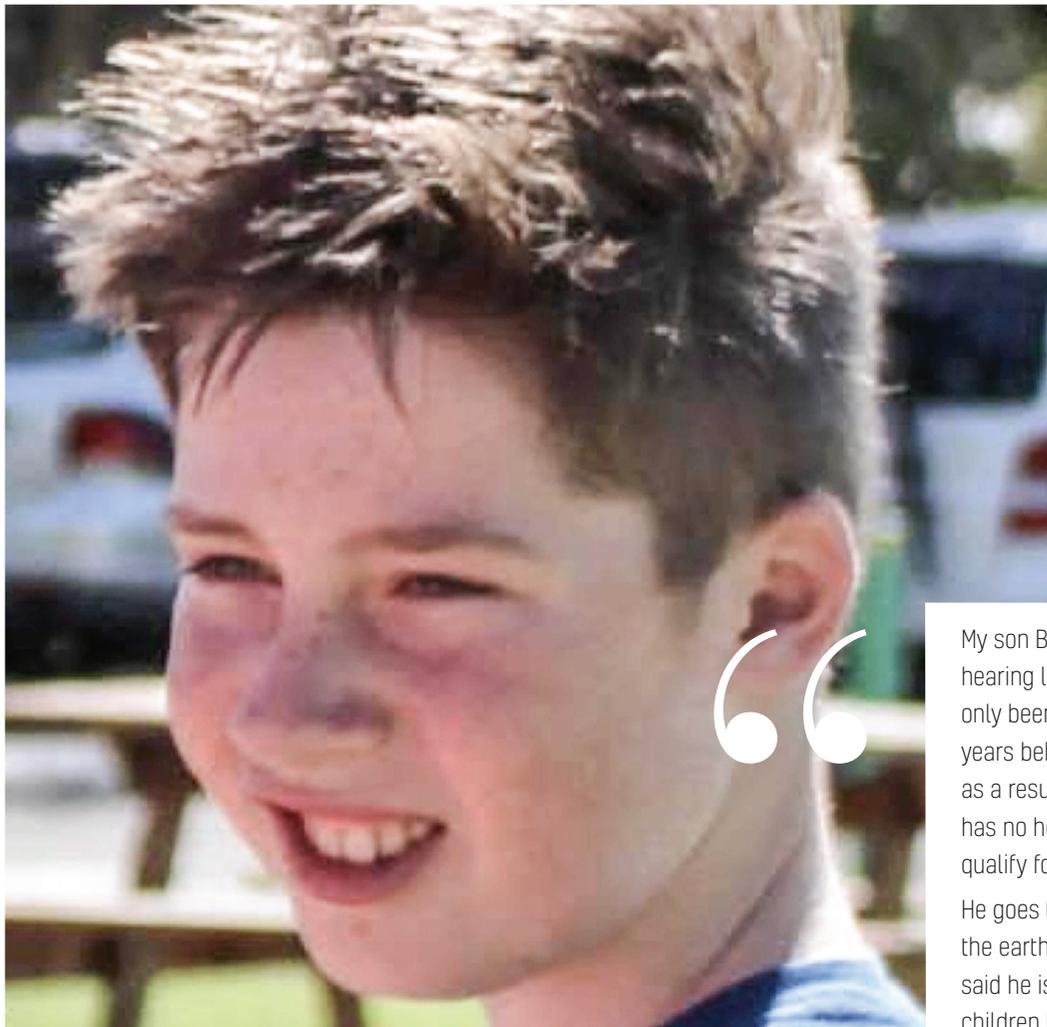




A journey
of change

STRATEGIC PLAN
2015-2021
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ONE WAY

a tale of two pathways

My son Blake has a severe high frequency hearing loss. He has hearing aids and has only been diagnosed a year ago. He is two years behind in all areas of his learning and as a result, we do extra work at home. Blake has no help provided at school as he doesn't qualify for this.

He goes to a private school which we pay the earth for. Blake came to me today and said he is passionate about helping other children to be able to go to school and learn easier and not feel so different, like you are a burden for your peers and teacher. It broke my heart to hear him tell me. Whilst he knows he has to deal with feeling so alone and different in this world, he doesn't want other children to have to go through school the way he does - feeling isolated.

