



Down Syndrome
Victoria



Annual Report
2024-2025

Down syndrome is not a limitation – it's a part of human diversity.

In 2025 many people with Down syndrome are living full, dynamic and ordinary lives: building careers, speaking out, making friends, challenging systems, creating art. At Down Syndrome Victoria we believe that every person with Down syndrome deserves the opportunity to lead a life of inclusion, fulfilment, and self-determination. When supported, we know people with Down syndrome thrive in various areas such as education, employment, and community engagement. While varying levels of assistance may be required, people with Down syndrome each contribute uniquely to our shared human experience.

Collectively, we work hard to ensure equitable access to opportunities, services, and community involvement so people with Down syndrome may live meaningful lives on their own terms. We stand alongside people with Down syndrome and their families as they build lives rich in possibility, connection, and purpose.

This is Down Syndrome Victoria.

[You can read more about Down syndrome here.](#)



What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic condition that occurs at conception. It happens when a person is born with an extra copy of chromosome 21, which is why it is also known as trisomy 21.

Thank you to artists Thomas Brown, Edward Kidd, Kath Mansour, Ned Middleton and Harry Sencek for the original artwork elements included throughout this document.

Down Syndrome Victoria would like to respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands across Victoria on which we operate. We recognise and celebrate the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Country, culture and community, and extend that respect to all First Nations people.



Down Syndrome Victoria is a not-for-profit membership association. Membership is free for individuals and families. You can read more about membership on our website.

We work alongside people with Down syndrome and families to reach their full potential and live the life they choose.

This Annual Report celebrates Down Syndrome Victoria's achievements towards this mission.

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About Us

Our values shape our actions

Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) is Victoria's peak organisation representing people with Down syndrome and families. We are a community-based, not-for-profit membership association with a proud history of supporting individuals, families and the community since 1978.

DSV advocates alongside people with Down syndrome to have access to the same opportunities, supports and community activities as other Victorians. We work within a human rights framework, consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability.

We offer a range of services and supports to people with Down syndrome, families and professionals across the lifespan:

- **advice, support, workshops, information, wellbeing programs, social groups** and **community** for people with Down syndrome
- **personal** and **tailored support** for parents and family members during pregnancy and throughout the lifespan
- **programs** and **initiatives** that support the wellbeing and connection of parents and carers of children with disabilities across Victoria
- **online community groups** for families and people with Down syndrome
- **training and information workshops** covering a wide range of topics for people with Down syndrome, families, and professionals

- an **Education Program** providing an extensive suite of resources, support and information for students, families and education professionals
- a jam-packed **calendar of events**, including an annual **Family Fun Day** to connect and celebrate community
- a regular **newsletter, podcast** and **social media** groups where you can explore the latest topics of interest and connect with like-minded people
- **systemic advocacy** that supports the full participation of people with Down syndrome in the economic and social life of the community.

Our Vision

A society where people with Down syndrome are valued, reach their potential and are equal in every aspect of life.

Our Mission

We work alongside people with Down syndrome and families to reach their potential and live the life they choose.

Our Values

'Do the right thing' We are honest, ethical and trustworthy. We take accountability for our actions to deliver in the best interest of people with Down syndrome and their families.

'Passion for members, families and communities' We exist for our members and community. We listen, lead, create opportunities and take action to ensure an inclusive future.

'Respect for people' We develop lifelong relationships, based on value, trust, compassion and respect.

DSV Today: A Continuum of Support

NON-DIRECTIVE PRENATAL SUPPORT

- UNBIASED FAMILY SUPPORT, INFORMATION AND CONNECTION
- PEER CONNECTION
- RESOURCES AND REFERRALS
- COHESIVE, SUPPORTIVE CARE VIA PHONE AND ONLINE
- GUIDANCE NAVIGATING SERVICES AND SYSTEMS

THE EARLY YEARS, BIRTH – 5 YEARS

- NEW PARENT SUPPORT AND WELCOME PACKS
- HOME AND COMMUNITY VISITS
- MYTIME FACILITATED SUPPORT GROUPS
- REGIONAL FAMILY NETWORKS
- T21 CLINIC (RCH)
- THE PERFECT GIFT
- ONLINE PEER SUPPORT PLATFORMS
- NDIS NAVIGATION

PRIMARY SCHOOL, 6 – 12 YEARS

- EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS
- FAMILY SUPPORT & MYTIME
- T21 ASSESSMENT CLINIC (RCH)
- ONLINE PEER SUPPORT PLATFORMS
- NDIS NAVIGATION



LIFELONG SUPPORT

- ADVOCACY & REPRESENTATION
- FAMILY FUN DAY
- STEPUP! FOR DOWN SYNDROME
- ANNUAL EVENTS AND FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES
- TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT THROUGH KEY LIFE STAGES
- INFORMATION AND RESOURCE HUB
- PODCAST, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEBSITE
- MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER
- TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME, FAMILIES, PROFESSIONALS
- PEER CONNECTION OPPORTUNITIES

ADULTS, 18+ YEARS

- ADULT SUPPORT & AGEING WELL
- FITSKILLS21 GYM INCLUSION PROGRAM
- EMPLOYMENT CONNECTIONS
- CLUB21 SOCIAL PROGRAMS
- ONLINE PEER SUPPORT PLATFORMS FOR PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME AND FAMILIES
- SUPPORT NAVIGATING SERVICES AND SYSTEMS, INCLUDING THE NDIS

SECONDARY SCHOOL, 13 – 18 YEARS

- EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS
- FAMILY SUPPORT & MYTIME
- T21 ASSESSMENT CLINIC (RCH)
- CLUB21 TEENS & HOLIDAY PROGRAMS
- ONLINE PEER SUPPORT PLATFORMS
- SUPPORT NAVIGATING SERVICES AND SYSTEMS, INCLUDING THE NDIS

Highlights of our Year

9,081 attendees accessed 1,155 MyTime peer support sessions held across 41 locations throughout Victoria

14.75% increase in DSV membership compared to FY24

Over \$93,000 raised via DSV's Five Peaks Trek

\$250,000 raised at the MRC Gala

104 volunteers supporting DSV services and events, up from 82 in FY24

9 employees with Down syndrome work across various roles at DSV

46% increase in demand for family support

85 students with Down syndrome supported in local schools

Health related resources embedded within health services and primary health networks, reaching 17,500 health professionals across Victoria

32 new families and 23 prenatal families supported
25 Perfect Gift boxes delivered

Developed new and strengthened existing partnerships that assist meeting the increased demand for DSV information, services and supports. Highlighted by the MRC Foundation Gala

439 Club21 activities delivered across Victoria, attracting 3,361 attendees

Launched the Education Platform

Advanced the voice of people with Down syndrome through the Advisory Network. Presenting at Parliament, leading workshops and events, and representing DSV at the World Down Syndrome Congress 2024 in Brisbane ensured that lived experience remains at the centre of everything we do.

FitSkills21 participant increase from 11 to 30 with 100% likely to recommend this program

Expanded Club21 and FitSkills21 to 16 locations

19,504 engagements within our closed Family Support and Adult Support Facebook groups

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME CONGRESS 2024 – BRISBANE

A highlight for DSV this year was attending the World Down Syndrome Congress in Brisbane, which brought together global leaders in research, advocacy, and practice, sparking new ideas and fresh insights.

DSV shared our expertise through multiple presentations, including collaborative sessions like Together from the Start with DSWA, Down Syndrome Australia, Prenatal Care Australia, T21 Mum's Network, Celebrate T21, and 21 Gifts, as well as presentations by staff, including our Advisory Network. These sessions highlighted the importance of collaboration in ensuring everyone in the Down syndrome community receives the support and information they deserve.

Congratulations to Down Syndrome Australia for hosting such a remarkable event, and to all states and territories for their partnership in making the Congress a resounding success.



