goals and live independently. Guide Dogs Victoria celebrated IGDD 2024 with an exclusive Pup-Up Café in Kew at the lovely Studley Grounds. It was the ultimate celebration, filled with Ambassador Dog and puppy cuddles, immersive experiences including learning how to be a sighted guide, and the wonderful opportunity to learn from Clients with lived experience.

We welcomed members of the public, donors, volunteers and Clients to celebrate our life-changing Guide Dogs. To raise awareness of the barriers still faced, guests had the pleasure and privilege of hearing from three Guide Dog Handlers; Erin Goedhart, Lucy Carpenter, and Melanie Stephens as they shared their stories of travel, adventure, and importantly, access rights.

In addition to our celebrations, Guide Dogs Australia encouraged the public to learn the law regarding the legal rights of Handlers and their Guide Dogs under the theme, 'Wherever you can go, Guide Dogs can go too.' Guide Dogs working with their Handlers have a legal right to access any event, business, or public premises, as well as public transport or rideshare vehicles. This theme simultaneously celebrates the journeys our Clients have embarked upon alongside their Guide Dogs and the adventures they have shared together, while shedding light on the unfortunate reality of unlawful refusals that Guide Dogs and their Handlers still encounter in public spaces and how we can all educate others on Guide Dog access rights.

It is time we paid more attention to the access rights of people with low vision or blindness to allow them and their Guide Dogs to keep travelling safely and confidently.





Guide Dogs Victoria Volunteer Ambassadors.

Championing community and extending our reach through their dedication.

During the 2023-2024 period, Guide Dogs Victoria was pleased to expand our ambassador program, welcoming several distinguished individuals who bring a wealth of diverse talents and passions to our mission of promoting independence for individuals with low vision or blindness.

These exceptional individuals embody our values and have made significant contributions to our work, using their unique stories and platforms to impact the community.



Dilruk Jayasinha

A beloved comedian, joined us for our Tax Appeal campaign in 2024, adding warmth and humour to raise awareness of our life-changing services. He brings empathy and joy to his role, sharing our mission in a relatable and engaging way.



Dolly Diamond

A long-time ambassador of Guide Dogs Victoria, continually leads our presence at the Midsumma Festival Pride March and ChillOut Festival, celebrating inclusivity in gender and sexuality.



Eleanor Baillieu

An ambassador since 2018, continues to enrich the lives of future Guide Dogs through her role as a Puppy Raiser. Her influence spans beyond her philanthropy with us, advocating for educational and cultural development in Australia.



Jimi the Kween

A finalist on The Voice, is an advocate for diversity and inclusivity. They are a dynamic addition to our Ambassador Team, aligning perfectly with our mission of creating accessible environments for all.



Joost Bakker

A pioneer in sustainability, joins us as an ambassador to integrate sustainable practices into our new Campus build. His expertise guides us toward a greener future, ensuring our development respects the environment.



Lauren Phillips

Beloved voice of Melbourne mornings and host of Channel Nine's Postcards, brings personal connection and enthusiasm to the role, having witnessed her blind grandfather's journey. Her passion for inclusivity and love for dogs make her an ideal advocate for raising awareness.



Andrew 'Lehmo' Lehmann

A well-known comedian and radio host, joins us with his son Laddie after touring our Campus and falling in love with our puppies. His deep love for animals and commitment to supporting Guide Dogs Victoria will drive exciting initiatives in 2024.



Mason Cox

Renowned AFL player and advocate for the low vision and blind community, uses his public platform to champion our cause, particularly through his own experiences with low vision.

Each ambassador plays a vital role in amplifying our narrative and advancing our mission to deliver essential services for individuals with low vision or blindness. We deeply appreciate their unwavering volunteer time and commitment and look forward to nurturing these impactful partnerships in the future.





Our supporters.

Our impact.

Thank you for changing the lives of people living with low vision or blindness.

Our support from the community takes many forms and flows into Guide Dogs from all over Victoria. We are very appreciative of all our supporters and are pleased to bring you a heart-warming story.

\$15.9m

raised from more than
24,000 donors and lottery
program supporters.

142

new Otus
Fellowship
members.

The Otus Fellowship was
established to honour the
generosity of our wonderful
supporters who have included
Guide Dogs Victoria in their Will.



Gifts in Wills.

Thank you for your generosity.

In grateful memory of our very special supporters whom we cannot thank in person and whose life-changing gifts were received during the past year.

