Annual Report
2025-2026



Down Syndrome
Victoria



In 2025-2026, Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) strengthened connections, expanded pathways and responded to changing community needs in a complex disability landscape.

What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a genetic condition caused by an extra copy of chromosome 21. It is a natural part of human diversity and occurs in people of all backgrounds, cultures and communities.

Like the artwork featured throughout this report, every person with Down syndrome contributes their own perspectives, strengths, creativity and voice.

Across Victoria, people with Down syndrome are learning, working, advocating, creating, volunteering, leading and connecting. Their achievements enrich our communities and challenge outdated assumptions about disability.

At DSV, we work alongside people with Down syndrome and families to envisage a future where everyone is recognised, included and valued. Through information, advocacy, programs and support, we help build communities where people with Down syndrome can live the life they choose.

This annual report reflects that work in action, celebrating a year of connection, leadership, opportunity and impact, and the people who continue to make it possible.

Learn more about Down syndrome on our website.

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

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



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.

Highlights of our year

Laid the foundations for the DailyGood Café and DSV's relocation to the Royal Children's Hospital precinct

9,213 attendees accessed 1,136 MyTime peer support sessions held across 39 locations throughout Victoria

9 employees with Down syndrome working across various roles at DSV

A significant milestone of delivering a total of 150 Perfect Gift Australia boxes to new families was reached

100% of educators reported that DSV's Education Support Services had improved educational outcomes for their student with Down syndrome

85% of members would recommend DSV's services and supports to other families of people with Down syndrome

Club21 delivered a total of 3,985 activities

86 students with Down syndrome supported in local schools

FitSkills21 reached new milestones through new seasonal programs and nutrition classes, supporting people with Down syndrome to build skills, independence and wellbeing

Family Support services experienced a significant increase in engagement from culturally and linguistically diverse communities

The Advisory Network continued to challenge assumptions and demonstrate the value of lived experience leadership by presenting at Parliament, leading and co-designing workshops and events, and contributing bimonthly at Board meetings

The final year of Building Knowledge Project saw new dementia and ageing resources, workshops and relationships with key dementia and ageing stakeholders

Building Knowledge Project reached over 1,787 health professionals over the course of the project

FitSkills21 delivered a total of 1,178 sessions

Over $50,000 raised via StepUP! for Down syndrome 2025

Almost $45,000 raised via DSV's Larapinta Challenge 2025

Membership grew 9.8% overall, including 14.7% growth in members with Down syndrome

120 volunteers contributed over 4,500 volunteer hours to DSV's governance, programs, events and services

DSV today: a continuum of support

NON-DIRECTIVE PRENATAL SUPPORT

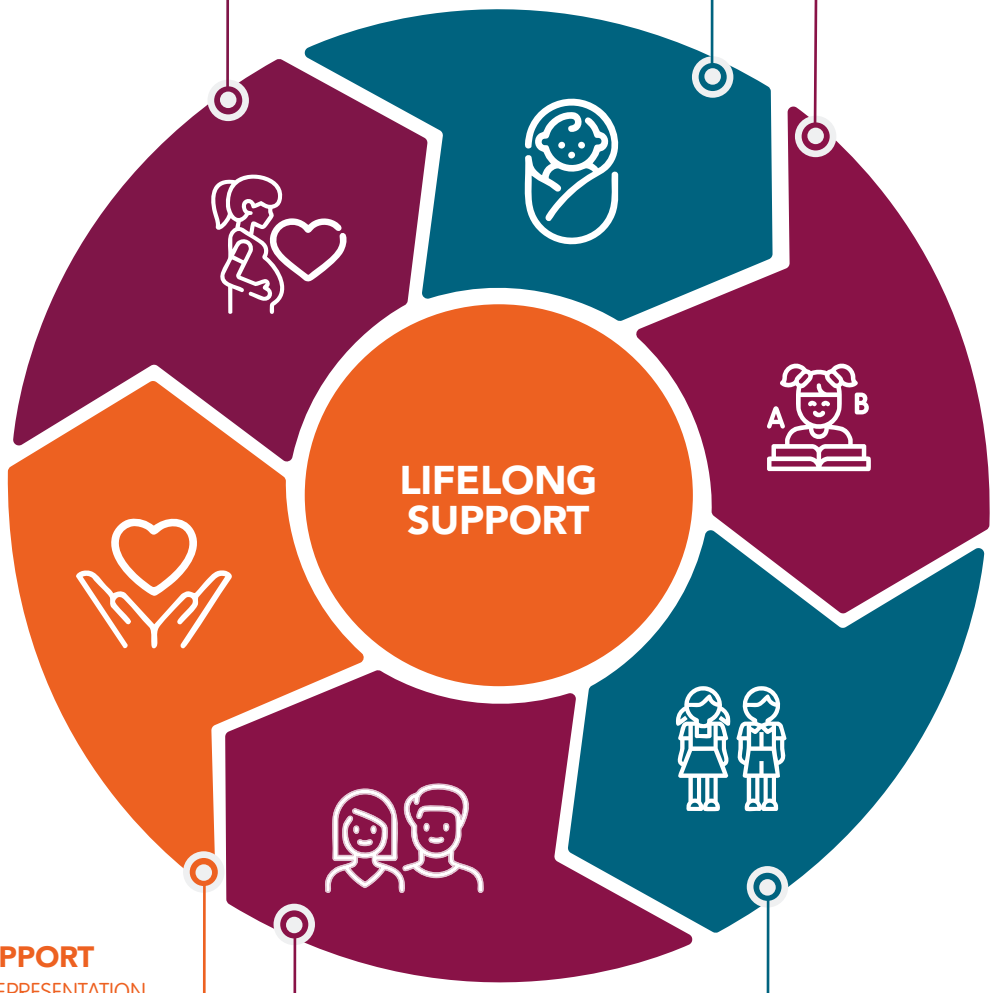
- UNBIASED FAMILY SUPPORT, INFORMATION AND CONNECTION
- PEER CONNECTION
- RESOURCES AND REFERRALS
- COHESIVE, SUPPORTIVE CARE VIA PHONE AND ONLINE
- GUIDANCE NAVIGATING SERVICES AND SYSTEMS

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



About us

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.

We work alongside people with Down syndrome to advocate for inclusion, create opportunities and ensure people have access to the same rights, choices and community participation as other Victorians.

Through information, advocacy, education, community connection and practical support, we help people with Down syndrome and their families navigate life's opportunities and challenges, while working to create a more inclusive Victoria for all.

Our values shape our actions

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.

Thank you to artists Margaret Bryson, Ned Middleton and Dominique Ressom 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.

Board and staff

THANK YOU TO OUR BOARD AND STAFF WHO WORKED WITH DSV THIS YEAR

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

Chief Executive Officer

Daniel Payne

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

President

Brendan Edwards

Vice President

Felicia Koh

Treasurer

Wendy McNabb

Board Members

Talia Boltin
Pieta Manning
Loren Pettigrew
Jenna Weeks

Secretary

Madison Robinson

We'd like to thank outgoing board member Lachlan Vivian-Taylor for his contribution to the DSV Board and the Victorian Down syndrome community. Lachie stepped down from the board in August 2025 and we are grateful for his service and commitment.

OUR PEOPLE

DSV's impact is made possible by a dedicated team of staff, facilitators, educators, lived experience leaders, volunteers, contractors and board members who work alongside people with Down syndrome and families across Victoria.

We thank every member of our team for their commitment, expertise and passion throughout the year.

To learn more about our team, visit our website.













President's report – Brendan Edwards



It has been another year of achievement, growth and, at times, uncertainty for Down Syndrome Victoria. As I reflect on the year, I am once again incredibly proud of what our organisation, staff, volunteers, members and supporters have accomplished together. We have continued to deliver valued programs and services, advocate for people with Down syndrome and their families, build community connections and find new ways to create opportunities and influence attitudes.

We have continued to navigate a time of significant change across the disability sector. Changes to the NDIS, uncertainty around future funding arrangements and reductions in Federal Government support for community organisations are creating a challenging environment for organisations like DSV. More importantly, these changes create anxiety and ambiguity for the people and families we exist to support. Many in our community are understandably worried about what the future holds and whether the supports they rely on today will continue to be available in the future.