Where on earth in this State will people listen and help? Blake doesn't understand why every day he has hurdles to overcome. When relief teachers and other people come in and don't know how to teach him, he just sits through a lesson without understanding any of it. Blake sees other children who receive help that have met the criteria for funding. Because he can hear some thing, he gets nothing. I can't explain to him why this is. Blake clearly struggles and I just have to sit back and support him with love and understanding.

I am ashamed at our government and education system to let my child go through this and say he isn't deaf enough - deal with it. Very seriously contemplating home schooling him because our education system is failing him.

cassandra



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If we could get the right support with Blake's education, everything could change for him. I want him to feel 'I can do this, I just need a little extra help, I don't need to feel like I am a burden any more.' He could have a chance to blossom. He wouldn't have to try to bluff his way through he wouldn't have to feel so anxious and embarrassed.

If everyone in Blake's life could understand how much harder it is for him, they could change the way they communicate. He wants to learn and he is bright. One on one, Blake is great. he just needs to be able to hear the teachers. I am lobbying for Blake to have the right technology at school to support his learning.

Blake excels in anything visual like computers and in every sport, which gives him a sense of accomplishment. I want him to feel that in the classroom as well.

As a family, we are trying to make communication easier for Blake as well as my husband Simon who has the same level of hearing loss. We use captions on TV and

a better way

we hope to learn Auslan as a family so we can better communicate with each other and with other deaf children and adults who could act as mentors. We are connecting up with other families and Blake is meeting other kids who are deaf or hard of hearing like him. We're going on a family camp soon which should be fantastic. So in the future, on bad days, Blake could jump online and chat to his friends who can understand what he is going through.

I want Blake to be inspired. He is a special little character, grown up beyond his years. I believe that he can overcome his troubles and as he said, use those experiences to help other kids turn their lives around. Blake should be able to finish school and feel confident he will get the support he needs to achieve that. He should have opportunities for higher education to become a graphic designer or web designer. We are just trying to help him realise his dreams.

cassandra

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message from our chair

KERRY FERGUSON



This Strategic Plan was created in 2015 and was designed to have a five-year lifespan. The plan has served us well and the spirit, ethos and intent still align with our present and future aspirations and mission. Due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the current dynamic refocusing, the DCA Board has decided to extend DCA's strategy timeline from the end of 2020 to the end of 2021. This also allows us to be prudent with our resources during the upcoming period of projected economic downturn.

We would like to assure you that DCA continues to work diligently towards achieving our Strategic Agenda. We adapted quickly to the changes imposed by the restrictions, continuing to deliver meaningful services to support deaf and hard of hearing children, young people and their families. While apprehensive about these difficult and unprecedented times, DCA has fast tracked its remote offerings and expertise – an important and prominent aspect of our services and engagement going forward.

Together we are overcoming adversity and reshaping how we deliver on our mission.

DCA is developing services and programs to reach children and young people across Australia. It means people living in rural and remote areas, together with those living in cities, can access vital services and connect with the deaf and hard of hearing community. We continue to be excited about DCA's future and achieving our vision of creating a world where young deaf and hard of hearing children are empowered and achieving their full potential.

Our current Strategic Plan was written in 2015 and the Board has been revisiting the key pillars. We would like to share the major areas of focus for the period up until December 2021.

sustainability

Sustainability has never been a more important consideration for DCA. We continue to strive to provide quality services through a NDIS framework and we have been working hard to maximise opportunities in this area. We continue to deliver our services remotely and look for creative and efficient solutions to the problems offered by reduced revenue and opportunity. Never has it been so important for DCA to have an agile operating model that can withstand the current difficulties and from these circumstances grow and embed new practices for the organisation that are emerging. We have learnt much from expanding our remote practices and services which puts us in an exciting position for the future.

enterprising

Achieving program sustainability is a process and a challenge. DCA is testing and embedding different operating models including looking at different ways of delivering services and alternative sources of revenue. DCA has always delivered quality services for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families and this remains a key focus. We continue to look to the latest developments and technological advancements to better serve our deaf and hard of hearing community

data & evidence

The Board and management of DCA are working hard to leverage data and evidence to drive provision of services, management reporting and Board governance. The latest scientific research and evaluation from our own programs are driving our decision-making and focus. DCA continues to strive for a mature approach to investment decisions, that supports innovation and appropriate financial rigour. We have a great story to tell but we are still learning how to tell it. As we improve our ability to communicate our impact, we can look forward to greater stakeholder engagement and access to alternative funding opportunities.