Alfred Noel Curphey

Amelia Eliza Holland Trust

Sandra Arnold

Sydney Arnold

Lois Batten

Betty Brenda Spinks Charitable Trust

Francis Bonica

Patricia Boucher

Andrew Brentnall

Jasmine Brunner

Maurice Butterworth

P Campbell

Bryan Cannan

Ronald Charles

John Chenery

Ramona Chhibber

Grace Chong

John Clayton

Pauline Cocks

Jennifer Cook

Roger Cook

Lorna Cooper

Nancye Cuffe

Roger Cutajar

Eardley De Motte

Elizabeth Dethridge

Willie Dickenson

Ian Dodd Trust

Mary Dooley

Julie Douglas

The Drury Trust

Robert Ducrow

Janette Dunbar

E C Curwen-Walker Charitable Trust

The Edith Kemp Memorial Trust Fund

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Shirley Fricke

Ursula Fuchs

Rena Grantham

Donna Greenland

Gwenneth Elsie Miller Charitable Trust

Jennifer Harte

Margaret Henderson

Helen Henry

Roberta Hepner

Susan Hilliard

Leslie Hines

Edith Hocking

Constance Hunt

James Alford Trust

Clifford Jervis

Joan and Ronald Filmer Foundation

Joe White Bequest

Adelaide Johnson

Mary Jones

Kathleen Ann White Charitable Trust

Edna Kerr

Betty King

Leonard Lammin

Mary Laughton

Audrey Lawson

Mary Lenehan

Perri Letford

Lewis Posner & Rosetta Lenzer Charitable Trust

Linda Brown Trust

Susan Lissenden

The Lola Poynton Memorial Fund

Marie de Bavay Trust Fund

Marjorie Hayes & Olivia Cock Memorial

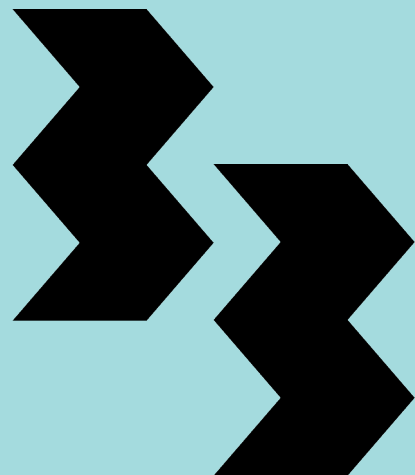
Joseph Mason

Annie Matthews

Kevin Maxwell

Samuel Miller
Colin Morgan
Pamela Morgan
Joyce Morse
Muriel Gauder Bequest
Patricia Neary
Neville and Rita Brown
Edna Olson
Patricia Mary Holmes Charitable
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Russell Vontom Charitable Trust
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Pauline Tanaskovic
Paul Traumanis
Catherine Van Leuvan
Victor Russ Pittman Charitable Trust
Enid Watson
The Wilfred & Ruby Bird Charitable Trust

The William Mansel Higgins &
Dorothy Higgins Charitable Trust
Ada Withers
Hariclia Withers
Francis Wittmann
Alex Yakovlev
Macyll Young



We would like to thank the following trusts, foundations, groups, and organisations for their generous support.*

Banks Legacy Fund

Cybec Foundation

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Robert & Elizabeth Sinclair Foundation

Gourlay Charitable Trust

Vontom Family Trust

LJM Foundation

Melbourne Airport

Japan Festival Committee

Variety The Children's Charity

Department of Social Services

Perpetual - Impact Philanthropy

Department of Health

Milestone Systems

Future Generation Australia

Walter Campbell Memorial Trust

The Orloff Family Foundation

Sun Foundation

Lynx Charitable Foundation

Isaacson Davis Foundation

Kel & Rosie Day Foundation

Mandy Deam Foundation

Gaudry Foundation

Mutual Trust Foundation

Urquhart Charitable Fund

Department of Families, Fairness
and Housing

Australian Communities Foundation

Olive Woods Trust

**Donations \$5,000 and above in FY2023-2024.*

Lifelong supporters.

Gary and Angela Williams.

Gary and Angela's journey with Guide Dogs Victoria is one of deep commitment and lasting impact, shaped by their shared dedication to improving the lives of people living with low vision or blindness.

Angela's journey with Guide Dogs Victoria began during her childhood at Presbyterian Ladies' College Melbourne on an excursion to the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind that left a lasting impression on her and a passion to help people living with low vision or blindness.

Gary's connection to Guide Dogs was established in Brisbane. Gary's mother, Phyl Williams, was a passionate supporter of Guide Dogs Queensland with her commitment and contribution to the organisation recognised by a plaque in their reception area.

In 1999, when Angela and Gary moved to Melbourne, Phyl shifted her support to Guide Dogs Victoria with a generous gift in her Will. In her memory, a Guide Dog puppy named Phyl was raised and trained. During this time, Angela began to volunteer with Guide Dogs Victoria across various roles from Puppy Raising to shopping for resident Clients, driving, and co-hosting regional fundraising events. Together, Angela and Gary supported numerous Guide Dogs Victoria events at Kew Campus and around Melbourne, further solidifying their commitment to the cause.

By 2008, their involvement was further deepened as they began providing temporary care for breeding dogs. In 2010, they were trusted with the ongoing care of Rommie, an Ambassador Dog who proudly served Guide Dogs Victoria for many years. In 2013, their family was joined by Lottie, a breeding dog who birthed three litters of puppies, and remains a wonderful companion.

Gary's dedication to Guide Dogs Victoria took a new direction in November 2010 when he joined the Board of Directors, serving until 2016. During his time on the board, Guide Dogs Victoria committed to the redevelopment of the Kew Campus which was a pivotal moment in our organisation's nearly-70-year history.

Even after stepping down from the board, Angela and Gary's passion for Guide Dogs Victoria has remained strong. They continue to volunteer, provide temporary care, support the Puppy Pal program, and have even included Guide Dogs Victoria in their Wills. Their commitment is driven by a shared mission to improve the lives of children and adults with low vision or blindness. For Angela, the most rewarding experiences have been the years spent traveling to fundraising events. For Gary, serving on the board gave him an enlightening insight into the values and direction of the organisation and the success of the Kew Campus redevelopment has been a particularly emotional achievement.



