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Dear Members,

On behalf of the DSWA Board, our Staff, Volunteers and myself, we wish all members, supporters and friends of DSWA a beautiful, safe and joyous festive season.

This year has seen enormous support, participation and growth of DSWA. Of course with all growth there are challenges, and I commend our board and team for their resilience.

Thank you to my amazing team for delivering three playgroups, KiDS club, FrienDS for Life, Aim High, Life Skills Lab, Employment, Communications, IT, Admin support and our critical Family support.

We look forward to starting 2026 and celebrating the 40th Anniversary year of DSWA. This incredible membership has built this organisation over 40 years bringing to life the support and family connection we are lucky enough to share now.

Warm regards

Cassandra

Cassandra Hughes

ceo@downsyndromewa.org.au

What's On

Office Closure

The Down Syndrome WA office is closed over the festive period from 4pm on Tuesday 23 December and will reopen at 8.30 am Monday 5 January.

From all of us here at DSWA, we wish you a positive and joyous festive season and a fantastic 2026.

For support over this period please contact one of the helpline specialists which operate 24/7:

Lifeline: 13 11 44

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

Further helplines can be found at <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-helplines>.

If your request is urgent, please reach out to our CEO, Cassandra Hughes, at 0432 407 527 for assistance.



Important Dates 2026



Educators Professional Learning
Friday 20 February



World Down Syndrome Day
Saturday 21 March



DSWA Gala Dinner
Saturday 6 June



Step Up and Dance for DSWA
Sunday 11 October



Christmas Party
Saturday 5 December

Christmas Lights for DSWA

The Strang family are lighting up for Christmas and raising funds for Down Syndrome WA!

You can help by visiting their amazing Christmas lights show at 23 Jindinga Way Wanneroo 6065.

And make a donation when you visit or donate at <https://lights.mycause.com.au/>



() Christmas Party ()

The festive season has well and truly arrived at DSWA, and what an amazing turnout we had! It was heart-warming to see so many families coming together to celebrate and enjoy the day.

Santa was without a doubt the star of the show! The excitement was contagious — from the children to the adults... and maybe even the staff, who were just as thrilled to see him!

A huge thank you goes to our incredible volunteers and dedicated staff who worked behind the scenes to make the day run so smoothly. Your time, energy, and festive spirit made all the difference, and we truly couldn't have done it without you. From all of us at DSWA — THANK YOU for helping create such a joyful and memorable celebration!

See all the Christmas photos on our public Facebook page
at <https://www.facebook.com/DownSyndromeWA>



Merry Christmas From DSWA!



Get Involved

Educator Learning Day

Join Down Syndrome WA for a full-day professional learning workshop:
Educating Students with Down Syndrome

- 📅 Friday 20 February 2026
- ⌚ 9:00am – 4:30pm
- 📍 Perron Place, Victoria Park
- 💻 Attend in-person (\$375) or online (\$330)

This engaging workshop is designed for Educators, Education Assistants and Administrators who want to strengthen their knowledge and practical skills to support students with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities.

Topics include:

- Developing pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills
- Implementing practical supports and classroom adjustments
- Strategies to promote inclusion and success
- Using Functional Behaviour Analysis in the classroom

Learn directly from DSWA staff and specialist presenters with extensive experience in inclusive education.

Register at: <https://www.trybooking.com/DHPNR>

Educating Students with Down Syndrome

Professional Learning

Join us for a full-day workshop with presentations from DSWA staff and specialist presenters.

Educators, Education Assistants, and Administrators will gain valuable tools and strategies to better support students with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities in the classroom.



DATE Friday 20th February

TIME 9:00am - 4:30pm

VENUE Perron Place
61 Kitchener Avenue,
Victoria Park

RSVP <https://www.trybooking.com/DHPNR>



Family Support



This year has been a very busy one at PCH, with some new babies in the NICU to visits on the wards, as well as catchups while waiting for appointments or playing at Ronald McDonald House.

Nikki and Paula have both really enjoyed popping in to say a quick hello and being able to bring you a coffee or a snack — moments made possible thanks to the generous support of Telethon.

They would like to say a huge thank you to all the parents and families for allowing us to be a part of your journey. It is truly a privilege to walk alongside you, and we can't wait to see you at some of our events next year.

Weekly Visits Returning

Nikki and Paula will be returning to their weekly visits from 15 January. If you have any concerns or need to reach out during this time, please email: familysupport@downsyndromewa.org.au and we will respond upon our return.

