

# Year in Review 2019-20

*"In Australia, I am able to access the NDIS. I have better access to communication than I did in India"*

Leander



*"We made contact with Expression Australia because we wanted to pick up Auslan lessons again"*

Luca's mother

Image courtesy of RCH Creative Studio

*"I've always wanted to do something for the Deaf community"*

Karen



*We focus heavily on community activities because the community and clients need to feel connected and have access to information in Auslan.*

For Auslan interviews, see our website under **"About us"**.



# President's Message

**We continue to lead the way through innovation and connections.**

This year we commenced work on our new Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 – this will be a vital document to guide us into the new decade. We also completed our work on both *DeafNav* and the first version of *Auslan Anywhere*, and both are exceptional innovations.

Our partnerships were strengthened with the government and our engagement with the community was increased, which you may have noticed in recent months through increased visibility of Auslan interpreters for critical government announcements and our daily Auslan updates.

As you all will know, it has been quite a year with the January bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic. This means the delivery of information in our language, Auslan, is paramount. On behalf of Expression Australia, we applaud the government and other agencies for ensuring that critical information has been delivered in Auslan as well.

Through my experience of being evacuated from Mallacoota with my family during the bushfires, I'm very aware of how being provided with information in Auslan allowed us to make 'real-time' decisions. This included our decision to evacuate Mallacoota a few hours before the bushfire hit the town.

Our priorities are access to information in Auslan, Deaf Leadership and the creation of a Deaf Centre. These will be key priorities in our Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 and we look forward to sharing that journey with you all.

Last but not least, a BIG thank you to the Expression Australia Team for all of your hard work and diligence in ensuring that Deaf and hard of hearing people have access to all available resources.

**Gavin Balharrie**  
President



# Chair's Report

**We have had another very satisfactory year as we continue to transition into the NDIS environment.**

This year, our Board has had the honour of serving Expression Australia and seeing our services grow in line with our Strategic Plan and vision of access, inclusion and equal opportunity for our community. 2020 has been a difficult year like no other, with the bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic. Our organisation has seen many challenges in its 134-year history, and we will get through this as well.

We are proud of the vital role Expression Australia has played in delivering information and support to the Victorian and Tasmanian communities during this time. We are also proud of the way our staff quickly transitioned to remote working and innovated to provide best possible services in a disrupted environment. Our thanks and congratulations to our staff, Senior Management Team, and Interim CEO Andrew Lyall, for their outstanding responsiveness, resilience and determination whilst managing their own lives, families and challenges during COVID-19.

Whilst COVID-19 has dominated much of the year, I am pleased that other strategic initiatives have been progressed, which will help to position Expression Australia for the future. This includes the development of our next Strategic Plan. We also developed our Theory of Change and are pleased to present it in this report. It articulates the

direct links between our activities, goals and the impacts we aim to achieve.

This year, we were delighted to welcome Melissa Hale onto the Board. Garry Fowler and Peter Berg retired with our gratitude for their tireless and expert service. And we sadly farewelled our CEO, Christine Mathieson, with our deepest thanks for her remarkable legacy.

Our thanks go also to our wonderful partners – especially the National Disability Insurance Agency, Deaf Victoria, ASLIA, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria Police, Department of Health and Human Services, Emergency Management Victoria, Telstra, the ABC, the Tasmanian and Victorian Governments, Melbourne Polytechnic and our fellow Deaf organisations for their ongoing support and collaboration.

I am immensely grateful to my fellow Directors for their steady guidance, unflinching insight and strong leadership over this unprecedented 12 months. We look forward to continuing to work together to meet our communities' needs in the coming year.

**Catherine Santo**  
Chair



# Interim CEO's Report

**Our achievements reflect our ongoing commitment to access, equality and inclusion.**

The NDIS is now fully rolled out and we continue to expand service delivery across Victoria and Tasmania. We also continue to learn about the NDIS and to advocate for improvements within plans for our clients, and outside of the NDIS, within systems throughout society.