impactful partnerships

Sometimes a greater impact can be made in partnership rather than alone. DCA continues to evaluate potential partners in our programs and services, with the aim of investing in the highest return both socially and financially, whether this be in direct DCA action or supporting our partners in their work. We have a renewed focus on working with the federal and state governments to communicate our impact and look for new opportunities to better serve deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.



our
mission
and
vision

mission

TO INSPIRE AND EMPOWER DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

vision

TO CREATE A WORLD WHERE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING HAVE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ACHIEVE POSITIVE LIFE OUTCOMES.

key supports through the journey

post diagnosis

'As a parent of a deaf child, the first deaf person I met was my own daughter. So I didn't know what to do, I want a network of people that can help me and advise me on the basics of parenting a deaf child. I want to meet lots of deaf parents and I want to find a forum where I can meet hearing parents who have deaf children so we can share our stories and the struggles we are going to encounter'

Shireen

'When we learned our baby Davie has Treacher Collins Syndrome, I was in such an emotional state. I felt like the future I had imagined for Davie had suddenly been swept away and replaced by something unknown. My mind was buzzing with questions and of course, one of my biggest worries was how he would cope with this deafness. My mentor was literally a beacon of light because she understood how I felt. She had been down this road before with her own son's deafness. She helps us firstly to accept the diagnosis and then guided us with how to interact with our son Davie. She provided reassurance. I had all these questions and all these fears for my little newborn son: 'Is he going to be okay?' 'Will he be able to make friends?' I needed to hear another parent's advice - and that gave me so much hope that, with the right supports, Davie would be okay'

Carol

childhood

'We got cochlear implants for Alexandria when she was tiny and until the camp, we didn't realise how much her hearing loss was continuing to impact her. Managing her Asperger's and Attention Deficit hyperactivity Disorder had been so difficult, and had actually taken our focus away from her hearing loss. We realised through DCA, particularly through the panel with the young deaf adults telling their stories, how much Alexandria's deafness is affecting her. It has helped us make some important decisions we had been struggling with'

Trina and Chris

'Tom was born hearing but after developing meningitis at four months of age, he was left with a learning delay, epileptic seizures and a moderate to severe hearing loss in both ears. When Tom went to his first camp, it was the first time he had ever been with other children who face the same challenges as him. He made new friends and had so much fun. There were no barriers for Tom on camp and there are so many learning opportunities for him and for all of us. It's invaluable for us to get together with other families to hear their stories and challenges. We talk about how to get past the hurdles to access the funding and support we need for our children. Tom has attended lots of recreation programs since where he has those precious opportunities to meet other children who are deaf'

Ann

transition to independence

'Through Independent Living Skills, I have learned how to get the V-line train all the way to Southern Cross Station, catch another train and a tram to get to school. I don't mind all the travelling. It's worth it to come to a good school. I have some other school friends who travel with me on the trains. If I finish school, I will get a job - I would love a job in sports! I am good at footy, soccer, basketball and swimming.'

Rhys

'I want to talk to my mentor - she understands me because she is deaf too. She has helped me learning sign language. We link up, learn new signs each week and talk about everything. I get to meet new people online and talk to them in sign language. We don't have any other deaf kids out here and it helps me to talk to others. My mentor has helped me with her knowledge of schools with learning plans too. I am scared that I will forget Auslan if I don't get to talk to her any more. Then if I am with other deaf kids on camps, I won't know anything, and I will feel left out. And I want to grow up being connected to both the deaf and hearing worlds. I still need this help because I am going to be deaf for life.'