Board & Staff

as at 30 June 2025

Thank you to our Board and staff who worked with DSV this year

Our team is comprised of eight dedicated and passionate volunteer board members, alongside a thriving group of hard-working and highly skilled staff.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President

Brendan Edwards

Vice President

Dr Felicia Koh

Treasurer

Wendy McNabb

Board Members

Pieta Manning
Lachlan Vivian-Taylor
Talia Boltin
Loren Pettigrew
Jenna Weeks

It was our pleasure to welcome Talia, Loren and Jenna to the DSV Board in June 2025.

We extend our gratitude to outgoing DSAN members Emily and Keziah for their incredible contributions to DSAN and DSV. Their dedication, advocacy and passion have created opportunities and paved the way for others in our community. Both Emily and Keziah will remain valued employees at DSV as lived experience advisors working on various initiatives.

OUR CORE STAFF

For a full list of our wonderful team members visit our [website](#).

Chief Executive Officer

Daniel Payne

Administration and Personal Assistant to the CEO

Stephanie Papaleo

DOWN SYNDROME VICTORIA ADVISORY NETWORK

Madison Robinson - Coordinator
Matthew O'Neil - Chair
Jenny Bowden
Keziah Glenane
Colby Hickey
Katherine Mansour
Emily Porter

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Senior Manager Service Delivery

Karen Peters

Family Support Manager

Sonia Bonadio

Adult Support Manager

Debby Fraumano

Regional Coordinator

Linda Jungwirth

Club21 Manager

Helen More

Club21 Teen Coordinator & FitSkills21 Facilitator

Brad Cresswell

FitSkills21 Manager

Nicole Bryson

Health & Pathways Project Manager

Zoe Shearer

Employment Manager

Bree Mills

MYTIME

Senior Manager MyTime

Madison Robinson

MyTime Officers

Theresa Heenan
Amber Pleydell
Sharon Reeve

EDUCATION PROGRAM

Education Managers

Paula Kilgallon
Ro O'Dwyer

Education Consultants

Megan Bramble
Dianne Hickey
Carolyn Warren

COMMUNICATIONS AND EVENTS

Communications Manager

Lucinda Bain

Communications Officer

Stephanie Preston

Events Coordinator

Nicole Bryson

HR, ADMINISTRATION & COMPLIANCE

Business Development Manager

Janice Chan

HR & Compliance Manager

Leonie White

Grants & Partnership Manager

Stephanie Ah Lam

Administration and Database Officer

Anna Cook

Volunteer and HR Coordinator

Johanne Zuleta

Accounts & Payroll

Kathryn Goldsmith
(subcontractor)

"On behalf of DSV I would like to acknowledge former Chair, Peter Sloan, who sadly passed away in September 2024. The Sloan family has been an integral part of the DSV community for decades. Amelia, through her role as a DSA Health Ambassador and involvement in various DSV groups and events; Jackie, a long-standing and respected member of our community and former MyTime Facilitator; and Peter, a past DSV President and highly respected medical professional. We are deeply grateful for Peter's contribution and leadership, and we extend our ongoing support to Jackie and Amelia, along with our heartfelt thanks for their continued commitment to DSV." Daniel Payne, CEO DSV

President's Report



As another big year for the organisation comes to a close, we reflect on the growth, positivity, and real progress that DSV has accomplished. Our wonderful team have achieved a great deal across all areas of our work, from family support to education, employment, our Club 21 program and many more initiatives and programs.

This year has brought some fantastic achievements, but we have also seen some challenges. While we've continued to deliver meaningful services and supports for people with Down syndrome and their families across Victoria, there remains a sense of uncertainty. The impending cessation of Federal Government's Information, Linkages, and Capacity Building (ILC) grants, and the subsequent development of Foundational Supports remain a major cause of this uncertainty. That's why, with our exceptional CEO leading the way, we're committed to continuing our advocacy efforts with the Victorian Government to ensure the voices of people with Down syndrome are not only heard, but truly valued in shaping what comes next.

Among many bright moments of the year, the MRC Foundation Gala Ball stands out as the highlight. It was an evening filled with generosity, community spirit, and celebration, and we were absolutely thrilled to receive \$250,000 in support of our work. We're incredibly grateful to the MRC Foundation and all who made the night such a success. It's moments like this that remind us what we can achieve when we come together.

Despite wonderful efforts like this, the current economic climate continues to place pressure on our organisation. Like many others, we are feeling the impact of rising costs and increasing demand for services, while fundraising becomes ever more challenging. In response, the Board continues to work to review how we operate and explore how we can build a more sustainable and adaptable future for DSV.

To aid us in these endeavours, the Board is pleased to welcome three new members: Talia, Loren, and Jenna, each bringing a wealth of varied experience and fresh perspectives that will strengthen our governance and help guide DSV into the future.

The continued commitment of our community – people with Down syndrome, families, staff, volunteers, partners, and members – remains our greatest strength. Thank you for supporting us, and believing in a future where every person with Down syndrome is celebrated and included.

Here's to another year of working together.

Brendan Edwards
President, Down Syndrome Victoria

A Message from our CEO



FY25 was a defining year for Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) – marked by growth, connection, and adaption to sector-wide change. Across our programs, services, partnership and advocacy, we've seen people with Down syndrome and families continue to lead the way in shaping an inclusive Victoria.

At DSV, our work is grounded in the belief that people with Down syndrome deserve to live a life of inclusion, fulfilment and self-determination. We strive to foster a culture where families and carers feel confident and supported. We aim to play a lead role in shifting community attitudes. This year, these beliefs came to life through tangible outcomes – expanded regional engagement, record participation in our programs, and strengthened relationships with families, partners, and government.

Over the past year, DSV highlights include:

- Facilitated **over 16,500 community engagements** across Victoria through tailored advice, workshops, events and programs.
- Expanded **Club21 and FitSkills21 to 16 locations**, giving more adults and teenagers the opportunity to connect, build friendships, and improve wellbeing. This included a 10% increase in attendance across Club21 programs with 440 activities delivered.
- Launched the **Education Platform**, reaching more Victorian educators and schools than ever before with practical, evidence-based learning resources to improve student experiences and educational outcomes.
- **Strengthened regional connections** through leadership workshops, local events, and increased direct engagement with people with Down syndrome, families and carers.
- Hosted **1,555 MyTime peer support sessions** across 41 groups throughout Victoria, with 9,081 attendees.
- Further advanced the **voice of people with Down syndrome** through the Advisory Network. Presenting at Parliament, leading workshops and events, and representing DSV at the World Down Syndrome Congress 2024 in Brisbane ensured that lived experience remains at the centre of everything we do.

- Developed **new and strengthened existing partnerships** that assist meeting the increased demand for DSV information, services and supports. Highlighted by the MRC Foundation Gala.
- Over **100 committed volunteers** provided support to our programs and services. From the dance floor to the board room, they bring our programs and events to life!

THE SECTOR LANDSCAPE

FY25 unfolded amid significant change across the disability sector in Victoria and nationally. In recent years, the release of the NDIS Review and the Disability Royal Commission's Final Report prompted both optimism and uncertainty. While reaffirming the importance of inclusion and rights-based service delivery, these reviews also call for major system reforms that will shape the future of support and funding for our members and organisations like DSV.

Throughout this period, DSV has remained a trusted and a stable voice for people with Down syndrome and families. Our advocacy focused on ensuring that reforms do not negatively impact people with Down syndrome, including more flexible supports, timely information, and stronger pathways to education, employment, and community life. I would like to acknowledge and thank Down Syndrome Australia and our state and territory colleagues for their continued collaboration to amplify our national voice and shared impact.

Financial headwinds were expected in FY25, driven by the conclusion of funding for several major projects in FY24 and ongoing uncertainty around Federal and State Government funding – alongside increased operating costs, particularly SCHADS Award wage adjustments and program consolidations and expansions. Whilst we made strong progress through new and existing partnerships, philanthropic support, and donor generosity, and internal efficiencies, we closed the year with a \$112,948 deficit.