We started work on an Information, Linkages, Capacity Building (ILC) grant that aims to improve access to health providers for Deaf and hard of hearing people in regional Victoria and Tasmania. This three-year project, has the potential to change how Deaf people access health care, focusing on emergency department, planning and giving birth and inpatient stays in hospital.

And of course, we experienced the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a terrible event in the lives of all Australians, but it has been particularly challenging for Deaf and hard of

hearing people, especially in terms of communication and access to information. In response we commenced our daily Auslan updates and our partnership with ABC News to provide Auslan interpreted news every Sunday. The vast majority of this was funded by Expression Australia.

I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their leadership throughout the financial year and especially Christine Mathieson, who vacated the role of CEO in May. Christine's contributions to Expression Australia has been transformational. I would also like to thank the staff of Expression Australia and the management team, all who have done exceptional work throughout the year.

**Andrew Lyall**  
Interim CEO

# Our Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change outlines the work that we do, how we do it and the impact that we have. It forms a visual representation of our purpose: why we provide specific services and programs, in working with clients and community to achieve specific outcomes.

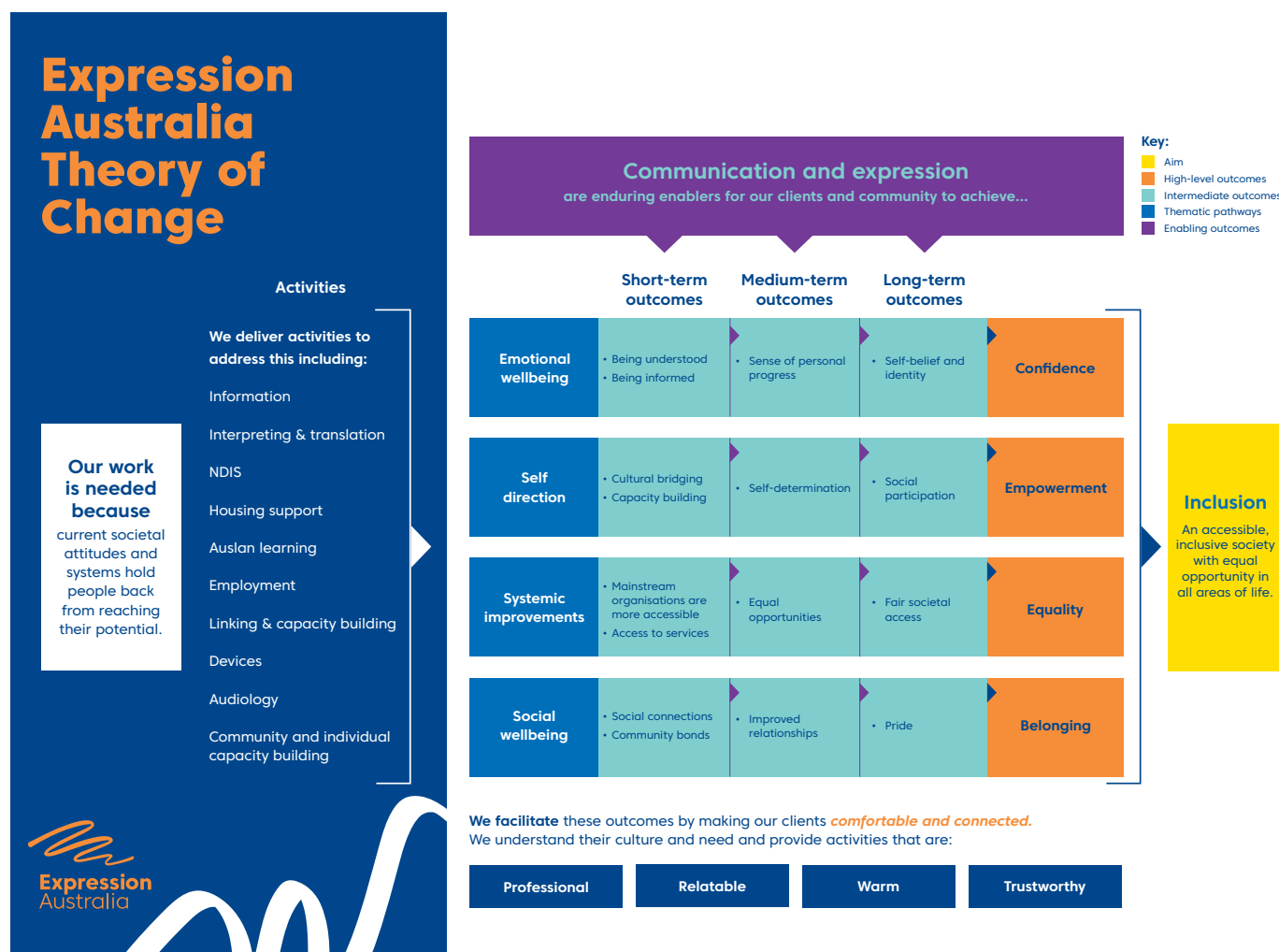
Our Theory of Change informs our planning and helps us to map our work and the process we undertake to achieve these impacts, as well as how these fit into the vision and mission of the organisation.