In this environment, DSV has made a clear decision to remain alongside our community. We will continue to provide our core services and support, even though this will create some additional financial challenges for the organisation. We believe that our community needs stability and connection. Until there is greater clarity about the future of disability funding and services, we will continue to support our community for as long as we can, while working hard to find sustainable ways to continue this support into the future.

On that front, one of our most exciting developments is the launch of The DailyGood, our new social enterprise café. DailyGood provides an opportunity to create employment for people with Down syndrome, generate new income and sustainability for DSV, build partnerships and help challenge perceptions about what people with Down syndrome can achieve. We are incredibly excited about what the café can become and the many opportunities it can create for our community.

There are certainly some challenging times ahead, but there are also plenty of reasons to be optimistic. DSV has a strong community, passionate people and a clear purpose. We will continue to innovate and adapt while remaining firmly focussed on our vision: a society where people with Down syndrome are valued, reach their potential and are equal in every aspect of life.

On behalf of the Board, I thank our staff, volunteers, members, families, partners, donors and supporters for everything you have contributed this year. Your commitment gives us confidence that, together, we can navigate the challenges ahead and continue to make a meaningful difference.



Brendan Edwards
President, Down Syndrome Victoria

A message from our CEO – Daniel Payne



This year has left me with a deep sense of pride in our work and gratitude for the people who make it possible.

Every year I am reminded that DSV is so much more than an organisation. It is a community of people who care deeply about creating opportunities, supporting one another and working towards a future where people with Down syndrome are valued, included and able to live the life they choose.

This year has been one of remarkable impact. Across Victoria, our team supported families at some of the most important moments in their lives, provided information, guidance and encouragement when it was needed most, helped people build friendships and confidence through our programs, created pathways to employment, strengthened inclusive education, and continued to advocate for the rights and opportunities of people with Down syndrome and families.

Our growing membership was another important sign of the strength of the DSV community. This growth means more people with Down syndrome and families are connecting with DSV, accessing information and opportunities, and helping shape our work and advocacy across Victoria.

None of the impact reflected throughout this report would be possible without the extraordinary support of our employees, volunteers, Board, donors, partners and sponsors. Their commitment, expertise and generosity sustain our services, extend our reach and give DSV the confidence to pursue new opportunities. We are deeply grateful to every individual and organisation that has invested in our community and shared our belief in what is possible. Most importantly, I thank the people with Down syndrome and families who place their trust in us, share their experiences and continue to shape the direction of our work.

As Brendan's report outlines in more detail, the disability sector continues to face uncertainty as NDIS reforms unfold and funding becomes more constrained. At a time when demand for trusted information, advocacy and support is growing, DSV remains committed to maintaining the services our community relies on, while pursuing new opportunities to strengthen our long-term sustainability.

A major part of this work is our upcoming move to the Royal Children's Hospital precinct and the launch of our social enterprise café, DailyGood. More than a café, DailyGood will create award-wage employment opportunities for people with Down syndrome, provide a welcoming hub and generate income to support DSV's broader work. The relocation will also place DSV closer to young families and leading health, research and community organisations, creating new opportunities for collaboration and impact.

While the year ahead will bring challenges, it also brings enormous opportunity. We have a clear strategy, a committed Board, an exceptional team and a community that continues to motivate us every day. My commitment is to continue to advocate, adapt and innovate so that people with Down syndrome and their families can access the information, opportunities and support they need to reach their potential and live the life they choose.

I remain optimistic about the future of DSV. Not because the road ahead is easy, but because of the strength, resilience and generosity of the people who make up this community. Together, we will navigate uncertainty, embrace new opportunities and continue building a future where people with Down syndrome are valued, included and able to thrive.



Daniel Payne
CEO, Down Syndrome Victoria

A message from our Advisory Network Chairperson – Katherine Mansour



After four years as a member of the Down Syndrome Victoria Advisory Network, I was lucky enough to step into the role of chairperson this year. It has been a delight to be working alongside the other members to help advocate for our community. Thank you to our previous chairperson, Matthew O'Neil, for your guidance and help as I stepped into this role.

We started this year as a new team, welcoming Jack and Daniel to the Advisory Network. They have brought fresh ideas and energy to the group, representing a regional and younger community.

I want to say a big thank you to Kez and Emily as they moved from the Advisory Network to being Lived Experience Advisors at DSV. They have continued to contribute to DSV's health and employment projects.

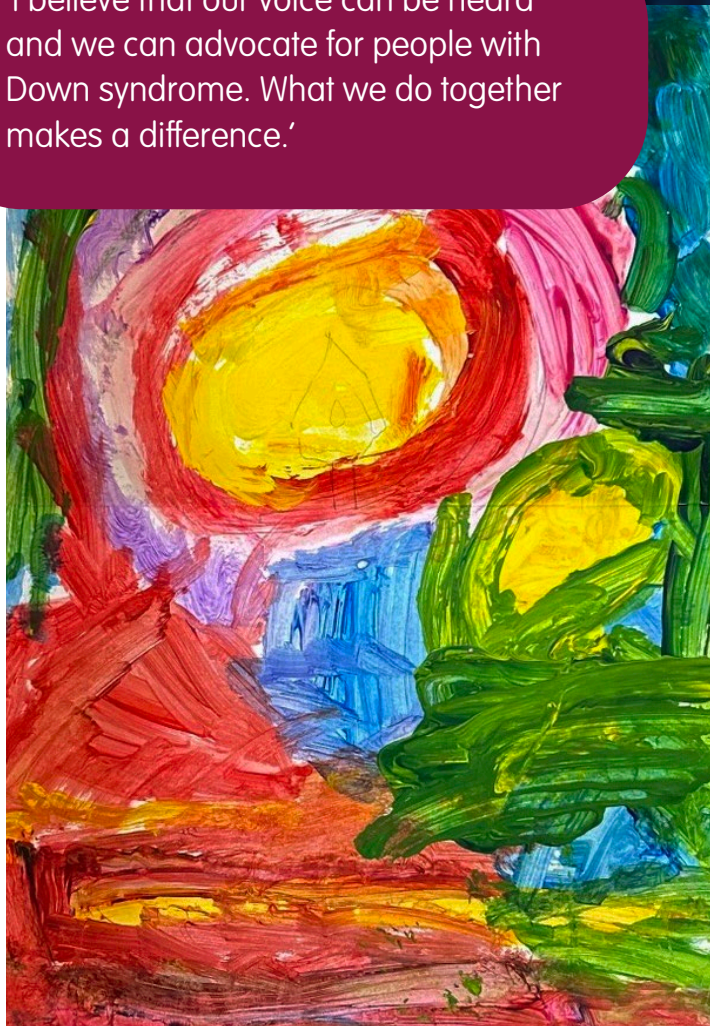
Our new team has worked well together and supported one another this year.

I am most proud of our contribution to the Dad's Carers Project. We had the opportunity to host a session with DSV dads from across Victoria where we got to share stories about our lives and why our dads are so important to us.

It was exciting to help shape DailyGood from the beginning. We gave feedback, shared ideas and helped choose the new café logo. We were truly part of this project from the start and it feels like we always have our voices heard at DSV.

I would like to say thank you for supporting DSV this year. What we do truly matters to our community.
I am so excited for the year ahead and our future.

'I believe that our voice can be heard and we can advocate for people with Down syndrome. What we do together makes a difference.'



Katherine Mansour
Chairperson, Down Syndrome Victoria Advisory Network

Our impact across the lifespan

DSV's services and supports continued to respond to people and families at every stage of life, from early diagnosis and school inclusion through to adulthood, ageing, employment and community participation.



Down Syndrome Victoria Advisory Network



A report by Advisory Network Vice Chairperson – Colby Hickey

The Down Syndrome Victoria Advisory Network is a group of employees with Down syndrome who provide advice, feedback and lived experience to ensure the voices of people with Down syndrome are heard, valued and reflected across Down Syndrome Victoria.