We wish you all a safe, healthy, and happy festive season and look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Regional Outreach

Proudly supported by
~~telethon~~

Our Great Southern members had a Christmas meetup on the 7th December. Nineteen people caught up for a lovely, casual afternoon tea at Jean and her family's house.

A huge thank you to our regional representatives Jean, Wendy and Jenny who organised such a great event at short notice.

And a huge thank you to all our volunteer regional representatives who support our members in regional areas every day of the year.



Open Employment Program



Ready for Work Program

In early January 2026, our DSWA employment coordinator, Lara, will run a 5-week Ready for Work program.

This program helps our members learn the skills and knowledge they need to start working. It is great for

- School leavers who want to start work in 2026
- Members who are not sure how to begin looking for a job

The Ready for Work program covers many topics, including:

- Writing a resume
- Making a video resume
- Writing a cover letter
- How to dress for different jobs
- How to behave at work
- Exploring different types of jobs and industries
- Self-management and building confidence

If you or someone you care for would like to start their work journey, please register at <https://www.trybooking.com/DIGP1>.

If the January dates do not work for you, the Ready for Work program will also run again at the end of February.

If you have any questions, please contact our employment coordinator, Lara, at employment@downsyndromewa.org.au

Ready For Work 2026!

DSWA will be holding a ready for work course over a 5 week period to help prepare to join the workforce.

The course will begin on the 20th of January through till the 17th of February.

9am till 12pm



Down Syndrome
Western Australia



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

A big Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from our employment coordinator, Lara!

I hope all our members and your loved ones have a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

I am very excited to see what 2026 will bring for all our members, especially those in the employment program.

Our employment program had great success in 2025, and we are looking forward to even more great things in 2026!

Life Skills Lab



The Life Skills Lab

This year we started our new project called The Life Skills Lab.

From June to September, 47 people joined or helped at our events.

From September to December, 53 people joined.

It is great to see more people coming each time. We think this shows that our activities are fun and useful.

We worked with other groups, like TransPerth, DFES, the Office of the Public Advocate, ScamNet WA and Valued Lives, to give lots of helpful information to everyone.

We had many people join the Office of the Public Advocate and Valued Lives for the Housing and Living workshop.

Thank you to both groups for helping us talk about these tricky topics.

If you missed these sessions, we will run them again next year.

An online version of the Office of the Public Advocate event will be on 28 January. Booking link: <https://www.trybooking.com/DFZWG>.

The Housing and Living workshop workshop will come back in May 2026.

This year we have learned a lot about:

- How to run our sessions well
- What skills people need more help with
- What people want to learn

We could not have done this without the DSWAAN . Thank you to everyone in the group for helping since June.

DSWAAN

We are looking for new DSWAAN members.

You can help plan sessions and other activities. If you want to join read more here <251127-Attachment-DSWA-AN-Governance-Document-Easy-Read-Version.pdf>



Aim High

2026 is going to be a great year for Aim High.

We have activities every month.

Events will be held in North and South Perth, so everyone gets a chance to come along.

There are lots of different activities to enjoy.

These include relaxed pub meals, sip-and-paint sessions, music workshops, and photography activities.

Our full calendar is now available.

You can start choosing which activities you would like to join.

Aim High is about meeting new people, making friends, and building confidence.

DSWA staff and friendly community volunteers will be there to support you.

Our first event is a pub meal at Ciccerello's in Fremantle on the 24 January.

Book at <https://www.trybooking.com/DIHPU>

If you have questions contact Kern on 08 6182 3690 or
adultsupport@downsyndromewa.org.au

AIM HIGH 2026 EVENT CALENDAR

JAN

Saturday 24th January 6 pm
Pub Meal
Cicerellos - Fremantle

JUL

Saturday 18th July
Christmas in July and Disco
South Perth

FEB

Friday 20th February
Bingo
North Perth

AUG

Sunday 23rd August
Pub Meal
North Perth

MAR

Friday 20th March
Sip and Paint
South Perth

SEP

Friday 18th September
Video making ready for world
Down Syndrome month in Oct
South Perth

APR

Sunday 19th April
Kings Park walk and photos
North Perth

OCT

Saturday 24th October
Rock climbing
North Perth

MAY

Friday 22nd May
Mini golf
South Perth

NOV

Sunday 22nd November
Pub Meal
South Perth

JUN

Friday 19th June
Music making workshop
North Perth

DEC

Saturday 5th December
Christmas party



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Living My Best Life

Living My Best Life will be the main event in early 2026. Join us for five weeks of:

- Cooking
- Money management
- Games
- Socialising and more

The sessions are at the Belmont Hub.