Our vision is for access, inclusion and equal opportunity, and our work is needed because societal attitudes and systems hold people back from reaching their potential.

The work that we do creates the outcomes of equality, belonging, empowerment and confidence within our clients and community.

Our impacts sit within four key areas in which we work to achieve these outcomes, namely:

- **Systemic improvements** - improving access to health care, education and mainstream services
- **Social wellbeing** - connecting people with community and creating strong relationships
- **Emotional wellbeing** - improving management of feelings, both good and bad
- **Self-direction** - increasing feelings of independence, autonomy and resilience.



# Systemic improvements

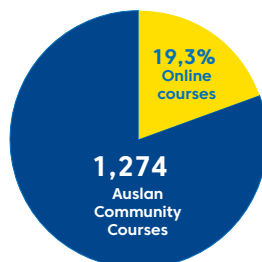
Improving access to health care, education and mainstream services.

**34** jobseekers accessed the workplace modifications through our program.

We supplied

**\$40,000**

government-funded workplace-modifications to our participants. (This equipment assists participants to perform their normal duties.)



We provided

**\$53,800**

media interpreting across Victoria and Tasmania.



**\$23,400**

interpreting to the ABC News to provide information in Auslan on television.

**\$23,000**

interpreting to make the ABC News Sunday Bulletin accessible to Deaf people in Auslan.



**24**

Kindergartens are learning Auslan and we supported 37 NDIS participants to learn Auslan in their homes with their families.



**75%**

of LGBTQIA+ participants that gain employment reach their 3 month milestones.



We partnered with

Melbourne Polytechnic and DeafConnectEd to continue to provide quality and consistent interpreting to Victorian TAFE institutes.



We reached

**139,500**



people through our ABC News partnership announcement and promotion.

**79%**

of our Sensory participants (including Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind, Low-Vision and Deafblind) reach their 6 month employment milestones.

**3** ILC grants:

1. Deaf Regional Health Grant
2. Deaf LGBTQIA+ empowered 'Rainbow Project'
3. Information Digital Hub





# Social wellbeing

Connecting people with community and creating strong relationships.

We held a number of **community events** including;

- Rainbow Reunion
- Annual Community Update
- Christmas Festival
- Deaf Leadership Network
- Tasmanian Community BBQ Day.



Senior Deaf Groups in Victoria and Tasmania host **fortnightly senior social events** in the **JML Centre** in East Melbourne and the at the **Hobart office** in Tasmania.

We held **5 Community Forums**:

1. Ballarat Deaf Community Forum
2. Coronavirus Q & A Session
3. Community Consultation (May)
4. Community Consultation (June)
5. Online Community Forum

**Our online forums have had 28,000 unique views.**

Minutes viewed	People reached
8,205	5,869
7,619	10,123
3,975	6,025
10,629	6,971

# Emotional wellbeing

Improving management of feelings, both good and bad.

**1,240**

**hours of Audiology support** delivered to **people over 65** by the Commonwealth Home Support Programme.



We delivered

**33,600**

**hours of support** as part of the Commonwealth Hearing Services Program.

We provided

**43,716**

**hours of interpreting** through Auslan Connections.



Our **employee engagement score** was **86%**. We scored **5% higher** than the disability sector average.