The past year has been an extraordinary one for the Advisory Network, filled with leadership, advocacy, professional development and community engagement. As Vice Chairperson, a person with Down syndrome, and someone who has had the opportunity to work as a journalist at many DSV events, I am proud to reflect on what the Advisory Network has achieved in FY26.

Across the year, we held ten meetings focussing on discussion, decision-making, leadership and self-advocacy. We also developed our professional skills through IT training, goal setting, SMART goals and self-advocacy development. Our Chairperson continued to represent our voices at Board meetings bi-monthly, ensuring lived experience informs DSV's governance and planning.

We played important roles across DSV projects, including FitSkills21, Club21, employment initiatives, communications and volunteering. We helped shape plans for the DailyGood Café through feedback, ideas, key decisions, branding and its launch. We also contributed to research and sector development, including the University of Sydney's Connect to Move Advisory Panel.

WHY WE SHOW UP

This year, we have been MCs, keynote speakers, journalists, photographers, interviewers, presenters and event hosts. At StepUP!, World Down Syndrome Day at Parliament House and Family Fun Day at Werribee Zoo, we helped connect with the community and share our stories.

We also delivered workshops and information sessions on health, cancer screening, ageing and dementia, provided volunteer training, contributed to the MyTime Dads Peer Support Pilot, and presented at the VALID Having a Say Conference and other disability sector events.

For me, being a journalist at these events is particularly meaningful. I am not just reporting on what is happening, I am part of it. I get to tell our stories, ask questions, take photographs and show the community what people with Down syndrome can achieve.

LOOKING AHEAD

We continue to challenge assumptions and demonstrate the value of lived experience leadership. We are building confidence, independence and self-advocacy while creating meaningful paid employment and leadership opportunities.

Most importantly, our work ensures that people with Down syndrome are not simply represented; we are leading, influencing decisions, shaping services and creating positive change across Victoria.



Key achievements



KEY ADVISORY NETWORK ACHIEVEMENTS THIS FINANCIAL YEAR INCLUDE:

- 4 volunteer training sessions were delivered by Advisory Network staff
- 10 meetings were held throughout the year
- 2 professional development workshops were completed on IT skills, SMART goals and self-advocacy
- 1 public speaking workshop was delivered to 35 attendees at the VALID Having a Say Conference
- Advisory Network staff played key leadership roles at StepUP! for Down syndrome, Family Fun Day and World Down Syndrome Day at Parliament House, serving as MCs, keynote speakers, interviewers, journalists and photographers
- 2 Advisory Network staff were appointed to the University of Sydney Connect to Move Advisory Panel
- Advisory Network staff contributed to the co-design and development of DailyGood Café
- Advisory Network staff participated in the MyTime Dads Peer Support Pilot, sharing their lived experience with fathers and male carers
- 2 workshops were co-designed and delivered on topics including cancer screening, ageing and dementia
- Advisory Network staff presented at the DSV Education Conference
- Advisory Network staff represented DSV at employment roundtables, stakeholder meetings and sector events
- Advisory Network staff presented on FitSkills21 at the 13th Oceania Academy Biennial Conference
- Jenny Bowden continued to represent DSV on the Down Syndrome Australia Advisory Network
- The Advisory Network Chairperson represented the Advisory Network at bimonthly DSV Board meetings throughout the year

Early years and family support

Family Support

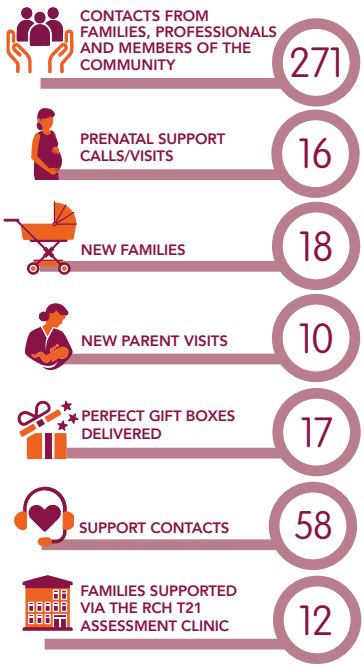
DSV's Family Support service provides support, information and resources to families and carers of babies, children and teenagers with Down syndrome, including pre- and postnatal support for new parents. We believe families have the right to feel supported in their choices, no matter which paths they choose.

Throughout FY26, Family Support continued to support families through some of life's most significant moments, from prenatal diagnosis and welcoming a new baby, through to accessing early childhood supports, starting school, navigating the NDIS and building community connections.

While enquiry numbers from families, professionals and members of the community remained relatively stable at 271, the complexity and intensity of support required continued to increase. Families increasingly sought assistance to navigate complex systems, understand changing NDIS arrangements, access appropriate health and education supports, and advocate for their children. We also saw growing engagement from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, reinforcing the importance of accessible, culturally responsive information and support.

Supporting families to build meaningful community connections remained an important part of our work. Through new parent support sessions, early years catch ups and individual family support, we helped families connect with one another, share experiences and build confidence for the journey ahead. We also engaged with 12 of approximately 30 families who accessed support through the Royal Children's Hospital's (RCH) T21 Assessment Clinic, collaborating with Dr Laura Marco and the team at RCH to support families and address children's health needs.

In addition to supporting families directly, Family Support worked alongside educators, health professionals and service providers to promote inclusive practices and increase understanding of the experiences of people with Down syndrome. Feedback from education sessions delivered to Maternal and Child Health nursing students was overwhelmingly positive, with participants describing the sessions as a 'powerful, challenging and rewarding learning experience' that reinforced the importance of individualised, family-centred care.



THE PERFECT GIFT

We are incredibly honoured to collaborate with The Perfect Gift Australia to provide these special gift boxes to families across Victoria. It is a privilege to be entrusted with the opportunity to deliver these meaningful gifts on behalf of Perfect Gift Australia and its dedicated, hard-working volunteers, whose generosity and commitment make this initiative possible. This year we reached the significant milestone of delivering a total of 150 boxes to new families, and we are deeply grateful to everyone who has contributed to making this possible.



THE FAMILY SUPPORT EXPERIENCE

'Our family is incredibly grateful for the encouragement received from Down Syndrome Victoria, as we navigate the sometimes complex and always rewarding experience of having a family member with Down Syndrome.

We've gained such valuable knowledge from enriching DSV webinars on offer, support navigating the NDIS, along with making new friends through family activities and sharing advice on social media, plus reading and watching uplifting stories of people living with Down Syndrome and access to support for Carers. We love connecting with other families and sharing in their victories!

We would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Family Support Manager Sonia Bonadio for her incredibly warm reassurance at every opportunity. Especially during diagnosis and through heart surgery days. Our family is forever appreciative, and we cannot imagine life without our dear happy little boy!

Looking forward to many years of association with the 'DSV Family'. Most would agree we would struggle without the vibrant and supportive community you have created. Together we are unstoppable!'

Best wishes from the Barrell and Roberts family

MyTime

In partnership with the Parenting Research Centre, DSV is proud to deliver the Victorian MyTime program, supporting 1,297 members across 39 groups statewide in FY26. MyTime provides a welcoming environment where parents and carers of children with disability, developmental delay or other additional needs can connect, share experiences, access information and build supportive peer networks. This important work is made possible by our dedicated MyTime Officers, Facilitators and Play Leaders who create safe, welcoming and supportive spaces for families across Victoria.

This year, the Parenting Research Centre released the national MyTime Impact Report. Developed in collaboration with MyTime partners, and informed by program data, interviews with members and facilitators, and ongoing feedback from across the national program, the report reinforces what Victorian groups continue to show: when parents and carers feel confident, connected and supported, the benefits extend to families and children over time.

CONNECTION, INFORMATION AND WELLBEING

This year, MyTime continued to provide trusted spaces for members to share the realities of caring and seek practical guidance. Common discussion themes included changes to the NDIS, school inclusion and transitions, emotional regulation, carer wellbeing and burnout, access to respite, behaviour support, sensory needs, Centrelink, and preparing young people for adulthood. Facilitators supported these conversations with practical information, relevant referrals and ongoing connection between sessions.