Puppy Pals Regular Giving.

The Puppy Pals program at Guide Dogs Victoria plays a crucial role in nurturing the next generation of Guide Dogs through dedicated financial support. By committing to regular monthly donations, Puppy Pals contribute to the comprehensive training and care of our Guide Dog puppies, ensuring they receive the essential resources needed for their development.

This initiative not only enhances each pup's training and experiences, but also strengthens the community's

**Puppy
Pals.**

involvement in promoting independence for individuals with vision loss. The ongoing support from Puppy Pals is instrumental in sustaining our mission, allowing us to continue providing life-changing services and fostering a culture of compassion and inclusion. Puppy Pals get to follow pups along their training journey, attend exclusive events, and even have the chance to name future Guide Dog puppies!

'Meet the Pups' exclusive Puppy Pals event.

In September 2023, we were delighted to welcome our valued Puppy Pals to the Betty Amsden Education Centre for our first in-person event in over three years, for a 'Meet the Pups' celebration.

The day was vibrant and engaging, featuring a range of family-friendly activities such as face painting, a special Guide Dog demonstration, and colouring-in corners. Attendees enjoyed ample cuddles with the adorable pups from the L litter, which were named by these generous Puppy Pals donors, fostering a deep connection between the community and our future Guide Dogs.

We are profoundly grateful for the unwavering support of our Puppy Pals, whose regular contributions play a crucial role in sustaining our mission. Their donations not only help us provide essential training and care for these remarkable puppies but also enable individuals with low vision or blindness to live confident and independent lives. By following the journey of a litter from birth to graduation, our Puppy Pals actively participate in the transformative process of Guide Dog training, creating a lasting impact in the lives of those we serve.



Graduation Day.



Graduation ceremonies are an integral part of our calendar, celebrating the remarkable achievements of our Guide Dogs and the dedication of the individuals who support their journey and the life-changing roles they will go on to accept. These events not only honour the successful transitions of our Guide Dogs, but also strengthen the community of supporters who contribute to this vital work.

In March 2024, we proudly hosted the very first Guide Dog Graduation to be held at our newly established Kew Campus within the Betty Amsden Education Centre. Drawing a crowd of approximately 90 attendees, all gathered to celebrate the achievements of our latest graduating Guide Dogs, we honoured the graduation of four exceptional pups: Lucy, sponsored by one of our generous donors; Wanda, Zoey and Zoren.

The ceremony featured a captivating and at times humorous presentation by Rob, a Guide Dogs Victoria Client, who shared

insights into his fulfilling life with his esteemed Guide Dog, Hamish. Known for his striking black coat, Hamish has become a beloved figure in their community. Rob humorously noted that he occasionally wears a T-shirt displaying the phrase, “Hi, I am Rob – Hamish’s Human!,” serving as a courteous reminder to engage with the Handler rather than the dog.

Rob took this opportunity to express heartfelt gratitude to Guide Dogs Victoria’s supporters, exemplifying the profound impact that our Guide Dogs have on the lives of individuals with low vision or blindness.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our dedicated Puppy Raisers, skilled Guide Dog Trainers, committed Guide Dog Partners, and those who have chosen to bequest a legacy gift to Guide Dogs Victoria. Each has played a vital role in the journey of all the dogs that serve the community, from birth to retirement.

Otus Fellowship.

A proud history.

Members of the Otus Fellowship exemplify a profound commitment to Guide Dogs Victoria by leaving generous gifts in their Wills, forming a community of like-minded supporters dedicated to our mission. Established in 2007, the Otus Fellowship honours one of our champion stud dogs, Otus, a living legend at Guide Dogs Victoria. Otus's remarkable legacy includes his first litter going on to produce six Guide Dogs and one Therapy Dog.

Having officially retired from the breeding program in 2004 at the age of ten and a half, Otus was celebrated in November of that year by our Board of Directors and remains fondly remembered by countless staff, volunteers, and supporters.



As a testament to their invaluable contributions, Otus Fellowship members receive distinguished invitations to special Guide Dogs events and exclusive updates on our initiatives. Recently, they were invited to participate in two significant events that celebrated the vital work their bequests will enable us to continue.



Otus Fellowship Festive Lunch.

In early December 2023, nearly 150 guests gathered for the annual Otus Festive Lunch at Green Acres Golf Club in Kew, with some attendees travelling from as far away as Lakes Entrance. This joyous event provided a wonderful opportunity for camaraderie and featured informative updates from our CEO, Nicky Long, as well as engaging presentations from lived experience speaker, Melaine Robinson and Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Shelley Pannier.

The Otus Festive Lunch serves as an essential occasion on the Guide Dogs Victoria calendar for expressing our heartfelt gratitude to our generous bequestors. It fosters a deep sense of connection to our organisation and reinforces their important role within the Victorian community. By bringing



together supporters who share a common commitment to our vision and mission, we aim to strengthen the bonds that unite us in making a meaningful impact on the lives of those we serve.

Otus Fellowship Behind the Scenes.