Brooke

respectful

DCA respects and promotes the rights of deaf and hard of hearing children and young people and supports them, their family members and all those around them to make informed choices and enable them to fully participate in the community at all stages of their lives.

accountable

We are primarily accountable to deaf and hard of hearing children, young people and their families for our decisions and actions and also accountable to our shareholders. DCA strives to act with integrity and transparency at all times.

cooperative

DCA is committed to addressing the disadvantage experienced by deaf and hard of hearing children and young people. DCA's goal is to partner to assist in achieving our vision and providing the best possible support for children and young people and their families.

transition to independence

DCA is a collaborative, diverse and inclusive organisation. We strive to base our work on evidence, empowering deaf and hard of hearing children and young people. DCA seeks contemporary approaches to providing unbiased support, whilst at the same time advancing knowledge and skills in the field.

values in action

BUILDING BLOCKS

commitment

leadership

operations

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DCA

1. DCA values form the foundation for the way we do our

2. DCA staff reflect the values in their behaviours

3. The DCA values are integrated into day to day

PUTTING VALUES INTO ACTION

1.1 DCA's strategic plan and operational documents reflect DCA's values.

1.2 DCA's internal and external communications expose DCA's values

1.3 DCA works collaboratively with the child, young person, their families and stakeholders

2.1 DCA staff take a leadership role and build DCA values into their behaviour

2.2 DCA leadership guides employees in understanding the relevance of DCA's values in their day to day work

2.3 DCA provides guidance to children and young people with their families through a child-centred focus and access to successful role models to help them to pursue their life goals.

3.1 DCA's strategic plan and operational documents reflect DCA's values.

3.2 DCA's internal and external communications expose DCA's values

3.3 DCA works collaboratively with the child, young person, their families and stakeholders



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a young deaf person said it best:
I am not disabled, society and its system disables me.

the challenge

Australia does not afford deaf and hard of hearing children and young people the same rights and opportunities as other children. This means that for many, their life outcomes are not at the level of their hearing peers – from well-being to social inclusion, education and employment. Their needs and their voices are often not heard. The system is fragmented with gaps, duplication and limited evidence to drive change where it's needed most.

As Australians, we want to give everybody a 'fair go'. We recognise that children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing today require extra personal resources to navigate their way through the uncharted landscape that makes up our society. These personal resources include strength, critical thinking, self-confidence and independence. When

armed with these resources, we believe they will be better equipped to navigate the social, occupational and personal obstacles and opportunities they are likely to encounter throughout their lives.

According to recent Australian statistics, deaf children are less likely than their hearing peers to achieve Year 12. As a group, deaf children and young people therefore experience disadvantage in terms of accessing resources that allow development of social and cultural capabilities that helps protect them from the risk of exclusion in society.

the opportunity

navigating their own life paths

Young deaf and hard of hearing children and young people are living, learning and negotiations transitions towards independence and adulthood in an increasingly complex and challenging world. While navigation this, they face greater levels of choice and opportunity but also unprecedented uncertainty and risk. This calls for empowered, resilient children and young people who play and active role in navigating their life paths.

Evidence tells us that supporting children and young people's social and emotional development is vital to enable the achievement of all other outcomes including in education and employment. Deaf children and young people are no different.

DCA understand that to address the disadvantage, we need to deal with both the rights and capabilities of each child and young person. DCA also believed that with the appropriate support, children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing will enjoy improved life chances while society, in turn, will benefit from the total value of their contributions.



putting the deaf child at the centre

Children and young people who are deaf or hard of hearing will be at the centre of DCA's decision making, with their voices reflected at all organisational levels. This will mean investment and new processes to create an engaged community of deaf and hard of hearing young people. We will also need to engage and collaborate with key stakeholders who enable support for the child to grow into a young person and into adulthood.



the deaf child at the centre

0-23 year
olds who are
deaf or hard
of hearing

government

Protecting the rights of deaf and hard of hearing children and young people. DCA will work with the sector, young people and families to advocate for policies that reduce discrimination and enable equal opportunities to let young deaf and hard of hearing people and their families up for success.

families

are one of the most important influencers on a deaf or hard of hearing child or young person. Families need balanced, clear information on all the options to make informed choices and they need to be empowered to advocate for their child. DCA will engage families to understand their needs and the best method for meeting these needs.

peer groups

have a critical influence on young people and need to be engaged in the solution

community

Deaf and hard of hearing children and young people should be able to participate in all community activities. DCA will advocate for this inclusion in partnership with young people families and the sector.

health & education professionals

Strong language and communication skills are key to deaf and hard of hearing children and young people's social, emotional and intellectual growth. Health and education professionals need to provide equal learning opportunities. They are key stakeholders for DCA.