Guest speakers and practical workshops strengthened members' knowledge and confidence. Sessions included information about NDIS planning and reviews, positive behaviour support, caring for yourself, emergency care planning, advocacy, emotional regulation, mental health and local community services. Creative and wellbeing activities, including art, craft, massage, mindfulness, cooking and gentle movement, gave members valuable opportunities to pause, recharge and focus on themselves.

INCLUSIVE AND RESPONSIVE DELIVERY

The program continued to provide flexible and culturally responsive support through metropolitan, regional, rural, online and language-specific groups. Chinese and Vietnamese language groups remained a strong part of the program, alongside the Hume Indigenous group. Online sessions and contact between meetings extended the program's reach and helped members remain connected when distance, caring responsibilities, illness or other barriers prevented in-person attendance.

Group planning remained member-led, with facilitators regularly inviting feedback about topics, guest speakers and activities. This ensured sessions reflected the priorities of each local community and supported strong engagement across the program.

THE IMPACT OF MYTIME

Member feedback consistently described MyTime as a place of understanding, belonging and practical support. Members reported feeling less isolated, more informed and better able to manage the demands of their caring role.

OF OUR MYTIME MEMBERSHIP:

- FEEL LISTENED TO AND UNDERSTOOD — 94%
- SAY THE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT HELP THEM CARE FOR THEIR CHILD — 94%
- ARE SATISFIED WITH THE SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE — 92%



MyTime
continued

ADDED VALUE THROUGH ONLINE MYTIME SESSIONS

In addition to local group delivery, MyTime expanded the online event series offering to MyTime members and the broader DSV community. Across the year, 332 people attended MyTime Online sessions, including 197 who were not current MyTime members. This demonstrates how MyTime Online extended the program's reach, giving more families and carers access to practical information, specialist presenters and wellbeing activities.

Sessions included continence and toileting support with Continence Health Australia, gentle yoga with Ellen Blackman Yoga, personal emergency planning with Carers Victoria, an NDIS update on what to expect in 2026, sensory processing with Occupational Therapist Kevin Kao, information about Carer Gateway, and self-care and preventing carer burnout with Carers Victoria.

This online model demonstrates how MyTime contributes to DSV's wider mission by extending trusted support, information and connection across the community.

PARTNERSHIPS AND FUTURE FOCUS

DSV extends its sincere appreciation to our MyTime delivery partners and subcontractors for their collaboration, local knowledge and commitment to high-quality support. We also acknowledge the Parenting Research Centre for its ongoing trust in DSV to lead the Victorian MyTime program.

We sincerely thank Carers Victoria for its support of MyTime throughout the year. Together, we delivered 40 Carers Week events across Victoria, creating meaningful opportunities for members to connect, feel recognised and experience the sense of belonging that sits at the heart of MyTime.

This year we proudly celebrate four years of Kate Barakis as the Play Leader at the Heidelberg MyTime group. As an adult with Down syndrome in a paid MyTime role, Kate brings warmth, care and consistency to the group each week. Her contribution is a wonderful example of inclusive employment in action, supporting children to enjoy safe and developmentally appropriate play while members have the space to connect and share with their peers.

As we move forward, DSV remains committed to enhancing the MyTime experience and ensuring that every parent and carer feels supported and empowered in their journey.



FACILITATOR SPOTLIGHT: LAURA SOLTANI

'I facilitate the Tarneit and Melton MyTime groups and am also a Play Leader at Craigieburn MyTime. MyTime has been an important part of my own journey, one that started when I was looking for connection and support for myself and my family.

I often say I wish I had found MyTime sooner. In the early years of parenting, I was searching for other people who understood what life was like, but I did not always know where to look. When I was introduced to MyTime, I felt like I had found a place where I belonged and was accepted. Having a Play Leader there for the children made the experience even more valuable.

When I was ready to return to work, I hoped to find a role that would fit with my family life and align with what I care about. Becoming a MyTime Facilitator felt like the right opportunity. I now get to use my own lived experience to support other parents and carers on their journeys.

What I love most about MyTime is the connection. Every family brings their own story, but there is a shared understanding and compassion in the room. It is a space where people can share the realities of caring, celebrate small wins and notice the 'glimmers' of joy in everyday life. MyTime reminds carers that they are not alone, and that there is real strength in being connected with others who understand.'

MyTime
continued

'I didn't realise how isolated I was feeling, I am so glad I came to the group today.' **Carer**

'These sessions make me feel appreciated, like what we do actually matters.' **Carer**

'It's hard to let others help, but this reminded me that I can't pour from an empty cup.' **Carer**

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

- TOTAL NUMBER OF MYTIME SESSIONS: 1,136
- UNIQUE ATTENDEES: 1,297
- TOTAL HOURS OF SUPPORT PROVIDED: 2,187
- TOTAL ATTENDEES: 9,213

LOCATIONS 2025–2026



Education

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.

2025 saw some changes to the Education team with Lynsey Kennedy-Wood and Bernadette Casey stepping into the role of Education Consultant in their respective regions of Barwon and Bendigo. We are excited by the enthusiasm and expertise they bring to the team. Together with Megan Bramble in Gippsland and Ro O'Dwyer and Paula Kilgallon in metropolitan Melbourne, the education team continues to offer support to all Victorian schools.

The opportunity to provide practical assistance and resources to schools remains a highly rewarding aspect of our work, enabling us to support educators in creating more inclusive learning environments.

We would like to acknowledge the Department of Education for its ongoing funding and support of the Education Support Service (ESS), which enables us to achieve the best possible learning outcomes for students with Down syndrome.

100% of educators surveyed by DSV in 2025 reported that the ESS had improved educational outcomes for their student with Down syndrome.

100% of parents or carers reported that it would be beneficial for their child's school to receive the ESS.

STUDENTS SUPPORTED 86

INTERACTIONS WITH PARENTS AND TEACHERS 587



EDUCATION CONFERENCE

We were delighted to host our Education Conference on 2 March 2026. Opened by Nina Taylor MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Education, the conference attracted almost 100 attendees from across Victoria, providing an important opportunity to share contemporary practice, strengthen professional networks, and improve outcomes for students with Down syndrome.

The event featured an outstanding line-up of expert speakers who delivered engaging and highly informative sessions across a range of topics. A key highlight was a panel discussion facilitated by Dr Kathy Cologan, where young people with Down syndrome and their parents shared their experiences of school and life beyond school. Their insights provided a powerful, authentic perspective that resonated strongly with attendees. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

'Superb day. I really, really loved the entire event. Congratulations on a fantastic event!!!' **Conference attendee**

'The presentation was brilliant – so much valuable information to take away and apply. The presenters were simply amazing, very knowledgeable, and I thank them for sharing their expertise and insights.' **Conference attendee**

Education Program
continued



EDUCATION WEBINARS

Webinars were delivered to parents across the year, covering topics such as Advocacy in Education, Transition to Primary School and Transition to Secondary School. Sessions were well attended, and parents expressed appreciation for the practical strategies and guidance to support their children through key transitions.

EDUCATION PLATFORM

Teachers across Victoria have embraced the DSV Education Platform, accessing a growing library of practical resources designed to support inclusive learning environments. The Victorian Department of Education's promotion of the platform has played an important role in raising awareness and encouraging engagement among educators.

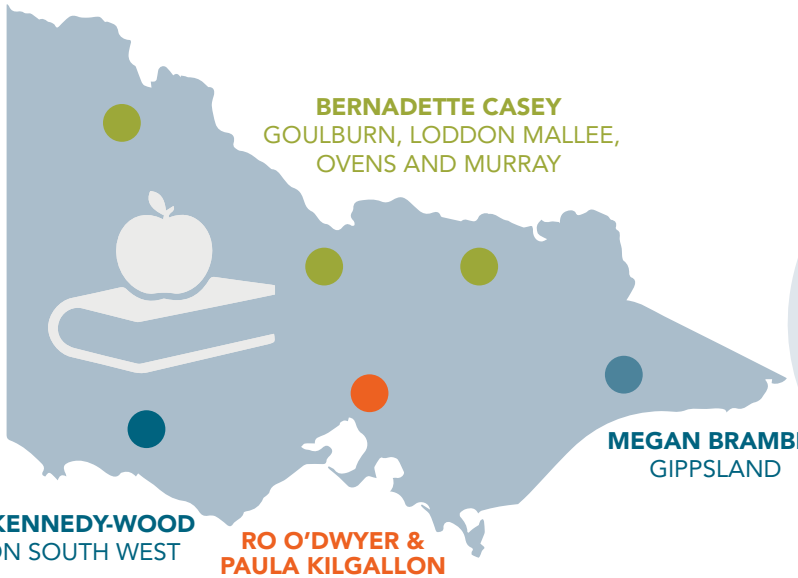
Since its launch in 2025, 242 educators have registered to access the platform and its resources.