In May 2024, we were thrilled to offer an exclusive tour of our Campus to 35 of our generous bequestors, providing them with a unique behind-the-scenes experience. During this special event, guests explored our premium veterinary facilities, nursery, and kennels, gaining valuable insights into the training of future Guide Dog heroes.

Participants also engaged in an interactive dog demonstration, where they had the opportunity to walk blindfolded alongside a Guide Dog in training, fostering a deeper understanding of the vital role these animals play in the lives of individuals with low vision or blindness.

The event was a resounding success, receiving outstandingly positive feedback from attendees. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all staff members who contributed to making this occasion possible. Whether by taking time out of their busy schedules to host parts of the tour or by warmly welcoming our bequestors as they navigated the Campus and explored its innovative features, your efforts greatly enhanced the experience and left a lasting impression. Thank you for your dedication and support in making this event truly memorable and many thanks to all who attended.

Inaugural Betty Amsden Ladies' Luncheon.

In March 2024, we joyfully welcomed 85 distinguished guests to our Campus in Kew for the inaugural Betty Amsden Ladies' Luncheon, a celebration of the remarkable women of Guide Dogs Victoria and the community they serve. The event was a heartfelt tribute to the extraordinary contributions of women who have left lasting impressions on our organisation.

Guided by our esteemed Puppy Development Advisor, Alex Hecker, attendees were introduced to a diverse array of women whose lives are intertwined with Guide Dogs Victoria. Our CEO, Nicky Long, eloquently shared the history of Guide Dogs Victoria, highlighting the invaluable contributions of prominent figures such as Lady Greta Coles, Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC DBE, Betty Amsden AO (the event space holding the luncheon aptly named after her, honours her legacy), Lady Marigold Southey AC, Barbara Bedford, Val Riseborough, and Diana Hatchley.

We were privileged to hear inspiring stories from individuals such as Frankie Airey, Chair of the Betty Amsden Foundation, and Puppy Raiser Loretta Priest, who was accompanied by the adorable Guide Dog in training, Stormy. Lucy Carpenter shared her journey as a first-time Guide Dog Handler with Guide Dog Dottie, while Jordina Howell, another cherished Guide Dogs Client, captivated attendees with a breathtaking soprano performance, accompanied by her Guide Dog, Vadrik.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who played a role in orchestrating this extraordinary event and to the influential women who helped shape Guide Dogs Victoria into the beacon of support and empowerment it is today. As we reflect on this memorable occasion, we eagerly anticipate making it an annual tradition, honouring the legacies of both past and present supporters.





Our gratitude.

Our National Corporate Partners.

Guide Dogs Victoria is a federated member of Guide Dogs Australia, who run our National Corporate Partners Program. The benefits of the program are shared across all participating states.

Without these generous partners who assist us through donations of not just funds, but volunteering time, giving products and services in kind, and workplace giving, we could not continue our vital work supporting Clients in the many ways we do.

Thank you to our National Corporate Partners for your incredible support throughout the past year:



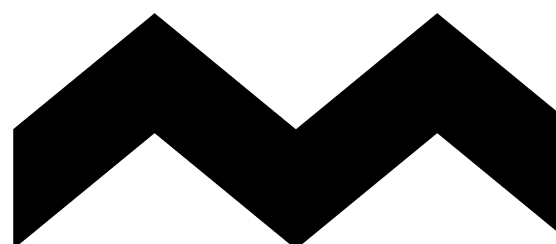
A decade of supporting people and animals.



This year we celebrate ten wonderful years of partnership with the Petstock Foundation, who are committed to empowering a better future for pets and people.

Over that time, Guide Dogs has received over \$1 million from the Petstock Foundation so that we can continue to enact positive change and realise our mutual goal of empowering people through their connection with animals, in our case, our world-class Guide Dogs.

Partners such as the Petstock Foundation do so much more than provide funding. During their time as a valued Guide Dogs partner, the team at Petstock has encouraged suppliers and customers to participate in raising awareness and support for Guide Dogs Victoria. Through in-store and online fundraising campaigns, Petstock staff and customers have walked for PAWGUST, hosted Puppy Raising drives in-store and supported our Puppy Raising program. Our sincere thanks to the Petstock Foundation and the entire Petstock team across the country for sharing our vision for empowered futures.

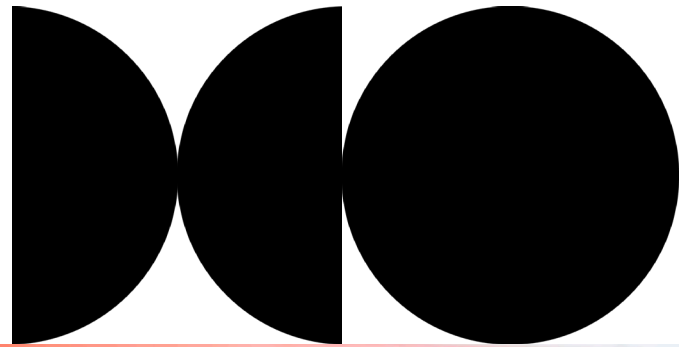


A valued legacy.