the
model
for change

I'm happy
that I'm
happy
with my
deafness. ”

We assist children, young people and their families to exercise the right to make their own choices and informed decisions, appropriate for particular ages and stages of development. By putting the young person firmly at the centre, DCA will enable and amplify the voices of children and youngpeople who are deaf or hard of hearing. These voices will drive the activities DCA undertakes and how these activities are delivered.

community building

DCA's work is driven by a connected and empowered group of young people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

evidence based

DCA has a clear, evidence based understanding of the needs, what works and the service gaps across Australia. This evidence underpins our actions.

collective delivery

Collective delivery and a clear alignment between need, evidence and expertise drives DCA's program offerings

collective advocacy

The sector comes together to advocate on issues that young people who are deaf or hard of hearing care about. This united voice drives system reform.

sustainability

DCA is financially and structurally set up to successfully deliver this approach.

the model for change

reaching potential

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing can do anything others can - with early diagnosis and the right support. As one young person said, "My parents have always told me I can do anything I put my mind to."

five pillars of change



community building

Build a community of empowered and connected 0-23-year-old Australians who are deaf or hard of hearing. Capture and amplify their voices to drive our actions.

evidence based

Understand the full support system - the gaps, as well as what works, and use this evidence base to inform our activities.

collective advocacy

Bring the sector together to advocate for a joined-up system of support that responds to the needs of young people. Co-design the advocacy agenda with young people and key sector partners and arm it with evidence.

collective delivery

Work with the youth sector to address gaps and invest in areas that have been shown to create impact. This will entail DCA delivering programs in evidence-based areas of expertise, as well as partnering where others are better placed to deliver. This support will centre on key transition points in a young person's life - including post diagnosis, pre-school, moving into primary and secondary school, further study or training and entering the workforce.

sustainability

Develop a sustainable organisation so we are well equipped to successfully implement and sustain these models.

outcomes

community building

- DCA has active online and offline networks of engaged young people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Young people who are deaf or hard of hearing are embedded in all parts of DCA from the frontline to the Board.

- This network of young people ensures service design and delivery meets their needs and the advocacy agenda is co-designed.

evidence based

- Priority actions are informed by a deep understanding of the national service landscape.

- Research with young people and families around their needs and what works drives DCA's response.

- Evaluation of key DCA programs highlights impactful practice. This informs decisions of where we invest.

collective delivery

- Evidence based service and supports are in place around key transition points - from post diagnosis, pre-school, primary and secondary school, to further study of work.

- DCA partners with others to address areas of need where DCA is not best placed to deliver.

collective advocacy

- The youth focused sector comes together to research and advocate for a joined-up support system that responds to the needs of young people and families.

sustainability

- DCA is financially sound

- Sufficient investment is made in the implementation of this approach.

- DCA's people, process and infrastructure enable deliver of this approach.

- DCA is recognised in the sector for living its beliefs and ways of working.

next steps

Step 1

Communicate the new strategic direction and why putting the deaf child at the centre is important.

Step 2

Invest the right infrastructure, process and culture.

Step 3

Support transformation through a tailored approach involving the deaf child and young person, families, the community, government and industry professionals.

some of our projects

community building

Establish a representative working group to develop approaches to building a community of young people who are deaf and hard of hearing and strategies for reflecting their voices in DCA's operations

evidence based

Develop research, monitoring and evaluation strategy, including capability required in this model and the best method of achieving these capabilities.

collective delivery

Research good practice models for partnering and collaboration.

collective advocacy

Develop a youth sector round table to explore shared issues, potential research and advocacy collaborations

sustainability

Implement the co-location with Vicdeaf, resulting in a new hub of services for children and young people who are deaf and hard of hearing, along with their families and the adult Deaf community.



Contact DCA

597 St Kilda Road
Melbourne Victoria 3004
PO Box 6466
Melbourne Victoria 8008

Telephone +61 3 9539 5300
Facsimile +61 3 9525 2595
info@deafchildren.org.au
deafchildreanaustralia.org.au
facebook.com/deafchildreanaustralia

ABN 57 108 025 207

DCA is a Not-for-Profit organisation and registered with the ATO with DGR status