We gratefully acknowledge the Bank of Melbourne Foundation for its generous support in bringing the platform to life and for its valued partnership over the past three years.

Parent feedback: 2025 ESS survey

'The benefit for our child is that she is fully engaged at school – she has a real love of learning and staff who support her and include her in all aspects at school. DSV has been fabulous in assisting the staff who sometimes need a little help in tailoring lessons to suit our daughter, as well as educating the whole staff on the best way to support our daughter.'

Your local education consultant:



BERNADETTE CASEY
GOULBURN, LODDON MALLEE, OVENS AND MURRAY

MEGAN BRAMBLE
GIPPSLAND

LYNSEY KENNEDY-WOOD
BARWON SOUTH WEST

RO O'DWYER & PAULA KILGALLON
MELBOURNE

We would like to congratulate Carolyn Warren and Dianne Hickey on their retirement from DSV. Carolyn and Di worked as Education Consultants in their respective areas of Bendigo and Geelong for several years. Their passion, hard work and dedication to supporting students with Down syndrome has been invaluable. We thank Di and Carolyn for all their work at DSV and wish them all the best for their retirement!

Community connection and participation

Regional Family Networks

DSV's Regional Family Networks connect 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.

This year, Regional Leaders came together for a lunch gathering at OC House, creating a valuable opportunity to connect, reflect, and plan ahead. The session was facilitated by Teresa Micallef from Belonging Matters, who supported a thoughtful discussion about how to keep the momentum going.

A key outcome was the group's commitment to bi-monthly virtual catch-ups, providing a regular space to stay connected, share ideas, and support each other. These sessions will help strengthen relationships with regional groups and DSV across the network.

Another regional highlight was the progression of the Geelong Regional Connections Project, a pilot initiative delivered in partnership with the Geelong Down Syndrome Regional Network volunteer committee. The project demonstrated the power of local leadership and community collaboration, generating more than 250 participations across social, educational and community activities. The Geelong Cats Football community event was a significant occasion, bringing together 130 community members to strengthen local connections, inclusion and engagement.

The focus moving forward is to maintain connection, build on shared learning, and continue working together to support inclusive practice across regions.

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

Grateful thanks also go to Cosmopolitan Lodge Queenscliff Freemasons, the Western Districts Freemasons and Freemasons Foundation Victoria for their support of the Geelong Regional Connections Project.





'You [DSV team] have been an incredible support for so many of our families in the country, who often feel forgotten.' **Parent**

Club21

Club21 is a place to connect, supporting people with Down syndrome to build friendships, explore new experiences, develop skills and confidence, and enjoy meaningful community participation.

Club21 continued to grow this year, creating meaningful opportunities for connection, confidence and participation. We expanded through the introduction of the Club21 Choir, increased regional participation and enjoyed the continued success of quarterly discos.

MELBOURNE AND EASTSIDE

Quarterly balls gained popularity, and the annual Christmas party remains the most anticipated event of the year. New activities were introduced, including *Let's Get Musical* movie club and a monthly Club21 choir. Participants also enjoyed unique experiences such as a duelling piano bar, and combined activities with regional groups, including Ability Fest and a trip to Castlemaine. At Club21 Eastside, laser tag and Sunday lunches were the standout favourites.

TEENS

Growth was experienced across the Club21 Teens program; karaoke and dance activities remained the most popular, alongside new additions including an Amazing Race series and radio workshops. The school holiday program continued to offer an engaging mix of activities.

REGIONAL

Regional groups in Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo and Shepparton continued to create opportunities for participants to socialise and enjoy their local communities. Highlights included karaoke, sporting events, piano bars and shared dinners. We look forward to continuing to grow membership and volunteer numbers across regional Victoria.

ONLINE

Club21 Online continued to connect people with Down syndrome across Victoria through music classes, social chat groups, games and active sessions. The disco, Zumba and exercise classes remained participant favourites.

We are incredibly proud of the inclusive and joyful community that continues to grow across Club21. A heartfelt thank you to our facilitators, instructors and volunteers for making the program possible.







Club21
continued

'Club21 changed the way I thought about myself.' **Club21 member**

'I am having the best day.' **Club21 member**

'OMG this is so much fun, we should definitely do this again.' **Club21 member**



CLUB21 ACROSS THE YEAR

	ACTIVITIES	ATTENDANCE	UNIQUE
MELBOURNE METRO ADULTS	439	668	70
MELBOURNE ADULTS EASTSIDE	18	115	25
MELBOURNE TEENS	32	201	29
REGIONS	46	169	25
ONLINE	343	878	52

TOTAL ATTENDANCE **3,985**

Club21 member spotlight: Kieran Phillips

What do you like about Club21?
Having fun, talking to friends and sharing gossip.

Favourite memory?
Christmas lunch in 2021. Catalina (C21 Facilitator) gave me a warm welcome, and I reconnected with old friends.

Favourite activities?
Online Tuesday chats and Friday activities. In person I like: Let's Get Musical, Eastside trip to Park Orchards market, the Cat Café visits, and Pottery painting.

Club21
Life was different before and after Club21. It has changed me personally. I went from feeling like an outsider to feeling more like an insider. I began to appreciate how people related to me and enjoyed hearing their stories. Club21 changed the way I think about having Down syndrome and, most importantly, changed the way I think about myself.

FitSkills21





FitSkills21 combines physical activity, friendship and community connection. Participants are paired with a volunteer partner for a weekly gym session, following a personalised physiotherapist-designed exercise program supported by a FitSkills21 facilitator. The program builds strength, fitness and confidence while creating opportunities for social connection and increased independence.

During a recent survey, participants described the program as healthy, fun and empowering. Many said making friends was their favourite part, with one participant saying, *'It makes you more confident and stronger in yourself'* and another speaking about the relationship with their volunteer: *'We get along very well, we are always laughing too much!'.*

This year marked another significant period of growth for FitSkills21:

- Expanded from eight to nine locations with a new group in Hawthorn.
- Increased participation from 30 to 36 adults with Down syndrome.
- Delivered 1,178 FitSkills21 sessions across all groups.
- Introduced Summer and Autumn sessions, providing additional opportunities to stay active and connected through circuit training, city walks, Zumba and dance.
- Strengthened the focus on the social meal as an opportunity to encourage healthy choices and build independence.
- Secured a VicHealth grant to provide a nutrition seminar for families and carers, with a dedicated seminar for adults with Down syndrome scheduled for July.

We thank the facilitators, volunteers, physiotherapists and community partners who support FitSkills21. Their dedication, encouragement and expertise help create a welcoming environment where participants can build confidence, improve their health and form meaningful friendships.

FitSkills21 member spotlight: Colette Boyd-Eedle

Colette joined FitSkills21 in August 2025. Since then, she has progressed from exercising in a quieter area of the gym for shorter sessions to confidently working out in the main gym space and joining the group for dinner afterwards.

Colette uses non-verbal communication and her enjoyment of FitSkills21 is evident. During a recent interaction, she was shown photos of herself and her volunteer working out. She was highly engaged as she looked through the images and used a rating system to identify exercises she enjoys, including the biceps curl, leg press, chest press and rowing machine.

Colette's mum shared, 'FitSkills21 has been absolutely fabulous for my daughter Colette, giving her purpose as she transitions from school to adult life. FitSkills21 has helped improve my daughter's quality of life.'