OUR PEOPLE AND PARTNERSHIPS

This year, DSV's people – our Board, Advisory Network, staff, and volunteers – have worked tirelessly and shown exceptional commitment and professionalism. I cannot thank each of you enough for your contributions, passion, and support. It truly takes a village!

Our partnerships have also continued to flourish. The MRC Foundation Gala raised an extraordinary \$250,000, enabling DSV to bridge critical funding gaps and sustain vital services and supports heading into FY26. Long-standing partnerships with organisations such as the Department of Education, Department of Social Services (DSS), Down Syndrome Australia (DSA), Parenting Research Centre, Carers Victoria, and the Bank of Melbourne Foundation, alongside our incredibly loyal fundraisers and donors, including our Five Peaks trekkers and Oak Living, continue to underpin DSV's financial sustainability and program growth. I, and the entire DSV community, could not be more grateful for your ongoing support, trust, and belief in our mission.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move into FY26, DSV is well-positioned to build on this year's progress despite uncertainty within the sector and broader economic conditions. Key priorities include:

- Continuing to support people with Down syndrome and families through significant NDIS and support reforms.
- Expanding our programs and supports to reach more people and communities, focussing on social, fitness and employment initiatives.

- Continuing to influence policy through collaboration with our community, partners, and the Down Syndrome Australia Federation.
- Deepening our regional impact through co-designed, locally led activities.
- Increasing our focus on health and ageing, including pathways for people experiencing dementia.
- Continuing to develop trusted and enduring partnerships that underpin the mission and sustainability of DSV.

TO OUR MEMBERS, COMMUNITY, AND PARTNERS - THANK YOU.

Inclusion is not just a vision; it's a shared responsibility. Thank you for your ongoing trust, advocacy, and belief in each other, and DSV. My passion for the DSV community has not wavered over the six years I have been fortunate to lead this incredible organisation. It remains a privilege, and I am excited to continue delivering information, services and supports to the Victorian community, working alongside people with Down syndrome and families to reach their potential and live the life they choose.

Daniel Payne
CEO, Down Syndrome Victoria

A Message from our Advisory Network Chairperson



I want to leave a legacy, a Down syndrome legacy. Hear my voice. See our value, our positive impact, and our potential. Inspire action, so that life for people with Down syndrome improves. **Matthew O'Neil,**
Chair DSV Advisory Network

We started the Advisory Network in 2020 to improve the lives of people with Down syndrome. Five years on, our voice is heard at every level of DSV. On the next page you can read a full report about what the Advisory Network have worked on this year.

We had an amazing year, with more opportunities than ever before. The Advisory Network have put in the hard work to make sure the voice of people with Down syndrome is heard. Thank you to Emily, Keziah, Jenny, Colby and Kath, and welcome to our new members Daniel and Jack.

Looking back at the year, it makes me feel proud to have Down syndrome and to be on the Advisory Network. We have celebrated Down syndrome, educated the community, made sure we had the right resources, helped to make opportunities for people with Down syndrome and we always support our community.

The highlight for me was the MRC Foundation Gala, it was the first time I had been to an event like that. I gave a presentation to over 600 people; it was one of the best feelings you could possibly have. It was an important event because we raised a lot of money for DSV. Hearing people donate money on the night made me feel like a rockstar. I met a lot of new people, people from big companies, we talked about how they could help DSV. My cheeks were hurting from smiling, I felt like the happiest man.

I think I can say, at DSV, we have a bright future. The work we have done will pave the way for more people with Down syndrome to be involved at DSV and throughout the community in Victoria.

Matthew O'Neil
Chairperson, Down Syndrome Victoria
Advisory Network

Down Syndrome Victoria Advisory Network

The Down Syndrome Victoria Advisory Network (DSAN) is a group of paid employees offering advice, feedback and support to make sure the voice of people with Down syndrome is heard and implemented at DSV.

The past year has been an extraordinary one for DSAN, filled with impactful moments, powerful advocacy, and community engagement. I'm proud to reflect on the meaningful work we've achieved together.

We participated in and presented at a series of high-profile events this year, including DSV's Authentic Inclusion in Schools Conference, StepUP! for Down syndrome, Family Fun Day, Oak Living Race Day, the MRC Foundation Race Day and Gala, the AFL Umpires Association Fiona McBurney Match Day Experience launch, and the Having a Say conference. These events helped raise awareness, build partnerships, and celebrate the inclusion of people with Down syndrome in all aspects of life.

World Down Syndrome Day 2025 was centered on the powerful theme: 'We call on all governments to improve our support systems.' This message informed our impactful visit to Parliament House Victoria, where DSAN staff spoke directly alongside The Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn, Victoria's Minister for Disability. It was our second visit to Parliament for the year - we also hosted a monthly DSAN meeting there, during which we met with Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs Iwan Walters, and Mary-Helen and Emma, representing Minister Blandthorn. These conversations were instrumental in sharing our lived experiences and strategic recommendations for policy reform.

WHY WE SHOW UP

Every event we attend offers us a platform to be seen, heard, and valued. These moments give me, and many others, a voice. They empower us to advocate and show the broader community what we already know: that people with Down syndrome are just as capable, ambitious, and deserving of representation as anyone else.

The work we do reinforces that message - loudly and proudly - and ensures our voices are not only heard, but respected.

Watch this space - we're just getting started.

Colby Hickey
Down Syndrome Victoria
Advisory Network





Down Syndrome Victoria Advisory Network

KEY ADVISORY NETWORK ACHIEVEMENTS THIS FINANCIAL YEAR

- 4 DSAN staff attended and presented at the World Down Syndrome Congress in Brisbane
- 18 speeches were delivered across topics such as health, fundraising, advocacy and education
- 10 articles written by Colby Hickey for DNews
- 4 social media posts were created for World Down Syndrome Day
- Kath Mansour emceed StepUP! for Down syndrome
- Jenny Bowden emceed World Down Syndrome Day at Parliament House
- 5 workshops were delivered on topics such as volunteering, Club21, FitSkills21, bowel screening, cervical screening and women's health
- 8 events were attended and presented at
- DSAN staff hosted 1 regional meeting
- DSAN staff hosted 1 meeting at Parliament House
- Emily Porter has been a Health Ambassador
- Keziah Glenane has been an Employment Ambassador
- Jenny Bowden has represented DSV on the Down Syndrome Australia Advisory Network
- 3 Club21 classes were designed and facilitated by Kath Mansour

We'd like to thank Loren from Jade Ambition for the specialised leadership workshops and ongoing support she provides us. The techniques and confidence we have gained from Loren's support was applied throughout the year at various speaking engagements, presentations, and community events.

Services & Supports

It has been a busy year for the Services team as we continued to deliver our core programs while expanding regional activities and exploring new ways to deliver our service offering to people with Down syndrome, families and the community.

Our Adult and Family Support Managers continue to meet the changing needs of families, many navigating the complexities of the NDIS and systems of care. Outreach at key life stages remains critical. This year, we responded to 492 requests through calls, visits and tailored information: a 46% increase in demand for family support.

The launch of our Regional Connections initiative included a two-day conference that strengthened collaboration across eight regional networks, benefiting over 300 families. Fourteen regional leaders attended, all reporting improved confidence, connectedness and knowledge of referral pathways to better support families in their communities. We also expanded our employment connections project into regional areas, opening pathways to meaningful work and inclusion across Victoria.

DSV's flagship programs grew significantly. Club21 introduced regional activities and quarterly discos, providing valued social opportunities for members. FitSkills21 grew from three to eight locations, enabling 30 participants to build fitness, confidence and community connections through this unique program.