Lady Coles became interested in bringing Guide Dogs to Australia in the 1930s. Once Guide Dogs was established here in the 1950s, she became one of our most enthusiastic supporters, making and selling jam to fundraise, painting walls in the Guide Dogs Victoria Centre and encouraging everyone she knew to join her in supporting people with low vision or blindness.

Coles has continued this fine tradition by hosting our Donation Dogs in-store for over 40 years. This year, Coles added to the \$14 million already donated over that time to Guide Dogs by their customers by unleashing a fundraising campaign in-store and online. Running for four weeks, Coles donated to Guide Dogs five cents from every purchase of dog food and treats.

Resulting in an incredible \$300,000 donated, this campaign will help ensure that future generations of Australians living with low vision or blindness receive the essential support they need to achieve their goals and live a life of their choosing.





Our future.

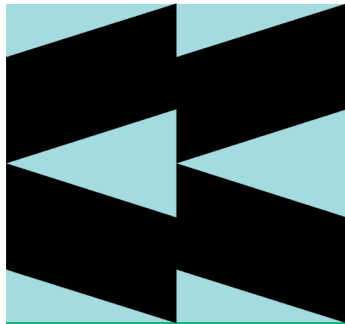
The Future is in Sight Campus project completion.

The Future is in Sight project journey began in 2016 when the Ian Potter Foundation provided initial funding to inspire and create the vision for the redevelopment of the then 60-year-old Campus.

The tired buildings that had served well, empowering generations of people with low vision or blindness that came through their doors, were to be transformed to create a brand-new sensory campus with buildings that would stand for years to come, providing a space to enrich and nurture the low vision and blind community and enable them to live their best lives.

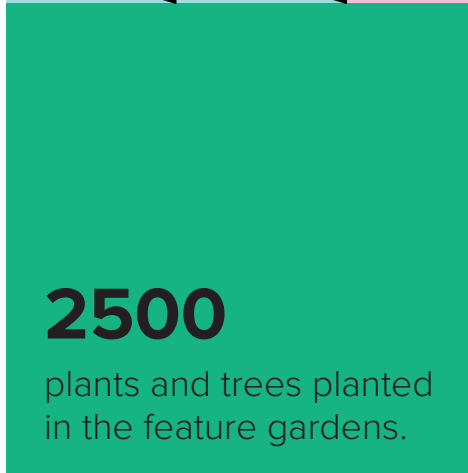


Transforming our iconic Kew site was no easy feat:



4270

tonnes of earth moved.



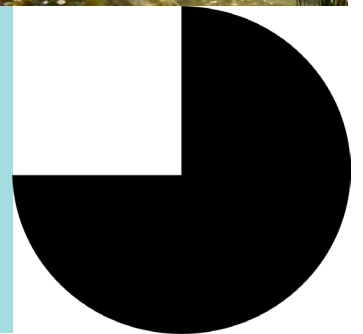
2500

plants and trees planted in the feature gardens.



550

tonnes of crushed rock laid for car park.



176

tonnes of structural steel used to support our buildings.



Our commitment to equity, access and inclusion.

The journey Guide Dogs Victoria embarked on required a set of 'guiding principles' developed to form the master plan. These are the 10 guiding principles for best practice developed for the Future is in Sight project.

1. Uplifting, in a welcoming and inclusive environment where the abilities of people who have low vision or are blind are enabled and positively promoted.
2. Universal design, providing a positive multi-sensory experience for everyone visiting, regardless of their ability, role or demographic.
3. Autonomy enabling self-reliance and independence for all visitors.
4. Accessibility – utilising light, colour, contrast and acoustic balance.
5. Ease of orientation with fluid way-finding systems that are easy to navigate.
6. A destination hub for the community.
7. Everyday landscapes and places invoking the love of learning.
8. Innovation, building flexible accessible and inspirational spaces for working and gathering.

9. Sustainability, optimising energy performance and reflecting best environmental management practice.
10. Wellbeing, adopting evidence based best practice to ensure the wellbeing and good health of clients, staff, volunteers, and animals.

The Campus redevelopment combined the talents of architects, engineers and builders and incorporated input from staff, volunteers, and Clients who Guide Dogs proudly serves.

Having completed the car park, workshop and warehouse stage in early 2021, the veterinary clinic and café building were finished in June 2022. In May 2023, the administration building and the Betty Amsden Education Centre, named in honour of lifelong Guide Dogs supporter and donor Betty Amsden OAM, were finalised. In late 2023 and 2024, the building housing our residential Client Services, Vision and Children's Services, reception and community hub were the final pieces of the redevelopment to be completed.

Over the past year, builders, architects and specialists have worked tirelessly to deliver this final and most ambitious stage. This space promises to absolutely transform the lives of thousands of people over the coming decades and is purpose-built to achieve this.

The dramatic front entry into the reception area features a pointed cantilevered roof, wrapping around a red river gum tree and a set of 11 colossus chimes, which can be played with the attached mini hammers, or with a cane – a thoughtful and accessible addition honouring the spirit of community, fun and inclusion.

Wayfinding tactiles and grooves are embedded throughout the build, both internally and externally, to encourage safe exploration and effective navigation. Within the reception space, the extent of the wayfinding features unfolds with different floor textures, tactiles, colour contrast and lighting – all giving visual and textural cues to signify key areas.