We provided

**310+**

**hours** of workplace interpreting via our Employment Service.



Total **Support Worker** hours: ..... **6,870**  
**Regional Victoria Support Worker** hours: ..... **1,416**  
**Tasmania Support Worker** hours: ..... **2,263**

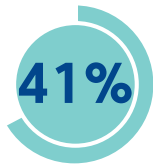
# Self-direction

Increasing feelings of independence, autonomy and resilience.

We funded

## 12 projects

through our grants program to improve inclusion and participation for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing.



41% of our staff identify as Deaf or hard of hearing.

Since its launch, DeafNav has had over 7,310 users accessing important information.



We provided a Learn Local course to help upskill and prepare Deaf students for future employment and study opportunities.



We provide a quality accommodation that supports residents to live independent lives.



We employ

## 194



Interpreters, Deaf Interpreters and Notetakers.

We provided an emergency VRI (Video Remote Interpreting) service at the start of COVID-19 so the community could feel confident they could get an interpreter during the crisis.

## 60%

of our interpreting through COVID-19 was via VRI.

## 47

organisations engaged our Video Production Team to produce Auslan content.

Expression Australia **You Tube** Views

70,067  
Views

527,019  
Impressions

2,753  
Hours watched

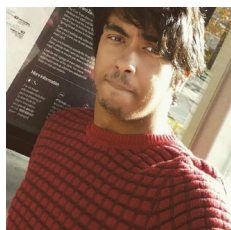
Our Auslan Community update videos had

## 231,046

118,700 minutes viewed and 42,510 engagements.



## Client stories



### Leander's Story

Leander was born Deaf - likely caused after his mother was involved in a motorcycle accident in India. He moved to Australia with his Grandmother when he was 17 years old and struggled to adapt to a different culture and language.

Leander said: ***"I was only familiar with Indian people and our culture. I hadn't met anyone from Australia so I was worried about communication."***

Leander learnt Auslan through Expression Australia with other Deaf migrants.

Learning Auslan has helped Leander connect with the Deaf community and open-up more opportunities.

Leander works with Sarah, an Access Coordinator, to access services through Expression Australia, including:

- Employment support
- Support coordination\*
- Auslan interpreters\*
- Learn Local Workwise Employment readiness course

Through accessing employment support with Sarah, Leander has found a job that he enjoys. He works as a cleaner at Expression Audiology and is able to communicate with and teach staff members basic Auslan.

Leander said: ***"Having access to communication is important for me. When there's no Auslan it's hard for me to communicate."***

Leander's new goal is to become an Auslan teacher at Expression Australia.

Leander says: ***"In the future, I think I'd like to teach Auslan and work for Expression Australia. They're my goals but I know it will be slow steps to get there."***

\*via Leander's NDIS plan



## Luca's Story

Luca Miraglia is a determined 13-year-old boy who has had to fight to overcome several barriers in his life.

Luca's identical twin brother, Alessio, died shortly before he was born, and Luca had to spend the first few weeks of his life in intensive care.

Luca's mother, Lisa, said: ***"Luca has severe to profound hearing loss in both ears, he is on the Autism spectrum and has kidney failure. He's got a bit to deal with but he's a tough kid and he's doing remarkably well."***

Luca and his family started learning Auslan when he was three months old to assist his language development but had to stop as further health issues arose.

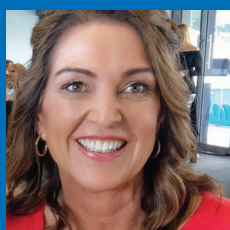
Now in grade six, Luca has returned to learning Auslan through Expression Australia and is using his NDIS plan so that his classmates can learn Auslan as well.

Lisa said: ***"Luca's school has an extra-curricular program that they run, and we thought; 'why not bring in a language?'. Initially it was held at lunchtimes once a week, so students wanting to join could come along and do an Auslan session at lunchtime. Since the pandemic hit, we've shifted to learning via Zoom which has also allowed parents and siblings to learn too."***

Luca has found that some of his classmates use signs with him during class and even some of his teachers too.