Internally, we streamlined processes to ensure efficient and sustainable service delivery, allowing our team to focus their time directly supporting members.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025/26, WE WILL:

- **Expand our health program** to include younger onset dementia education for health professionals and explore improved care pathways for people with Down syndrome.
- **Extend our employment opportunities**, including additional regional locations.
- **Strengthen our regional reach** by working with local networks to build momentum and connect with more families and individuals and find new and innovative ways to deliver services.
- **Launch a new Club21 booking system and client portal** to streamline communication and simplify bookings for participants and families.
- **Embed continuous, feedback-driven improvements** across all services, ensuring we continue to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Thank you to our participants, families, partners, staff and volunteers for your support.

Together, we continue to build a connected, informed and inclusive community for people with Down syndrome across Victoria.



Family Support



DSV's Family Support service provides support, information and resources to families and carers of babies, children and teenagers with Down syndrome, including pre- and postnatal support for new parents. We believe families have the right to feel supported in their choices, no matter which paths they choose. We aim to provide balanced, researched information so families can make informed decisions about how best to raise their children within their family context.

Family Support continues to provide vital assistance to families across the state, responding to a total of 343 enquiries covering health-related matters, navigating the NDIS, starting school, and a variety of carer-related issues.

We supported 32 new families and 23 prenatal families, offering understanding, information, resources and peer support at crucial stages.

We also engaged with 10 of the 38 families accessing support through the T21 Assessment Clinic at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH), collaborating with Paediatrician Dr. Laura Marco and Clinical Nurse Consultant Natasha Burgess, to support families and address children's health needs.

Our valued partnership with The Perfect Gift Australia continues to welcome new families into our community. Thanks to the industrious volunteers who have enabled DSV to distribute 139 beautiful gift boxes since 2019, including 25 this year. We are deeply grateful to Cathy Gibb and The Perfect Gift Australia for their dedication and generosity.

We remain committed to ensuring every family has access to accurate information, meaningful support, and a strong sense of community at every stage.



THE FAMILY SUPPORT EXPERIENCE

DSV has been with us since finding out about the potential of our baby having T21. To say it was shocking news was an understatement. Sonia was introduced to us, and since then has been a reliable source of information and an incredible support.

Being part of the DSV Facebook group introduced us to other families in the community. It is such a safe space where everyone is respectful and supportive. We have learned about resources and lived experiences, which have helped us firstly understand the diagnosis, and now raise a lovely daughter.

Now that our greatest blessing, Mia, is almost one, DSV has been a constant presence in our lives and the community is a great part of our journey. It was wonderful meeting other parents at the new parent morning tea, learning about the importance of keyword sign, and getting practical tips on navigating a new world called NDIS. We also greatly appreciated the Perfect Gift package that we received when Mia was born. It's such a thoughtful gift and a wonderful grassroots community initiative.

We thought we'd be traveling to Italy, but instead have landed in Holland. It has been our most rewarding and meaningful journey yet. And that would not have been possible if not for DSV and all the lovely families who we met along the way.

Thank you, Down Syndrome Victoria, for everything that you do for us all!

Tina, parent



MyTime

DSV is proud to hold the Victorian contract for the MyTime program, facilitating 41 groups statewide. MyTime provides a safe and welcoming environment where parents and carers of children with disability or additional needs can connect, share experiences, and access quality information and resources.

This year, we expanded our regional offering to Horsham, reflecting our commitment to meaningful regional presence within MyTime and DSV more broadly.

In partnership with Carers Victoria, we hosted Carers Week celebrations across the state, creating opportunities for carers to connect, learn and relax. With support from a Variety grant, we were able to provide new sensory toys for our program, enhancing play experiences and supporting the sensory needs of children in our groups.

We extend our gratitude to our MyTime partners for their collaboration and commitment. Partners include Extended Families Australia Inc, Wandarra Aboriginal Corporation, Inspired Carers Inc, Mallee Family Care Ltd, and Yarra Ranges Special Development School. Their contributions have been invaluable in enhancing the reach and effectiveness of our program. We also appreciate the ongoing support from the Parenting Research Centre and their trust in DSV to lead the Victorian MyTime program.

DSV remains committed to enhancing the MyTime experience and ensuring that every parent and carer feels supported and confident in their journey.

'It's just good to be with others who understand me.'

'This group has been a life saver.'

'I feel validated.'

'Since joining, my life has changed.'

'I love the camaraderie.'



THE MYTIME EXPERIENCE

I currently facilitate MyTime groups in Bentleigh East, Warrandyte and Blackburn. It's been an incredibly rewarding journey, one that started when I was seeking support myself.

I first heard about MyTime in a few different ways: I spotted a flyer in one of my son's therapy clinics, had a great chat with MyTime staff at the Source Kids Melbourne Disability Expo, and was encouraged to join by a counsellor I was seeing through Carer Gateway. I joined the Warrandyte group in March this year. It felt warm, welcoming, and safe. I knew straight away I wanted to come back.

Since then, I've continued attending and recently began co-facilitating groups. It feels incredibly meaningful to support other carers on their own journeys.

What I love most about MyTime is the connection. There's a shared understanding, a deep well of lived wisdom, and a chance to have 'me time' while also doing something creative. The space always feels calm, supportive, and led by what we need in the moment.

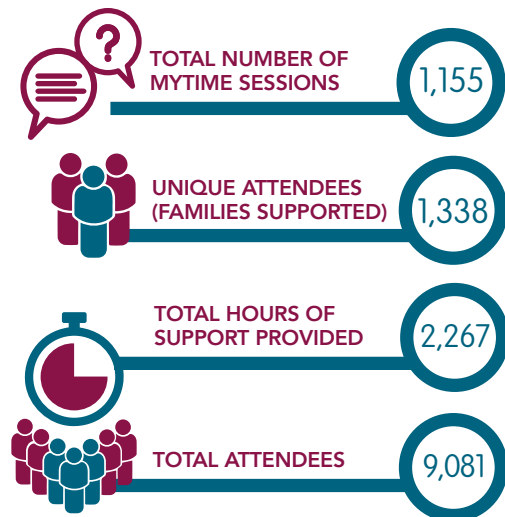
My 4-year-old daughter also loves coming along. She has the best time with the Play Leaders, which gives me the chance to fully engage in the group.

To other carers, I'd say this: we pour so much into others, and sometimes we forget to pause. MyTime gives you that pause. It's a commitment to yourself; your wellbeing, your connection with others who understand. However you choose to spend the time, it's yours.

Sarah Lacy, parent and MyTime Facilitator

MyTime

This year, the MyTime program recorded significant engagement and impact:



● LOCATIONS 2024 – 2025



Adult Support

Adult Support at DSV supports people with Down syndrome and families through key life stages and transitions. This can include ageing well, health, housing, legal issues, and employment. The adult support landscape continues to evolve as DSV navigates the various challenges and opportunities that present in an ageing population.

Visiting families in regional communities including Ballarat, Horsham, and Geelong, reinforced the importance of local connection and community support, setting a strong tone for the year ahead, with a focus on working together, staying connected, and helping families thrive.

FIONA MCBURNEY MATCH DAY EXPERIENCE

The Fiona McBurney Match Day Experience continued to grow, with participants involved in almost every AFL round. A major milestone was expanding the program to South Australia, where four participants took part for the first time.

Each experience gives participants a behind-the-scenes role supporting AFL umpires; checking match balls, joining warm-ups and ground inspections, and participating in the coin toss. A highlight of the program has been AFL teams taking time to meet participants, creating unforgettable memories. We extend our gratitude to the AFL Umpires Association and the umpires who make these experiences possible.

HAVING A SAY CONFERENCE

DSV maintained a strong presence at VALID's Having a Say Conference in January, amplifying the voices of people with disabilities. We showcased our resources and presented on FitSkills21, connecting with a broad audience.