Vision services, orthoptics and consulting rooms are housed next to the light and bright reception, leading to the residential wing, featuring seven ensuite bedrooms, a wheelchair-accessible bedroom, and a self-contained occupational therapy training apartment to help Clients learn independent living skills. Breakout spaces include the indoor fern garden, the quiet room, and the cedar lounge: a welcoming space with a distinctive smell, lined with reclaimed timber made from the cedar trees cut down during the initial construction phase.

To further enhance the development of independent living skills, a training kitchen featuring accessible stovetop and adjustable overhead cabinets which move at the touch of a button, and Braille-based taps and lighting is open to Clients participating in a range of on-site day and residential programs.

Providing a multi-purpose, mixed-media space, featuring spatial audio, the Immersion and Children's Activity Room

offers young Clients tactile learning opportunities such as a sensory wall installed at child-height, featuring zips, clips, and everyday items such as locks and switches that light up butterfly decals.

The internal gardens and courtyards provide tranquil spaces for our Clients and community. Externally, the Gandel sensory experience garden extends the length of the administration building from outside reception reaching up to the car park. The garden features a fishpond and a dry riverbed, complemented by a diverse range of walkways including grassy, paved, and natural paths. It also includes thoughtfully designed seating areas, and an array of plants and objects intended to engage the senses.

We would like to thank all the generous individuals, trusts and foundations, companies, and governments who have shared and invested in our vision to bring this new Campus to fruition.

There is still more yet to do. Construction of the Kent training plaza is scheduled to commence in September 2024. The plaza will feature a dog wash station located at the far end and an undercover area primarily designated for the training of Guide Dogs. Additionally, this space will serve Children's Services and accommodate various community events.

After five years of transformative work, Guide Dogs Victoria is proud to be a world leader in making the lives of the low vision and blind community a life without limits. We thank all who have helped to realise this vision. In particular, 2Construct, FPPV Architects and our Project Manager, Catherine Curry-Hydes.

Transforming waste for good.

Guide Dogs Victoria is proud to be a donation partner of the Victorian Container Deposit Scheme (CDS), having joined the initiative in early 2023. The CDS is a key element of the Victorian Government's \$515 million commitment to transforming the state's waste and recycling industry. Supported by contributions from the beverage sector, the scheme is integral to Victoria's goal of diverting 80 per cent of waste from landfill by 2030.

In early 2024, we introduced dedicated deposit points throughout our office spaces to ensure that containers eligible under the CDS are responsibly recycled. Guide Dogs Victoria remains committed to fostering a sustainable future, both on our Campus and beyond, by embedding environmental practices across all areas of our

Under the scheme, Victorians are eligible to receive a 10-cent refund per recyclable drink container, which can be donated directly to Guide Dogs Victoria. By choosing to support us in this way, participants are:

- contributing to the creation of clean, effective recycling streams
- reducing litter across the state
- helping sustain Guide Dogs Victoria and our essential services.

In partnership with our volunteer Ambassador, Joost Bakker, we are also working to integrate further sustainable practices within our newly redeveloped Campus, making it even more environmentally conscious. We look forward to advancing a cleaner, greener future for all Victorians through this vital initiative.





Our governance.

Guide Dogs Victoria Board of Directors

as of July 2024.



Dr. David Cochrane **Chair**

David, a board member since March 2017, holds a Bachelor of Economics, MBA, and DBA. He brings over 35 years of experience advising government and the private sector on commercial, economic, and financial policy.



Nick Mescher **Vice Chair**

Joining in 2019, Nick brings over 30 years of global tech leadership, a Bachelor of Applied Science, and is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management. His passion for innovation and digital transformation is a key asset.



Lisa Tepper **Board Member**

A member since April 2020, Lisa leads digital strategy at the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet. She brings expertise in strategy and business development from her 18-year career at Accenture, and holds degrees in engineering, science, and public policy.



Bruce Brook **Board Member**

Appointed to the board in 2018, Bruce is a Non-executive Director at CSL Limited, Incitec Pivot Limited, and Newmont Mining. He brings extensive leadership experience to the board, including CFO roles at WMC Resources and ANZ Banking Group.



Malcolm Haack

Board Member

Malcolm joined the board in January 2023. He is Group General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer at Orica, overseeing legal and compliance affairs. With 26 years in global blue-chip organisations, he brings extensive legal expertise. .



Cameron Algie AM

Board Member

Appointed to the Board in July 2023, Cameron brings lived experience with retinitis pigmentosa (RP) and a distinguished career in law and housing. He is a co-founder of an RP research society and authored a book on vision loss.



Melissa Dixon

Board Member

With 30 years in media and consumer sectors, including senior roles at Disney, Melissa joined in January 2023. Her background spans executive roles, consulting, and finance, bringing deep international experience and governance expertise to Guide Dogs Victoria.