We also thank the following fitness centres and physiotherapists for their support and partnership in the safe delivery of FitSkills21:

- Back in Motion Eltham
- Brunswick Baths
- City Baths Spinal & Sports Medicine Centre Melbourne
- Coburg Leisure Centre
- Hawthorn Leisure Centre
- LeisureLink Waurn Ponds
- Melbourne City Baths
- Move For Life Physio Mentone
- Move Play Thrive Physiotherapy
- Peninsula Aquatic & Recreation Centre
- Reload Physio Brunswick and Coburg
- Revo Fitness Southland
- Sheena Carney
- Silverback Strength
- South Coast Physiotherapy
- WaterMarc Greensborough

Adulthood and future planning

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.

Throughout the year, Adult Support responded to a broad range of enquiries across health, ageing, the NDIS, legal matters, housing, mental health, social connection and future planning. While the overall pattern of demand remained consistent with the previous year, enquiries increasingly involved complex and interconnected issues that required specialised information, advocacy and coordinated support.

The evolving NDIS landscape continued to generate significant demand for information, advocacy and practical support. Families regularly sought assistance to navigate changing policies, funding arrangements and plan implementation, highlighting the ongoing need for clear and trusted guidance.

Health and ageing remained a strong focus, reflecting the changing needs of adults with Down syndrome as they live longer. Families sought guidance about cognitive changes, maintaining physical health and accessing mainstream services that understand and respond to individual needs. Emerging research on ageing and dementia continues to reinforce the importance of targeted, informed responses for people with Down syndrome and those who support them.

A significant highlight was having geriatrician Dr Madeleine Healy's pilot clinic available as a referral pathway for families requiring specialised assessment and support. This strengthened DSV's capacity to connect people with appropriate expertise and reflected the value of collaboration between community support, clinical practice and research.

The themes emerging from enquiries this year reinforce the importance of specialised services that understand the unique experiences of people with Down syndrome and their families. As needs become more complex, DSV remains committed to providing trusted information, advocacy and practical support across adulthood and later life.





'I want to say a big thanks for your support... supporting older people with Down syndrome requires such flexibility, knowledge and experience.'
Parent

Adult Support
continued

'Coffee and Chat sessions at DSV have guided us through issues as they cropped up and understood our needs as carers – sometimes I chatted, other times I just needed to sit and listen but still feel connected.' **Parent**







REQUESTED SUPPORT TOPICS

- HEALTH AND AGEING 24%
- LEGAL 12%
- MENTAL HEALTH 9%
- SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL 9%
- CARER ISSUES 7%
- HOUSING 7%
- NDIS 7%
- SERVICE PROVIDERS 7%
- OTHER 18%

Employment Connections

Employment Connections works alongside people with Down syndrome and employers to create meaningful employment opportunities and more inclusive workplaces across Victoria.

During FY26, the program continued to support job seekers, families and employers to build pathways into employment, while developing new opportunities tailored to individual strengths, interests and goals.

This year, five people with Down syndrome secured paid employment across industries including administration, warehousing and retail. The team also strengthened relationships with employers, supported families to explore employment pathways and introduced two new initiatives, the Employment Support Service and Life Launch, to provide additional support before and after employment.

While creating opportunities in regional Victoria remains challenging, increasing access to meaningful employment outside metropolitan Melbourne remains a key focus for the year ahead.

Employment is about more than a job. It provides independence, confidence, purpose and a sense of belonging. Employment Connections remains committed to working alongside people with Down syndrome, families and employers to create workplaces where everyone can contribute and thrive.

We are grateful to Down Syndrome Australia and its funding partners for their continued support of this important work.

EMPLOYERS CONTACTED	78
MEETINGS WITH PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME REGARDING EMPLOYMENT	35
MEETINGS WITH POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS	12
FAMILY MEMBERS/CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME SUPPORTED	51
NEW ROLES SECURED	5
TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH DOWN SYNDROME EMPLOYED THROUGHOUT THE LIFE OF THE EMPLOYMENT CONNECTIONS PROGRAM	25



Employee spotlight: Patrick

When Patrick Hammond started his first paid role with the Royal Flying Doctor Service in November 2025, he quickly became a valued member of the team. Patrick works alongside colleagues to support daily office operations while building his confidence, independence and workplace skills.

'I wanted to get a job so I could work and get money so I can be independent. I am saving my money to go on holiday to the Gold Coast and theme parks.'

Patrick's employer highlighted the value of support provided through Employment Connections, while Patrick's family described the placement as a positive and successful transition into employment.

Patrick's story demonstrates what is possible when opportunity, support and an inclusive employer come together.

You can read the full story on our website.

'I found the process of hiring a person through Down Syndrome Victoria to be great! Bree's support and knowledge was excellent. The awareness training was invaluable and Bree's support on-site with Pat during the first few weeks was really helpful.'
Sally White, RFDS

Building Knowledge Project: improving inclusive healthcare

The Building Knowledge Project concluded in June 2026 after four years of work to make mainstream healthcare more informed, inclusive and responsive for people with Down syndrome and intellectual disability.

At the heart of the project was a commitment to lived experience leadership. People with Down syndrome helped shape resources, delivered training and shared their knowledge directly with health professionals. This strengthened understanding, challenged assumptions and demonstrated the value of including people with disability in the design and delivery of healthcare education.

The project's strongest legacy is the practical change it leaves behind, including stronger partnerships, more confident health professionals and services that are better equipped to listen and respond.

LASTING OUTCOMES

Several initiatives established through the project will continue beyond the grant. The Royal Children's Hospital T21 Specialist Clinic provides families with access to coordinated specialist care, while Health and Education Ambassadors continue to bring lived experience into disability awareness training across Victorian health services. The University of Melbourne Genetic Counselling Internship Program is also helping emerging practitioners build a more informed and respectful understanding of Down syndrome.

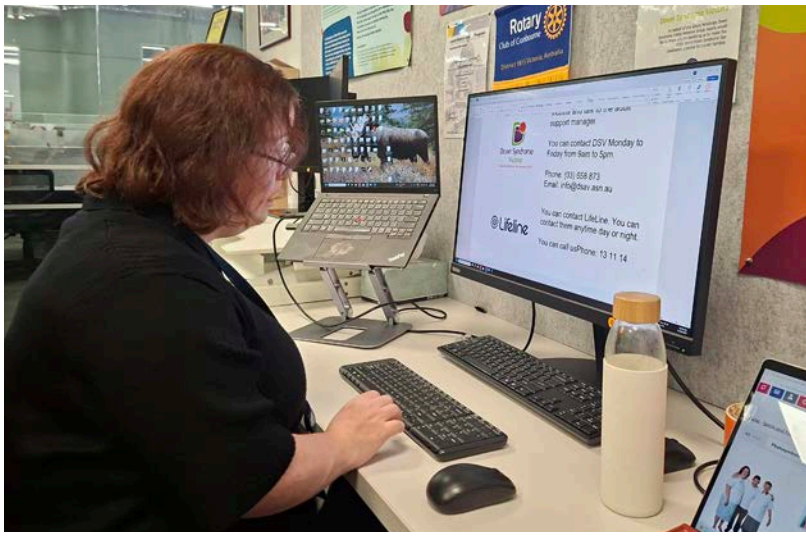
Partnerships with Monash Health Memory Clinic, Dementia Australia and clinical leaders have strengthened pathways for ageing adults with Down syndrome. Together, these initiatives provide a foundation for continued collaboration between people with Down syndrome, families, community organisations and health services.

DEMENTIA EDUCATION AND RESOURCES

Ageing and dementia became an important focus as the project evolved. DSV brought together clinical expertise, lived experience and practical guidance to help health professionals, families and supporters recognise changing needs and respond with greater confidence.

Workshops for health professionals, families and supporters created space for practical learning and discussion, supported by new resources including Ageing Well Starts Young and *Pathways to Care: Down Syndrome and Dementia*. These resources will remain available to support earlier conversations, clearer care pathways and better planning across later life.

You can find these new resources on our website.