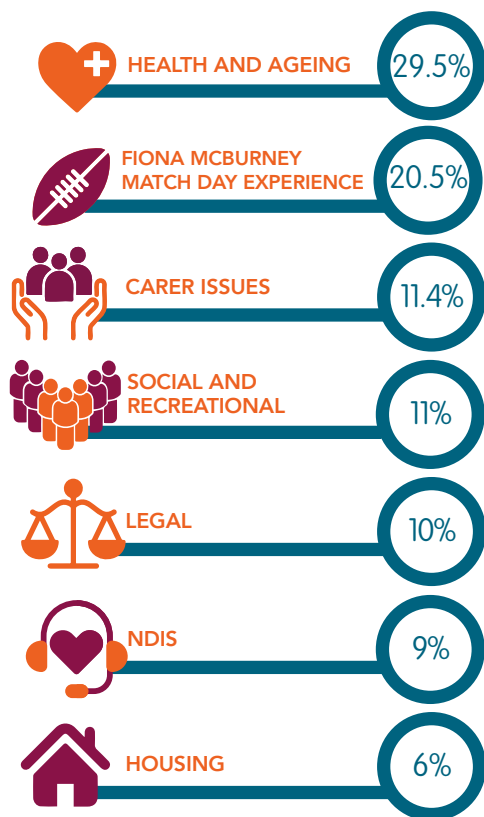


'Debby is amazing! She teaches me and my mum about a lot of ideas.'

Person with Down syndrome

Adult Support

REQUESTED INFORMATION TOPICS



'We cannot thank you enough for your assistance with our situation. We are so grateful for your suggestions and advice, it has really been encouraging to us.'

Parent

Health and ageing were the most common enquiries, ranging from younger onset dementia and Down syndrome regression disorder to maintaining physical health and wellbeing and accessing mainstream services, highlighting the need for specialised, coordinated support.

There was also increasing focus on social connection and relationships, ongoing learning and meaningful work, not only as important parts of daily life, but as ways to support emotional wellbeing and reduce the risk of loneliness.

We continue to see the impact of NDIS legislative changes affecting access to vital supports for families. We remain committed to advocating for flexible, responsive funding that reflects real-life needs.





Regional Family Networks

DSV's Regional Coordinator connects regional families to DSV services and supports, including hosting regional activities, referring to Family or Adult Support Managers or our Education Program, and sharing information and resources.

A highlight this year was DSV's Regional Conference in Inglewood in February attended by 14 regional leaders from Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Horsham, Warrnambool, Shepparton and Albury/Wodonga regions. The regional leaders participated in a workshop on asset-based community development, enjoyed connecting with other members, and plan to use the information to encourage more activity within their networks.

DSV also hosted several regional connection events, including three meals in Gippsland to foster local connections. An exciting outcome was the formation of a community-led Facebook page, [Down Syndrome Gippsland](#).

We thank Scrapheap Adventure Ride, Down Syndrome Australia and Carers Victoria for their financial support of regional families this year.

We would also like to thank Freemasons Cosmopolitan Lodge No. 96 who, in March 2025, hosted a fantastic community-led event that raised significant funds to support people with Down syndrome and their families across Geelong and the surrounding Barwon region. Thanks to the generosity of the Geelong community, local businesses including the very generous 360Q restaurant and Function Centre in Queenscliff, sponsors and event organisers, more than \$65,000 was raised – far surpassing the original goal of \$15,000.

These funds will be used to deliver critical support to people with Down syndrome and their families across Geelong and surrounding areas where it is needed most, bringing additional connections, supports and exciting opportunities to the area over the next two years.



The Education Program

DSV believes all students have the right to inclusive, equitable education in their local school, accessing the Victorian curriculum through reasonable adjustments. The DSV Education Program supports schools and families, offering a range of services to support children with Down syndrome.

EDUCATION PLATFORM

A major achievement this year was the launch of our curated education platform. Over 150 educators have registered, accessing resources tailored to students with Down syndrome, including DSV's education modules and past conference videos. The platform has been well received.

NEW EDUCATION MODULES

Three new modules were filmed this year exploring Reading, Writing and Behaviour. The modules highlight strategies and resources in the context of primary and secondary classrooms.

'The education resources are fantastic, a great support for practical implementation of recommendations made in the videos.' **Educator**

'I have found the professional learning videos really helpful and have been working with our ES team focusing on the behaviour component. Having access to the videos from the conference are supporting in us developing our understanding and approaches on an at needs basis. Being able to view these programs in a timely manner is having a positive impact on our work here.' **Educator**

'I think this is a great starting place if you have not had much experience with a child with Down syndrome.' **Educator**

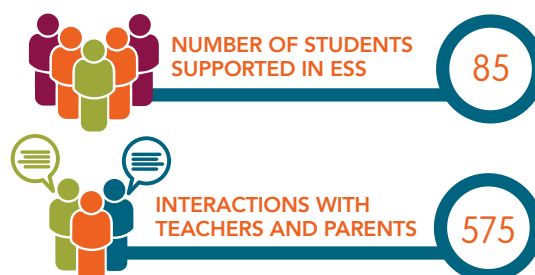


The Education Program

EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

In early 2025 more than 50 educators attended two online workshops: Setting up the year for success and Making curriculum adjustments for students with Down syndrome.

Family workshops included Advocacy in Education and our annual Transition to Primary and Transition to Secondary sessions, offering opportunities to learn from DSV's consultants and connect with other parents.

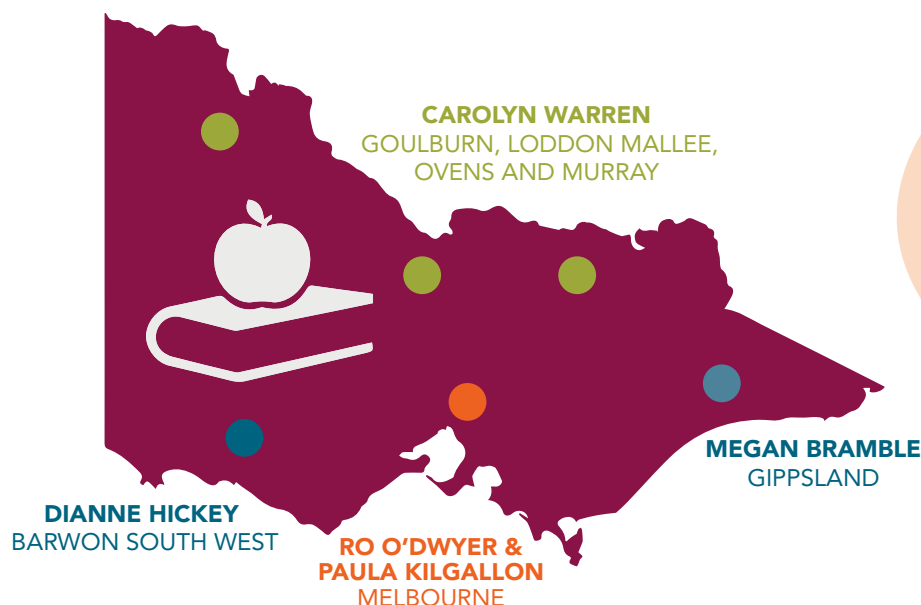


100% of educators in 2024 reported that the ESS improved outcomes for their student with Down syndrome.

100% of families in 2024 said they were likely to recommend the ESS to another family or school.

'DSV's Education Support Service has provided Maisie, her teachers and learning support officers with ongoing support with regards to inclusive practices and expectations within the school setting. The visits throughout the year provide continuity and consistency and are so important to celebrate the growth that Maisie has achieved. The service has been excellent in advocating for inclusion in all aspects of school life and has been of great benefit to staff in developing and deepening their knowledge of Down syndrome.' **Ruth Hartnett-Carr, Educator**

Your local education consultant:



Grateful thanks to the Department of Education and Bank of Melbourne Foundation for their important and continued support of the Education Program.



Club21

'Thank you for the great job that you are doing. I really love catching up with everyone and having fun.'

Club21 Member

Club21 is a place to connect, supporting people with Down syndrome build friendships, try new things, and enjoy everyday life.