David Simmonds

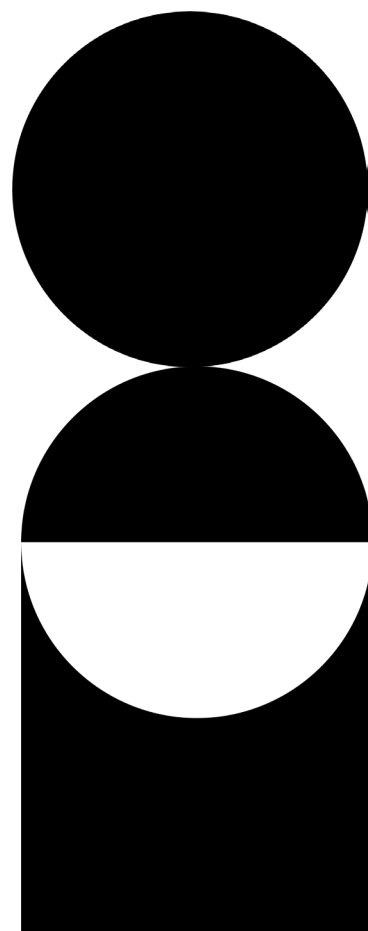
Board Member

A Director at Victoria's Department of Transport and Planning, David joined in June 2024, bringing valuable lived experience as a longtime Guide Dogs Victoria Client and former staff member. His personal and professional insights will significantly contribute to Guide Dogs Victoria's future direction.



Corporate governance statement.

Guide Dogs Victoria promotes fairness, transparency and accountability. Our Governance Commitment Statement describes our key governance obligations and outlines our commitment to leading standards. Key board policies and further information on those who govern our organisation can be found on our governance webpage. These structures ensure decision making meets stakeholder expectations of sound corporate governance, while meeting the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission's (ACNC) governance standards, and acknowledging our responsibilities to members, donors, Clients, staff, volunteers and the communities in which we operate.