DSV thanks Dementia Australia, Dr Madeleine Healy, Bernie Zeven, our project partners, and the many people with Down syndrome and family members whose contributions helped make this project such a success.

Although the project has now concluded, the need for continued work in this area remains clear. We sincerely thank the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing for its financial support and the opportunity to deliver this important initiative.

Building Knowledge Project: improving inclusive healthcare
continued



2025–26 KEY RESULTS FROM THE FINAL REPORTING PERIOD:

- **Support provided to 37 families through the T21 Clinic**
- **56 consultation sessions for health professionals**
- **42 training sessions reaching 569 participants**
- **One dementia webinar**
- **Three training packages and two new resources.**

PROJECT-WIDE ACHIEVEMENTS, 2022–2026
CUMULATIVE RESULTS ACROSS THE FULL LIFE OF THE PROJECT:

- **Delivered 161 workshops to 1,787 health professionals**
- **Delivered 73 workshops for people with Down syndrome**
- **Supported 163 health professionals through consultations**
- **Developed 20 training packages, six videos and five resources**
- **Ensured 98% of resources and training were co-designed with people with Down syndrome, families and health professionals**
- **Had 82% of training delivered by people with Down syndrome**
- **Achieved consistently outstanding evaluation results, averaging 4.8/5, while demonstrating measurable improvements in attitudes towards people with intellectual disability.**

Strengthening our community and organisation

Beyond our direct programs and services, DSV continued to build connection, increase awareness and generate vital support for our work through a variety of events, fundraising activities, communications campaigns and information sharing.

Events and fundraising

DSV events celebrate our community and create opportunities for connection, inclusion, awareness and advocacy. Thank you to everyone who attended, donated or volunteered throughout the year, and to our valued partners whose support helps make these events possible.

STEPUP! FOR DOWN SYNDROME

Down Syndrome Awareness Month was celebrated during October, highlighted by a record number of walkers. It was a sensational day with over 750 people attending, and through your support and generosity, we are thrilled to have raised over $50,000. We thank everyone for helping raise awareness about the rights and inclusion of people with Down syndrome. We acknowledge the significant contribution and support of Carer Gateway – Holstep Health.

LARAPINTA CHALLENGE, NORTHERN TERRITORY

In August our trek team took on the iconic Larapinta Trail, raising almost $45,000 to support DSV's work. Early starts, incredible scenery and strong camaraderie made for an unforgettable experience. We thank Andrew Bryson, Bree Ridgeway, Brendon Gray, Caitlin O'Neil, Loren Pettigrew, Rose Burnfield and DSV Charity Representative Debby Fraumano for their commitment, generosity and determination.

We also thank Inspired Adventures for once again ensuring a safe and memorable experience.





'StepUP! was brilliant – this was our first experience and we'll be there every year! My mum had tears in her eyes and we all felt overwhelmed about how amazing this community is.' **Parent**

Events and fundraising
continued





WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

It was wonderful to be back at Parliament House Victoria to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD). In response to the 2026 theme 'Together against loneliness', we reflected on the importance for people with Down syndrome to be part of a village: to feel connected, to feel a sense of belonging and to feel included. These are the things that help reduce social isolation and help people thrive.

The event was supported by the Minister for Disability Lizzie Blandthorn, Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Iwan Walters MP, members of parliament, and our community, partners and supporters. We were proud to have our staff showcase DSV's FitSkills21 and Club21 programs that illustrate what is possible when intentional spaces are created for connection, while also reminding us of the importance of continuing to build a society where belonging is part of everyday life. We acknowledge our guest speakers Meri, Monica and Eliza for sharing their stories. We were privileged to witness firsthand the friendship and connection they embody through their involvement in the Club21 Teens program.

WDSD was followed days later by our Family Fun Day gathering at Werribee Zoo alongside 500 members of the DSV community. The introduction of dedicated Connection Sessions at this year's event was a highlight. There's nothing better than seeing our families connecting with each other!

DSV acknowledges the support of Werribee Open Range Zoo, the regional families who joined us from Albury, Wodonga and surrounding areas with the support of Aspire Support Services, and our dedicated volunteers.

FIONA MCBURNEY MATCH DAY EXPERIENCE

The Fiona McBurney Match Day Experience continued to thrive this year, with 20 participants involved across almost every AFL round.

Each experience offers a unique behind-the-scenes opportunity supporting the AFL umpires and their trainers, checking match balls, joining warm-ups and ground inspections, and taking part in the coin toss. A standout highlight has been AFL teams and mascots taking the time to meet participants, helping to make each match day even more memorable.

We would like to thank the McBurney family, the AFL Umpires Association and the AFL for their continued support in making lifelong memories possible.

'The highlight of WDSD was getting to hear from the people that mattered the most.'
DSV partner

'I feel less alone when there's people around me who support me and love me and it's making my life better.'
Person with Down syndrome

Communications and information

At DSV, communication is woven through every area of the organisation's work, playing a vital role in connecting, informing and strengthening our community. Throughout FY26, we continued to build DSV's profile, share authentic stories and ensure people with Down syndrome and families remained informed, engaged and connected to opportunities, services and each other. Our communications work also supported DSV's growing fundraising, events, advocacy, training, projects, member engagement and partnership activities across the organisation.

Across our website, DNews and social media channels, we continued to share information, resources, opportunities and community stories that informed, connected and engaged our audiences. DNews remained an important source of organisational updates, advocacy news, events and community information, while Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn enabled us to reach and engage diverse audiences across Victoria.

A significant focus this year was supporting communications for DSV's most ambitious project to date, the launch of The DailyGood social enterprise café and hub at the Royal Children's Hospital precinct. Communications activities included developing the project identity, creating website and campaign content, producing partnership and fundraising materials, and helping communicate the vision and impact of the initiative to supporters, stakeholders and the wider community. Through this work, we have helped build awareness of a project that will create meaningful employment opportunities for people with Down syndrome while generating new income streams for DSV.

With support from a Public Record Office Victoria Local History Grant, DSV also progressed an important project to preserve its history. Working with professional archivist Dr Mike Jones, records dating back to DSV's beginnings were assessed, catalogued and rehoused using archival-quality materials. The project has established a sustainable system for managing the collection, helping safeguard decades of advocacy, community stories and organisational history, and creating a valuable foundation as DSV prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2028.

Across all communications activities, our focus remained on ensuring people with Down syndrome are represented authentically and respectfully, while amplifying individual voices and celebrating contributions.

Thank you to our staff, members, volunteers, supporters and community contributors who shared their stories, photographs and experiences throughout the year. Their generosity and willingness to participate continue to make DSV's communications meaningful, impactful and community-led.



GROWTH ACROSS DIGITAL CHANNELS

- Instagram interactions increased by **294%** reflecting stronger engagement with community stories and program content
- LinkedIn followers increased by **22%** helping expand DSV's reach among partners and stakeholders
- Facebook private groups grew by **7%** creating more opportunities for peer connection and support
- Across Facebook, DSV generated more than **10,800 engagements** through community-focussed content and updates
- Our monthly newsletter, DNews, engaged an active audience of more than **2,700 subscribers.**

Connect with us on Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn

Volunteers, students, partners and supporters

None of this work happens in isolation. DSV's volunteers, students, partners and supporters continue to extend our reach and strengthen the experiences we can offer.

VOLUNTEERS

From behind-the-scenes planning to centre-stage moments, our volunteers are at the heart of the resounding success of our programs and events. Our volunteer community has grown from 104 to over 120 dedicated individuals. Their generosity, enthusiasm, and commitment continue to shape meaningful experiences for our participants. We sincerely thank every volunteer for the time they contribute and the positivity they bring to the DSV community!

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

This year we hosted our inaugural Volunteer Awards as part of StepUP! for Down syndrome, recognising two exceptional volunteers whose dedication has made a significant impact on the lives of participants: David Van Dieren from FitSkills21 and Ronnie Lepore from Club21.

We also acknowledge and thank the seven volunteer members of the DSV Board: Brendan Edwards, Felicia Koh, Wendy McNabb, Jenna Weeks, Loren Pettigrew, Pieta Manning and Talia Boltin. Their leadership, commitment and generosity continue to guide and strengthen our organisation.