This year, Club21 continued to provide vibrant social spaces, supporting our community grow in confidence and participate in the community. There were seven groups across Victoria: Metro, Eastside, Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo/Shepparton, Teens and online, each offering a mix of events and experiences.

CLUB21 IN PERSON

Metro highlights included the MRC Charity Race Day, Christmas party and festival outings to Ability Fest, Waterfront Festival and Moomba. Fright Club grew, running our inaugural Halloween Ball. Club21 introduced a new tradition of quarterly balls, including a lively Superhero Disco and a magical Mid-Winter Masquerade Ball.

Club21 Teens enjoyed evenings out to see Elvis, movies, and karaoke as well as the Australian Open and a nail-biting basketball game. SuperPark remained a favourite during holiday programs.

Our regional groups stayed active with metro members travelling via train to meet Geelong and Ballarat groups, strengthening connections across regions. Highlights included nights at The Piano Bar in Ballarat and Geelong, visits to driving ranges, and evenings of dinner and dancing. The Shepparton crew kept busy too, heading out for bowling and dinner.

CLUB21 ONLINE

Statewide online sessions included music, social events, and high-energy classes. Discos, exercise, and Zumba – where members help create choreography – remained most popular.

We are proud of the supportive and lively community that continues to grow across our Club21 programs. A sincere thank you to all our families, support workers, volunteers, and facilitators who make Club21 possible.

'After the night, Riley said 'I made new friends!' And she even got one of the girls' phone numbers! It's given her a bit of freedom, the chance to experience the city at night like any other teen. That's something I couldn't offer her on my own.' **Parent**

Club21

Club21 Member spotlight: Oliver Chiodo

Meet Oliver!

Ollie has truly embraced everything Club21 Teens has to offer, and his experience is a great example of why the program is so special.

While Ollie has always been independent, sociable and confident, Club21 Teens provides valuable experiences that continue to expand his awareness. Navigating transport, experiencing busy venues and attending new events all contribute to his confidence in engaging with the wider world.

Ollie loves the variety of events and the chance to socialise independently at Club21 Teens. Without a parent or carer, he gets to explore the world on his own terms while meeting new people and connecting with friends.

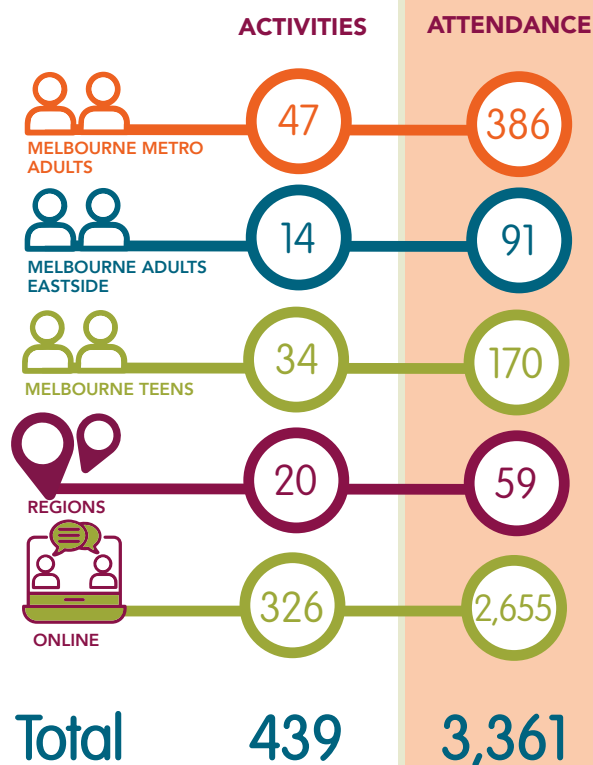
Without a doubt, Ollie's Club21 Teens highlight so far has been attending the Australian Open. Ollie loved the atmosphere and the tennis itself. It will be an enduring interest for Ollie and his family are grateful to DSV for providing him with such a wonderful opportunity.



'I would love to see more children and families involved. Being part of the wider community, meeting new people and having fun is so important for young people. It's what neurotypical teens do, so why should it be any different for someone with Down syndrome?'

Helen, Ollie's Mum

CLUB21 ACROSS THE YEAR



FitSkills21

Physical activity is vital for the Down syndrome community. FitSkills21 is an evidence-based program offering the opportunity for adults with Down syndrome to partner with a matched volunteer for weekly gym sessions, followed by a social meal, fostering community. Tailored by a physiotherapist, the program includes personalised, easy-to-read exercise programs with regular check-ins.

Participants report enjoying the social aspect of FitSkills21 most, particularly sharing meals with other participants after workouts. The program creates a comfortable environment, supporting connections with participants and volunteers, and participation in a local gym community. Other benefits include increased health and wellbeing, the development of life skills like independence, communication, money management and transport.

FITSKILLS21 EXPANSION

The program rapidly expanded to eight groups this year, due to significant interest. This growth led to the following:

- increased participant numbers from 11 to 30
- employment of 13 additional facilitators supporting more locations and groups
- volunteer teams for each location to ensure each participant is matched with a partner volunteer
- introduction of regional locations at Bendigo and Geelong.

The success of the FitSkills21 program would not be possible without the partnership and support of the following fitness centres and physiotherapists:

Brunswick Baths
Reload Physio Brunswick
ClubLime Mentone
South Coast Physiotherapy Tootgarook
Coburg Leisure Centre
Move & Groove Physio
Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre
City Baths Spinal & Sports Medicine
Centre Melbourne
LeisureLink Waurin Ponds
Chelsea Nichols
Melbourne City Baths
Move For Life Physio Mentone
Peninsula Aquatic & Recreation Centre
Back in Motion Eltham
WaterMarc Greensborough
Sheena Carney



The growth of FitSkills21 has seen our volunteer base increase from 14 to over 60 volunteers supporting a FitSkills21 session this past year. We sincerely thank these volunteers for their commitment and encouragement.



FitSkills21



- **Ages ranging from 19 years to 49 years with the average age of 31 years**
- **100% satisfaction with accessibility**
- **100% believe the partner volunteer is highly effective in supporting the participant to participate**
- **100% state the physiotherapist provided appropriate and effective exercise programs**
- **100% likely to recommend this program**

(Source: DSV FitSkills21 Parent/Carer Survey April 2025)

FitSkills21 spotlight: Daniel Kennedy

Introducing Daniel!

Daniel Kennedy is a FitSkills21 participant at our Bendigo location which operates on Friday evenings at Gurri Wanyarra Wellbeing Centre. Daniel thoroughly enjoys participating in the FitSkills21 program, which has supported him in his endeavour to look like 'The Rock'. Daniel also shared that he has a real connection with his volunteer Sandy and that FitSkills21 feels like family.

What motivates you to stay fit and healthy?

To stay active! FitSkills21 is fun and you can make new friends.

Why would you recommend the FitSkills21 program to others?

FitSkills21 makes me feel good. It's fun, helps improve my fitness and I can see changes in my body from working out each week.

Tell us about your partner volunteer, Sandy.

We get along really well and it's fun, she makes me laugh. I like that we get to catch up with everyone each week.

Daniel's progress

Daniel has been actively participating in FitSkills21 for the past 12 months and has demonstrated consistent engagement and enthusiasm. Over this period, Daniel has progressively increased both the weights and repetitions in his exercise program, as well as performing more challenging exercises. In addition to his scheduled sessions, he has shown initiative by attending the gym a second time each week with his support worker.

Congratulations to Daniel on his achievements!



Employment Connections

Employment Connections is an initiative aimed at enhancing employment opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome statewide. The program offers a comprehensive service tailored to both employers and job seekers, fostering inclusive workplaces that value diversity and the unique contributions of people with Down syndrome. Through its specialised services, the program not only benefits job seekers but also enriches the workplaces of participating employers.