Only 12 people can join, and spots are going fast.

The cost is \$10 per session.

This includes cooking ingredients (lunch) and snacks. Just bring yourself and your excitement to learn!

Sign up for the Living My Best Life program at <https://www.trybooking.com/DHQZC>



Current Research Projects



Research survey for adults with Down syndrome

Kirsty Haywood is a PhD student at the University of Western Australia.

She is doing a research project.

Kirsty wants to learn how to help people use health services better.

This includes things like talking with a doctor or pharmacist about your medicines.

The first part of her project is a short online survey.

The survey asks who helps people with Down syndrome manage their medicines and health care.

You can ask someone you trust to help you with this survey.

You can do the survey here:

<https://redcap.link/medicationsupportsurvey>

Playgroups

Playgroup East

Supported by



We had a lovely, relaxed morning at Playgroup East for our December session with some water play, fishing fun and a Christmassy vibe too. The flute made an appearance with some festive tunes and, as always, we enjoyed taking the time to chat and connect.

Stay tuned for exciting new developments for Playgroup East in 2026!

Anita
familysupport@downsyndromewa.org.au



Playgroup South

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What a fabulous way to end the year with a lovely Christmas party 🎅️ 🎄 As we reflect on the year that was, we have crafted, painted, coloured and created, played with water, explored sensory play, and celebrated births, birthdays, milestones, Valentine's Day, World Down Syndrome Day, Easter, Halloween and all the special moments and holidays in between.

We have absolutely loved welcoming both new and regular families throughout the year and have enjoyed every minute spent together ❤️

Playgroup South wishes everyone a safe, happy and magical Christmas and New Year 🎄 🎅️ 😊 We look forward to seeing familiar faces and meeting new ones in the year ahead.

Playgroup runs every Monday during the school term – we can't wait to do it all again next year xx 🎅️

Renee and Nicole
familysupport@downsyndromewa.org.au



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Playgroup North

We've had a Delightful December at Playgroup North!!

We kicked things off with an amazing Christmas Dance Party and our friends from Ambiance Dance brought loads of Christmas cheer, our kiddos made their own Christmas ornaments and some really cute Christmas cards, plus we gave our Kindy friends a beautiful playgroup graduation send off.

Playgroup North kicks off the first Friday of Term 1 2026 from 9.30-11.30am.

Please contact familysupport@downsyndromewa.org.au for more information.

We hope all our playgroup families have a wonderful Christmas break and the most fantastic New Year, stay safe on the roads and enjoy every minute with the people you treasure the most.

Karina and Anita



Kids Club

Supported by



Story Making Workshop

Our first event for 2026 is a Story Making Workshops aimed at primary and high school aged kids and teens. It is presented by DADAA.

Book at <https://www.trybooking.com/DIHAJ>

Kids Club 2025

As we wrap up another year of Kids Club, we want to take a moment to celebrate and reflect on 2025.

Throughout the year, our group enjoyed a variety of activities, from music and dance, to sport and science, creating opportunities for children of all abilities to participate, grow, and feel included.

It has been great to try new events, see new faces, and see friendships and confidence grow. The energy, joy, and encouragement shared at each event was wonderful to see.

As we wrap up the year, we'd love to hear your feedback. We are in the process of planning the 2026 Kids Club calendar. We look forward to hearing from you!

[Kids Club 2026 calendar event interests – Fill in form](#)

Siobhan

kidsclub@downsyndromewa.org.au



Join us for our first event in 2026. It is a Story Making Workshop aimed at primary and high school aged kids and teens and presented by DADAA.

Book at <https://www.trybooking.com/DIHAJ>

Story Making Workshop (Youth)

DSWA and DADAA invites you to join an youth workshop to record your own story. Using microphones, film or photographs. By drawing pictures, or writing something down. You can tell a little, or a big story, or even make your very own book.



DATE Thursday 29th January

TIME 9am till 12pm

VENUE Forster Park Community Centre

\$10 per person with morning tea provided



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Aim High

There are 2 Aim High events in January 2026!

A Story Making Workshop with DADAA.

Book at <https://www.trybooking.com/DIHAJ>

Story Making Workshop (Adult)

DSWA and DADAA invites you to join an adult workshop to record your own story. Using microphones, film or photographs. By drawing pictures, or writing something down. You can tell a little, or a big story, or even make your very own book.