SOCIAL AND FITNESS PROGRAMS

Club21 volunteers have collectively volunteered over 600 hours in the past year. We now have at least 70 volunteers actively engaged in our programs and we are expanding in areas such as Shepparton and Bendigo. Our weekly FitSkills21 sessions have seen our dedicated volunteers contribute approximately 3,500 hours in the last year, a monumental effort!

SKILLED VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENT PLACEMENTS

DSV welcomed two Genetic Counselling students from Melbourne University to contribute across a range of activities, including program delivery and operational support. Their involvement brought fresh perspectives and valuable support to our work.

We also partnered with Monash University, offering placements to Occupational Therapy students, and became a community partner for their Volunteering in Practice elective unit. DSV has been fortunate to host over a dozen students due to this initiative.







'I love seeing the joy on the faces of the Club21 participants when they create something or when they're having fun with friends. At FitSkills21, it's seeing the progress that my partner has made and how they continue to persist and challenge themselves. I've loved seeing their confidence grow from day one.' **Volunteer**

Financial snapshot

DSV recorded an income of $3.07 million in FY26, while continuing to invest $3.14 million in programs, services and organisational capacity. The modest operating deficit reflects our commitment to maintaining valued community supports during a period of significant disability sector and funding uncertainty, while investing in DSV's future through our relocation to the Royal Children's Hospital precinct, the establishment of DailyGood Cafe and our new central office.

	INCOME	EXPENSES
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
2026	$3,070,052	$3,138,201

Complete Financial Statements are available on our website or upon request.

Donors, sponsors and 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. We were inspired by the commitment of individuals and groups who launched their own fundraising efforts ranging from Kick for Charity to our keen trekkers who challenged themselves with the Larapinta Trail. We are grateful to all who contributed to DSV including many generous donors who have chosen to remain anonymous. Each supporter is part of our incredible community, and we extend our deepest gratitude to you all.

Individuals

5,000+
Roslyn Allen
June Hunter
Carmine Santomartino
Bernard Sweeney
Weeks family

1,000+
Edward Allen
Dennis Banfield
Sunny Bhasin
Joel Deane
Julian Guebala
Bill Hearn
Suellen Mansour
Tania Moss
Barbara Newstead
Minh Duc Nguyen
Tina Orr
David Seton
Gary Stewart
Chris West

500+
Lorraine Aitken
David Aussems
Leon Howlett
Xuan (Kim) Huynh
Ann Kinnear
Jacqueline Regos
Wendy Rowsell
Jonathan Tay

In memoriam
Zoe Grace Banfield
Narelle Compton
Sue Dodds
Michael Nicoll
Rhys Vella

Organisational donors and sponsors

1,000+
Williamstown Superules Football Club
Dulce Gelateria
Rotary Club of Fitzroy
Rotary Club of Koo Wee Rup Lang Lang Inc
Trenerry Plastering Pty. Ltd.

500+
Good2Give
Stockdale Road Primary School
Voltek Electrics

Trusts and foundations

Bank of Melbourne Foundation
The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust
The Flora and Frank Leith Charitable Trust
Flack Trust
Australia Post Community Grant
MRC Foundation

Other funding partners

Parenting Research Centre
Down Syndrome Australia
Carers Victoria
William Angliss
Carer Gateway - Holstep Health

Government funding

State
Department of Education
Department of Health
VicHealth

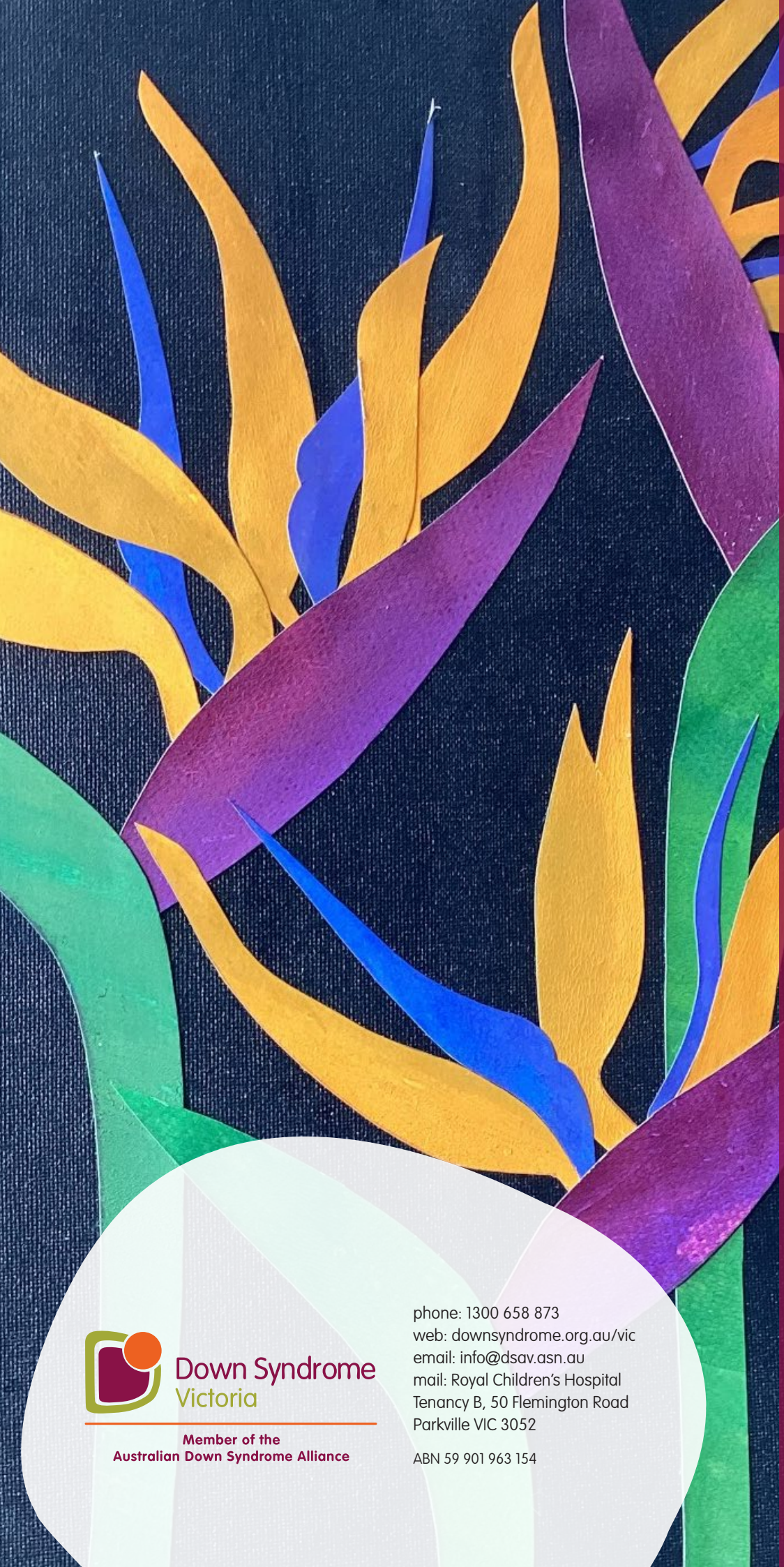
Federal
Department of Social Services
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
National Disability Insurance Agency
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Major fundraisers

Oak Living Race Day **$24,663**
StepUP! **$53,749**
Kick for Charity - Matt Walsh **$28,000**
Larapinta Challenge **$44,626**
Riders on the River - John Doherty and Peter Brennan **$8,505**

We would also like to thank our regular donors for their ongoing generosity, including those who support DSV through workplace giving and the Ritchies Supermarket Community Benefit Program.

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.



Down Syndrome Victoria

Member of the
Australian Down Syndrome Alliance

phone: 1300 658 873
web: downsyndrome.org.au/vic
email: info@dsav.asn.au
mail: Royal Children's Hospital
Tenancy B, 50 Flemington Road
Parkville VIC 3052

ABN 59 901 963 154

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)