For employers, DSV helps define and customise roles to match employees' skills and interests, including job carving, where tasks are tailored to fit individual capabilities, ensuring meaningful work. The program also offers Down syndrome awareness training, facilitating a supportive and inclusive work environment, and aids in advertising job opportunities, onboarding new employees, and providing ongoing on-the-job support.

For job seekers with Down syndrome, the program provides guidance and support throughout the application and interview process, onboarding requirements, on-the-job mentoring throughout the settling in phase of their new role, and ongoing check-ins.

This year, the program faced several challenges, including a period of funding uncertainty and the retirement of the program manager. Fortunately, continued funding was secured, and a timely recruitment process enabled a comprehensive handover between outgoing and incoming staff. During this period, there was a decline in employer-initiated enquiries prompting a strategic shift toward proactively identifying and approaching potential employers. These challenges contributed to a reduction in job placements compared to previous years. However, the new direct approach strategy along with strengthened relationships with partner organisations has established a strong pipeline of future opportunities.

DSV's Employment Connections program continues to play a crucial role in supporting people with Down syndrome with the tools and support needed to secure and maintain meaningful employment.

Employers receiving support and ongoing assistance

13

77

Employers directly contacted

Meetings with people with Down syndrome regarding employment

18

18

Meetings with potential employers

ADE employees with Down syndrome that received information on EC program

26

Over the duration of the Employment Connections project over 20 of open employment roles have been commenced by people with Down syndrome.



Employee spotlight: Susan Croft

Susan commenced her role as Clinic Assistant at Leapfrog Therapy, a paediatric occupational and speech therapy clinic, in April 2025.

Susan says, 'My job is as clinic assistant at Leapfrog Therapy in Balwyn. I work with the speech and occupational therapists, helping them with scanning, tidying and resetting session rooms and meeting and greeting parents and kids. The entire team at Leapfrog Therapy are super friendly, supportive, happy people who are easy to talk to.'

Susan found the recruitment process and support provided by DSV helpful, which included, 'assisting me with the interview questions which I had to prepare, the calls leading up to the date asking if I needed help getting there, during the face to face interview as I do get nervous and sometimes forget what to say, and afterwards with following up the results of the interview.'

Jaydin, Business Manager at Leapfrog Therapy says, 'Welcoming Susan into our team as an Office Assistant has been an incredibly rewarding experience. Susan brings such a positive, hardworking energy to the clinic, and her dedication, attention to detail, and pride in her work have made a meaningful impact on the team and our clients.'

'Working with the Employment Connections program has been a really positive experience. Bree [DSV] was incredibly supportive throughout the whole process; clear, practical, and always approachable. Susan has been such a valued addition to our team, and we're grateful for the opportunity to be part of something so meaningful.' **Employer**

Health Project

Now in its fifth year, the Building Knowledge Project has made significant strides in transforming health services to be more inclusive, responsive, and supportive for children and adults with Down syndrome and their families. Through collaboration, education, and advocacy with health services and professionals, the project has built a strong foundation for lasting change in mainstream health systems.

The project maintains a partnership with the University of Melbourne Master of Genetic Counselling. This year, two Master of Genetic Counselling students contributed to Club21 and FitSkills21, supported the Advisory Network, attended a new parents morning tea and joined DSV meetings. This important relationship builds knowledge and awareness, fosters collaboration and enhances expertise, ensuring families and individuals with Down syndrome benefit from informed, evidence-based guidance.

Key outcomes for the project have been:

- Increased understanding among health personnel about disability and inclusion
- Improved high-quality, relevant health services
- Enhanced attitudes and service culture within the health service system
- Greater access to inclusive health services for children and adults with Down syndrome, their families and supports

These outcomes were achieved through the following:

- 38 families supported by the Royal Children's Hospital T21 clinic.
- 4 Health and Education Ambassadors employed within three health services, delivering co-designed lived experience training; the longest standing ambassador has been employed for three years.
- 15 training sessions for Ambassadors to support them in their roles and contribute to employment longevity.
- 35 one-on-one consultations with health professionals requesting information for an individual they were providing care to.
- 47 workshops delivered to 438 health professionals, 88% delivered by people with Down syndrome.
- Health related resources embedded within health services and primary health networks, reaching 17,500 health professionals across Victoria.

Health & Education Ambassador spotlight: Daniel Harrowell at Albury Wodonga Health

Daniel has been working as a Health & Education Ambassador at Albury Wodonga Health for three years.

During that time his independence and capability on the job have continued to grow and develop. When asked what skills he has developed confidence in he stated:

'I am doing so much better speaking with my PowerPoint. I feel more confident in travelling to work, using a computer, writing emails, making and attending meetings, using Word and PowerPoint and giving speeches.'

A demonstration of Daniel's increasing independence and capability at work was when his computer battery went flat during an online meeting. He was able to problem solve the issue unassisted and log back into the meeting. These are skills he did not have when he first started work.

Daniel now delivers disability awareness training as part of staff induction training. Training evaluation results strongly demonstrate this training is delivering outcomes for the Albury Wodonga Health, transforming workplace culture and fostering inclusion of people with disability.



Events & Fundraising

Each year DSV hosts events celebrating our community, work and commitment to inclusion. Thank you to everyone who has attended, donated, or otherwise supported our events and fundraising activities, and to our valued partners, who make them possible. We appreciate you!

STEPUP! FOR DOWN SYNDROME

Down Syndrome Awareness Month was celebrated in October with StepUP! events in Melbourne and Geelong, bringing together 650 participants and raising \$50,000. Twenty volunteers helped bring StepUP! Melbourne to life, energising pit stops, encouraging walkers along the track, assisting market stall holders, running giant games and taking official photographs.

Special thanks to Sarah Collis and the Geelong community for their incredible support and enthusiasm, which made StepUP! Geelong a fantastic community-led success.

We would also like to acknowledge Carer Gateway Merri Health for their significant support of StepUP! Melbourne 2024.

FIVE PEAKS, MOUNT KOSCIUSZKO

November saw 18 hikers trek 42 kilometres in the snowy mountains, raising almost \$94,000. Highlights included 76-year-old Michael Mansour completing the challenge in honour of his daughter Kath, and respite carer Dee Milton's motivating motto: 'If we can, we should.' Her words encapsulate the spirit of the team and the mission to go beyond limits for a worthy cause.

Our appreciation to Andrew Bryson, Anna Cutler, David Fargetta, Debby Fraumano, Hamish George, Charmaine Guest, Tim Lucas, Julia Mansour, Michael Mansour, Suellen Mansour, Stan Marinis, Dee Milton, Stephen Moir, Will Moloney, Michael Muehlheim, Nicole Sutherland, and James Warr along with DSV's Charity Representative Lucy Bain for their significant effort, commitment and generosity in making this challenge a resounding success. We also thank Inspired Adventures for ensuring a safe and memorable experience.

The theme of World Down Syndrome Day this year is 'We call on all governments to improve our support systems'. In my opinion, people with Down syndrome make the world a more diverse and positive place; our governments need to understand this and ensure we are supported within workplaces, schools and in the community at large.

Colby, DSV Advisory Network



Events & Fundraising

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY (WDSD)

In March DSV returned to Parliament House Victoria to celebrate WDSD and this year's theme, **'We call on all governments to improve our support systems'**.

Community members shared stories illustrating how people with Down syndrome and their families thrive with the right support systems.

We were joined by the Minister for Disability the Hon. Lizzie Blandthorn, Premier Jacinta Allan and many others eager to work together to improve the lives of Victorians with Down syndrome and their families.

WDSD was followed by our annual **Family Fun Day** at Werribee Zoo attended by 600 community members. A day enriched with connection, performances, safari tours and quality family time. DSV acknowledges the generous support of Wyndham City Council and Werribee Open Range Zoo, and the many regional families who joined us from Albury, Wodonga and surrounding areas with the support of Aspire Support Services. Thank you to the seven dedicated volunteers who support everything from setup and registration to raffles and official photography.