Lisa said: ***"Some of Luca's support workers at school are learning Auslan as well. They sometimes have discreet conversations with him without drawing attention to themselves. It has been a real benefit."***

Luca has been teaching basic Auslan signs to followers at the Miraglia Foundation. Luca makes short Auslan videos and posts them the Foundation's Facebook page to encourage others to learn Auslan as well.



## Karen's Story

Karen is a Child of Deaf Adults (CODA) who grew up and lives in Hobart, Tasmania.

Karen experienced several challenges growing up as a hearing person in a Deaf family.

Karen said: ***"As I got older and reflected back as I had my own children, I realised how different my upbringing was to everyone else. I couldn't speak because my first language was Auslan."***

Karen said that she felt that it was her role to be the family interpreter because she was the oldest child.

Karen recently wanted to learn how to become an Auslan interpreter.

She tried to find courses available around Australia but found out that she wasn't eligible because she did not live in the course locations.

Karen said: ***"Once I heard about Expression Australia's Native Auslan Interpreting Course, I was so eager, I joined straight away. I was really excited to be a part of the course."***

Karen learnt that she was not alone in her experiences growing up as a CODA. To start with, Karen did not know what the term CODA was.

Karen had grown up in a time when it was normal for signing using a small space with a lot of fingerspelling.

Karen said: ***"It was such a hard thing to break because it was normal to sign very small and quiet in public and now Deaf people are far more open out in the community."***

Since completing the Native Auslan Interpreting Course, Karen has been more involved in the Deaf community and is looking forward to attending more after COVID-19.

Karen is also looking forward to sitting the NAATI exam to become a certified Auslan interpreter.



## Our Community Investment

We are proud of our role in providing access to Deaf and hard of hearing people. As part of our commitment to the community, we have invested resources, time and finances in a range of important activities and services.

***This work is critical because the community and clients need to feel connected and have access to information in our first language, Auslan.***

Our activities are varied and intended to create a strong impact for our community. As part of this, we provide financial support to Deaf organisations, groups and clubs. Over this financial year, we have also:

- Supported our Emergency Management Interpreting Team (EMIT) to provide quality access to important news in Auslan. You may have seen these interpreters in action recently on television interpreting the Victorian and Tasmanian Premier's press conferences across critical events, including the bushfires and COVID-19.

- Partnered with ABC NEWS to have the Sunday national news bulletin Auslan interpreted. We also provide a three-minute Auslan segment with a Deaf presenter at the end of the news bulletin, presenting important information in Auslan.
- Produced daily Auslan updates by Deaf presenters, giving the Deaf community access to daily breaking news and events in Auslan across our social media channels.
- Created weekly newsletters to keep clients and community members, who are isolated due to location or lack of access to the internet, updated and informed - particularly during COVID-19.
- Offered Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) to support clients without access during COVID-19 door-knocking campaigns.
- Worked with government agencies to create an understanding of the needs of Deaf and hard of hearing people while mask-wearing.

Carol, a Deaf community member from Victoria, watches the Auslan updates on Facebook.

Carol said: ***"The Auslan updates are fantastic because I am able to watch breaking news in Auslan. It's like my daily news in Auslan."***

# Financials 2019-20

Service planning and redesign continued in the lead up to full roll-out of the NDIS, which included maintaining service continuity for existing clients transitioning to the NDIS. The pace of transition to NDIS has been slower than anticipated. This delay in growth of NDIS services has been offset by transition funding from DHHS, which came to an end in early 2020.

Our interpreting service, Auslan Connections, has again performed strongly with service levels up 9.2% this year after a 3% increase in the previous year. Our employment service had an improved year with income down 5.26% compared to a 20% reduction in prior year.