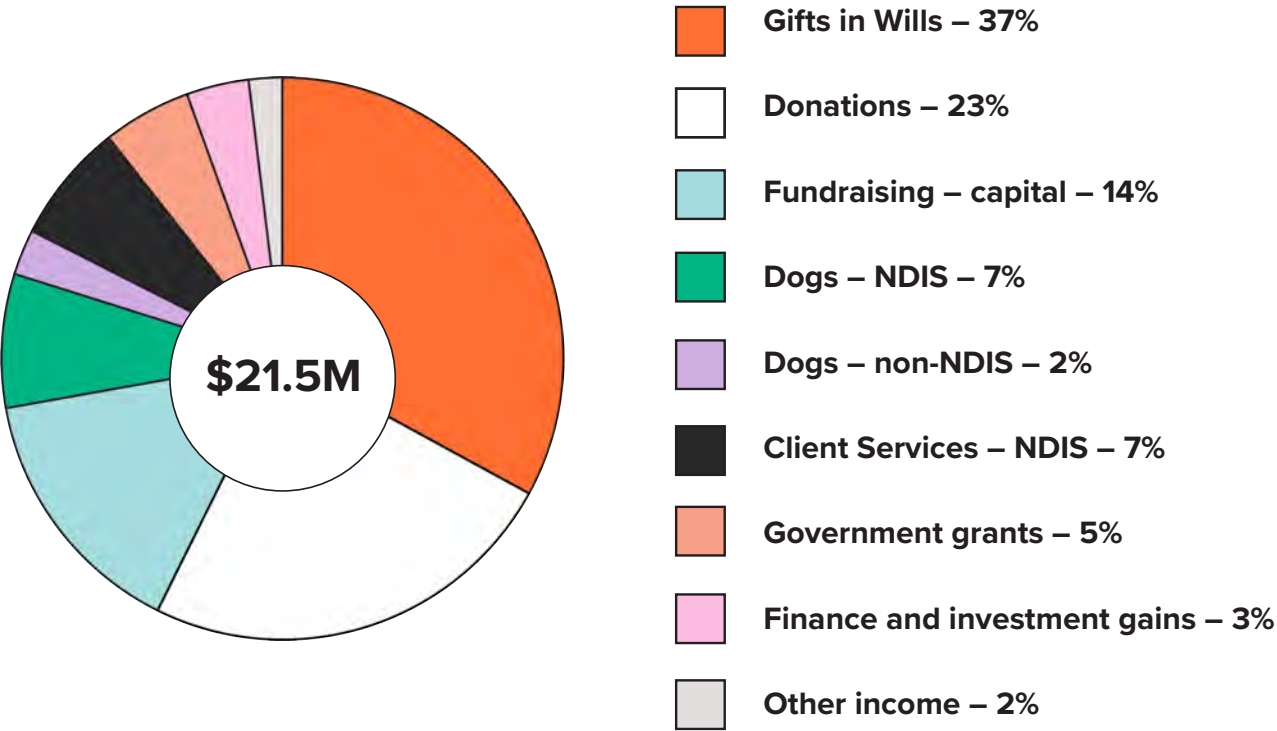




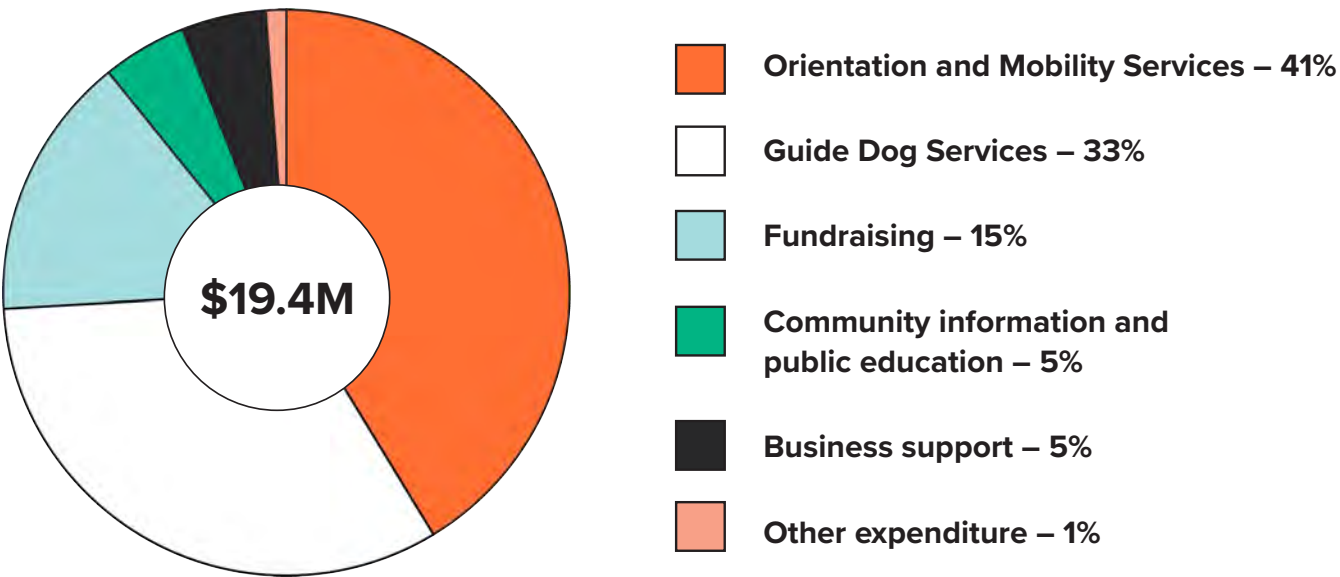
Our financials.

Guide Dogs Victoria’s activities in the 2023/2024 financial year resulted in a surplus of \$2.1m.

Income.



Expenditure.



Revenue.

	2024	2023
Income	\$'000	\$'000
Fundraising and gift in wills	12,868	12,405
Fundraising for capital purposes	3,028	2,228
Revenue from the provision of dogs and orientation and mobility services	4,739	4,935
Rental revenue	209	194
Finance and investment (losses)/gains	668	1,066
Other income		-
Total Revenue	21,512	20,828

Expenses.

	2024	2023
Expenditure	\$'000	\$'000
Fundraising and gifts in Wills	2,929	3,392
Cost of provision of dogs and orientation and mobility Services	14,497	12,894
Community information and public education	1,008	869
Corporate services	953	979
Other expenses		-
Total Expenditure	19,387	18,134

Balance sheet.

For the year ended 30 June 2024.

	2024	2023
	\$'000	\$'000

ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	1,106	11,733
Trade and other receivables	1,406	1,286
Inventories	987	1,145
Financial assets	609	507
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	4,108	14,671

NON-CURRENT ASSETS

Trade and other receivables	36	49
Financial assets	4,867	4,442
Property and equipment	34,686	22,302
Right of Use Asset	773	673
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	40,362	27,466
TOTAL ASSETS	44,470	42,137

LIABILITIES

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Trade and other payables	1,526	1,719
Provisions	1,214	1,176
Deferred revenue	398	2,095
Lease liabilities	259	221
Borrowings	58	–
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	3,455	5,211

NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES

Provisions	88	134
Lease Liabilities	523	455
Borrowings	1,942	–
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	2,553	589
TOTAL LIABILITIES	6,008	5,800
NET ASSET	38,462	36,337

ACCUMULATED FUNDS

Reserves	4,800	11,751
Retained earnings	33,662	24,586
TOTAL ACCUMULATED FUNDS	38,462	36,337

Our performance.

Performance report.

KPI	2023/2024 Full year actual	2022/2023 Full year actual	Positive / (negative) variance from prior year
Service			
Service delivery hours	20,613	24,058	(3,445)
Number of training and support programs delivered	3,105	3,123	(18)
Number of Clients assisted	1,251	1,272	(21)
Number of Qualified Guide Dogs	31	36	(5)
Number of Therapy Dogs allocated	36	48	(12)
Number of other working dogs allocated	14	25	(11)
Number of Guide Dog Handlers	236	247	(11)
People			
Employee sentiment percentage	74%	68%	6%
Lost Time Injury Frequency rate (number of lost time incidents for every 1 million employee hours)	4.0	8.3	(4.3)
Finance			
Operating surplus / (deficit) in \$'000	\$2,125	\$2,694	(\$569)
Operating surplus / (deficit) prior to Capital Purpose Income in \$'000	(\$903)	\$466	(\$1,351)
Working Capital Position (excluding Major Capital Development) in \$'000	\$465	\$2,556	(\$3,993)
Future is in Sight Campus redevelopment cash position in \$'000	\$185	\$8,790	(\$10,915)
Future is in Sight Campus redevelopment budget in \$'000	\$33,025	\$32,451	574





We're here whenever you need us.

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☎ 1800 804 805

🌐 vic.guidedogs.com.au

Guide Dogs.

ABN 68 004 621 461