DATE Thursday 22nd January

TIME 9am till 12pm

VENUE Forster Park Community Centre

\$10 per person with morning tea provided



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And a pub meal at Ciccerello's in Fremantle on the 24 January.

Book at <https://www.trybooking.com/DIHPU>

Aim High members!

Don't forget about our 18+ members pub meal! grab your tickets now



DATE 24th January

TIME 6pm - 8pm

VENUE Cicerellos Fremantle
44 Mews Rd,
Fremantle WA 6160
\$15 per person

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Stay Connected

DSA Health Webinars



Recordings from Down Syndrome Australia's latest sessions on Down Syndrome Regression Disorder (DSRD) and Sleep Apnoea are now available to watch online.

Both webinars share clear, practical information and talk through support options for families, carers and professionals.

Down Syndrome Regression Disorder (DSRD)

Webinar with Dr Cathy Franklin

Watch the webinar: <https://buff.ly/I042gl0>

Sleep Apnoea and Down syndrome

Webinar with Associate Professor Jasneek Chawla

Watch the webinar: <https://buff.ly/b0TKd61>



Watch our recent health webinars

 Down Syndrome Australia

Health Matters Art Competition

The 2025 Online Art Competition Health Matters! is now open!

This competition is part of a project looking at National Health Research Priorities, led by people with lived experience.

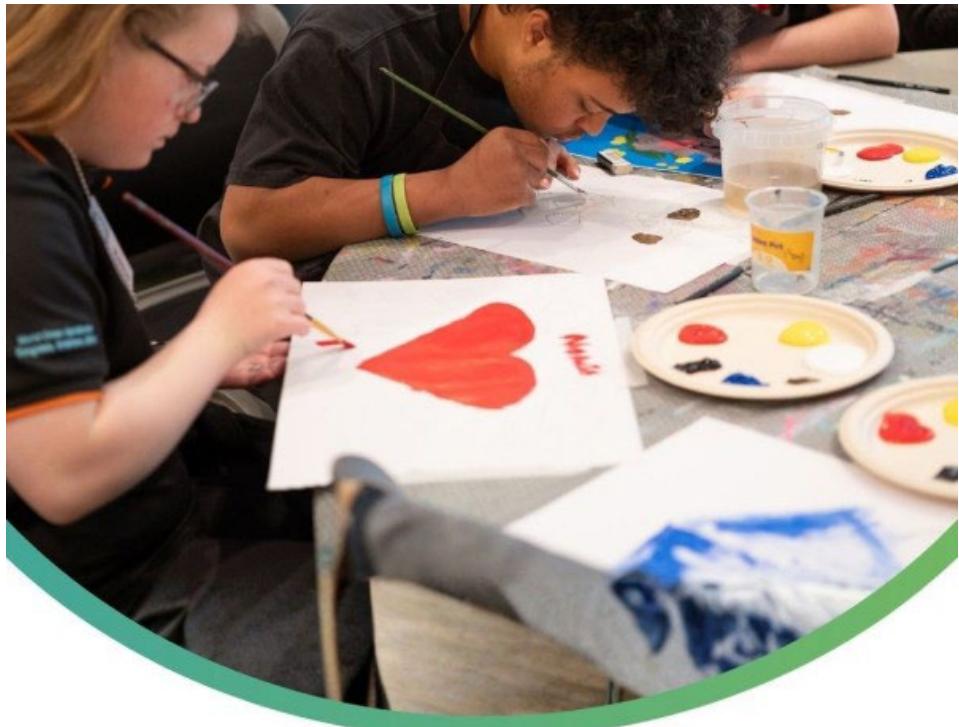
The competition is free and open to non-professional artists who:

- are aged 18 years or older
- live in Australia
- identify as having an intellectual disability

Learn more and enter:

<https://buff.ly/UquLuGs>

The competition is run by the Centre for Disability Studies and the National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health.



Call for entries: Health Matters! art competition



Disability Safeguards

The Australian Government is working to make disability safeguards better and stronger.

They want to hear from people with disability, families and carers.

You can have your say in a way that works for you. This could be a short written submission, a video or an online survey.

Submissions close 22 December.

Learn more: <https://buff.ly/ucdejUd>



Have your say on disability safeguards



Compliments and Complaints

We always welcome your feedback and suggestions. Send your feedback to admin@downsyndromewa.org.au or use our [online form](#).

Thanks for reading!