MRC FOUNDATION GALA

DSV was fortunate to have been selected as this year's MRC Foundation Gala charity partner, with the event on 8 May confirming just how impactful the opportunity was. In addition to the hugely important fundraising element, DSV also had the benefit of forging new connections that will help strengthen our community, as well as the chance to share vital stories about the importance of the work we do with a community outside our own.

Over 20 DSV volunteers and ten MRC volunteers contributed to the success of the evening. The Gala raised over \$325,000 with DSV receiving \$250,000, helping to bridge a gap in our FY26 funding, enabling us to continue to meet the increased demand and deliver support, education and advocacy for and with our community. We are incredibly grateful to the MRC and the MRC Foundation for their support.



Congratulations on a wonderful gala last night and a phenomenal result... We are delighted that your organisation can now proceed with your programs that are so beneficial for our children and families. We are also very appreciative of the hard work you and all your staff put in to support our children. **Parent**

Communications

DSV's communication strengths reside in our values and collective voice. We continue to strengthen and build our presence and impact through authentic communication strategies that aim to inform, connect and engage.

KEY COMMUNICATION CHANNELS:

WEBSITE

Our website is a central hub for information, resources, events and updates. Traffic to the site remained consistent throughout the year, with a continued focus on storytelling allowing us to illustrate our work and impact.

SOCIAL MEDIA

We have refined our approach to tailoring content for different audiences and platforms. As part of this strategy, we stepped away from X and redirected our focus to Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. In addition, we make use of targeted eDM campaigns, YouTube, Vimeo and the DSV podcast to deliver engaging and relevant content to our community. LinkedIn continues to grow as a key platform for DSV to connect with partners and supporters, with this year seeing a 44% increase in followers.

DNEWS

DSV's e-newsletter DNews is delivered monthly to approximately 2,700 people and continues to be a strong engagement tool. With a steady 37% average open rate our readers are engaged and active and in line with not-for-profit open rates according to Mailchimp. Colby Hickey's monthly Advisory Network contributions to DNews are a highlight of the monthly newsletter.

STORYTELLING

Some of our most popular stories include Chris, Eddie and Kieran's shared love of horror films, Jack's one year anniversary at Fleet Plant Hire, and our World Down Syndrome Day and Down Syndrome Awareness Month campaigns.

HERE'S HOW OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS GREW THIS YEAR



FACEBOOK

DSV open page:

- 2.5% increase in followers

Private Groups:

- 9% increase in members
- 851 posts
- 19,504 engagement (comments, interactions, shares, likes)



INSTAGRAM

- 18% increase in followers
- 450% increase in organic reach
- 2,042 content interactions (comments, shares, likes)



LINKEDIN

44% increase in followers

Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

Volunteers

From the office to the dance floor, DSV relies on the support and commitment of our fantastic volunteers. Throughout this report we've shared the ways in which volunteers impact the work we do. We extend our deep appreciation to each volunteer for the time and energy they dedicate to DSV.



Volunteer spotlight: Matthew Blackwood

A bit about myself

I describe myself as a positive, social, slightly cheeky, sometimes funny 33-year-old guy from country Victoria. I currently call the inner north of Melbourne home and enjoy spending time with the people I love and moving my body.

What made you volunteer for FitSkills21?

I wanted to dedicate some of my free time to doing something selfless like volunteering. After some research into local volunteer programs, I came across FitSkills21 which looked like a good fit for my personality and lifestyle. I was drawn to the concept of a program that allows the participants to enjoy what can be an intimidating environment (the gym) and see/feel the benefits of exercise and social interaction.

What's your favourite memory together?

I have a few, one of them was when Pip burst out laughing when I started singing 'shake it off' when we were shaking our arms in between sets - actually anytime Pip laughs is awesome. It's also great seeing how proud Pip is when she can increase the weights, and when she shares a bit about life outside the gym because it shows we trust each other and are building a friendship.

This year, our volunteer community has grown from 82 to 104 dedicated individuals, a testament to the generosity and enthusiasm that fuels DSV. Together, our volunteers contributed countless hours across programs, events, and behind-the-scenes operations, helping us reach more participants and strengthen our connection to the community. Their passion not only amplifies our impact but also embodies the spirit of collaboration and inclusion that defines DSV. We're inspired every day by their commitment and proud to celebrate their invaluable contributions. You can read about the work of our volunteers all through this report, because their impact is woven into almost everything we do.

Financial Snapshot

Five years at a glance

DSV is a responsible custodian of the funds provided by our generous partners and supporters. Every donation we receive is important and carefully distributed across our organisation to deliver services and support with and for people with Down syndrome, families and the community.

	INCOME	EXPENSES
2021	\$1,622,320	\$1,541,336
2022	\$1,580,604	\$1,668,368
2023	\$2,423,432	\$2,385,493
2024	\$2,675,958	\$2,653,721
2025	\$2,813,041	\$2,926,003

A copy of our complete Financial Statements are available on our website or upon request.

Donors, Sponsors & Supporters

Every year since its inception in 1978, community and philanthropic support has played a vital role in helping DSV deliver its supports and services in Victoria. A major highlight was being selected as the charity partner for the MRC Foundation Gala which raised an incredible \$250,000 to support our work.

We were also inspired by the commitment of individuals and groups who launched their own fundraising efforts - ranging from cutting their long locks to 18 determined fundraisers trekking NSW's five peaks!

We are grateful to all who contributed to DSV, including many generous donors who have chosen to remain anonymous. Each supporter is part of an incredible community, and we extend our deepest gratitude to you all.

Individuals

5,000+

Roslyn Allen
Tony Chen
Rachael Edwards
June Hunter
Carmine Santomartino
Neil Spencer
Bernard Sweeney
Daniel & Jenna Weeks

1,000+

Edward Allen
Dennis Banfield
Joel Deane
Akshay Fowdar
Bill Hearn
Harriet Kempton
David Seton
Mardi Sloan
Richard Vernon
Andrew Wilkie

500+

Charmaine Guest
Leon Howlett
Vindhya Kurugamaarachchi
Barbara Newstead
Sue Newstead
Tina Orr
Nina Rocha

In Memoriam

Zoe Banfield
Narelle Compton
Michael Nicoll
Peter Sloan

Organisational Donors and Sponsors

1,000+

AFL Umpires Association
DB Results
Dulce Gelateria
Rotary Club of Koo Wee Rup
Lang Lang Inc
Trenerry Plastering Pty. Ltd.
Williamstown Superules Football Club
Holstep Health (formerly Merri Health)
Down Syndrome Australia
Scrapheap Adventure Ride
Oak Living

500+

Good2Give Workplace Giving
Moonee Valley Racing Club
Rotary Club of Cranbourne
Yarraville West Primary School

Trusts and Foundations

Bank of Melbourne Foundation
The William Angliss (Victoria) Charitable Fund
The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust
Harcourts Foundation
Carers Victoria
The Flora and Frank Leith Charitable Trust
Freemasons Victoria
Freemasons Cosmopolitan Lodge No. 96
Variety – The Children's Charity
Cassandra Gantner Foundation
Melbourne Racing Club Foundation

Research Organisations/ Institutions

Parenting Research Centre
The Melbourne University, Melbourne Disability Institute – Community Based Research Program

Government Funding

Local

Wyndham City Council

State

Department of Education
Department of Health

Federal

Department of Social Services
National Disability Insurance Agency

Major Fundraisers

Family Fun Day
Oak Living Race Day
StepUP!
Melbourne Racing Club Foundation Gala



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**WITH THANKS TO
DSV'S LIFE MEMBERS:**

ROSLYN ALLEN
IAN COOK
FAE EGAN
PETER EGAN
TONY MCDONALD
JOSIE MCGIVERN
GEOFF MCGIVERN (IN MEMORY)
PAPALEO FAMILY
PROFESSOR CARL PARSONS
PAT WILLIS (IN MEMORY)