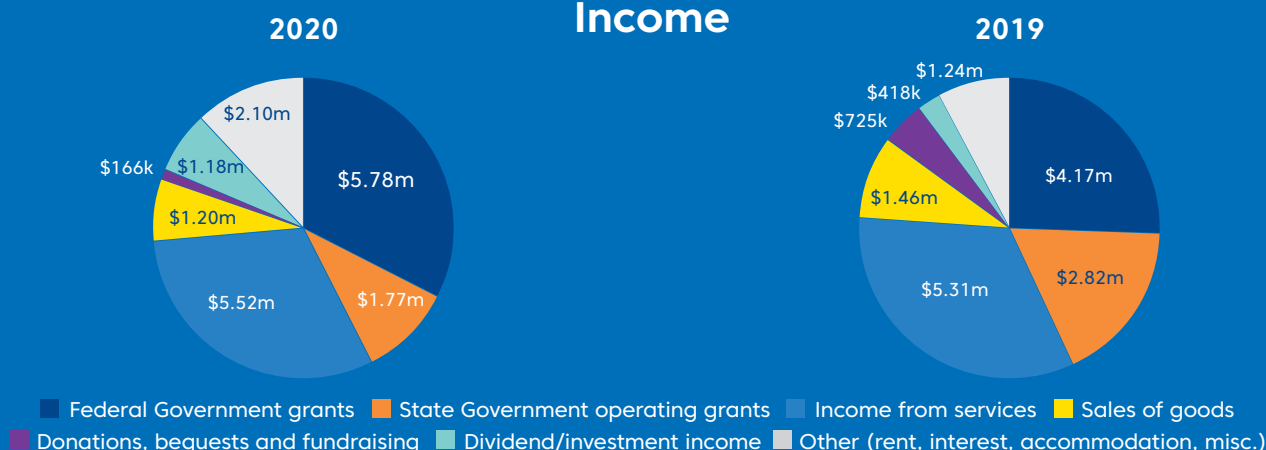
Our audiology service had its income reduced by 31.95% due to shut-down of services caused by COVID-19. Our Auslan courses also recorded a downturn in income by 45.39% due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.

The organisation retained unspent grant funds at the end of the year of \$757,366. In addition, net receipts for JobKeeper of \$1,219,347 were also received during the year.

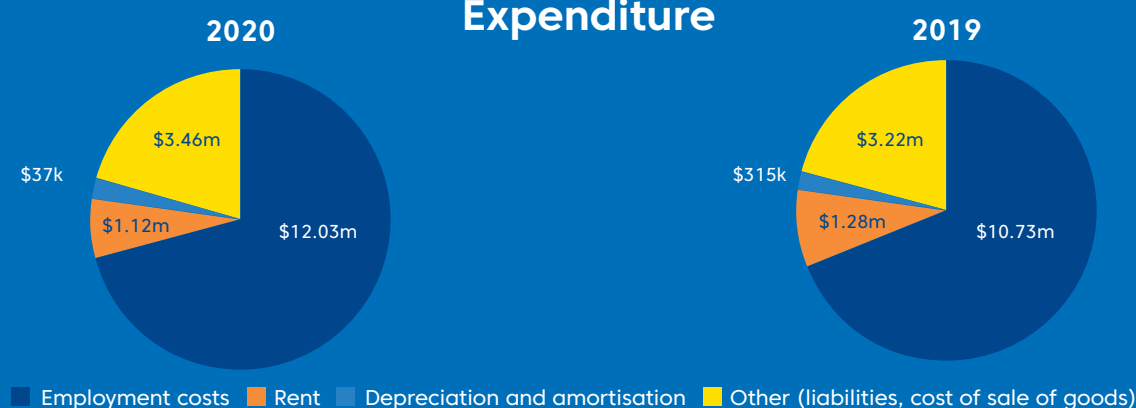
The total investment portfolio has performed well against our market-related benchmarks this year, despite the impact on markets due to COVID-19. During the financial year there was no significant change in the organisation's affairs.

Despite restrictions around COVID-19, we achieved a surplus for the 2020 financial year of \$795,986.

## Income



## Expenditure



	2020	2019
Net Profit	\$795,986	\$582,250
Unspent grants for special projects	\$757,366	\$82,745
Underlying net profit	\$38,620	\$499,505
Underlying comprehensive income	-\$1,539,327	\$542,312
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>\$26,709,808</b>	<b>\$27,491,766</b>

Expression Australia is a not-for-profit community business created by and for the Deaf community, established in 1884.

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