

Parents of Deaf Children

ANNUAL REPORT

2013



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Introduction

Parents of Deaf Children (PODC) is a non-profit organisation, dedicated to supporting parents with babies, children and teenagers with a hearing loss in NSW.

PODC aims to provide independent and unbiased information and support for parents and carers, irrespective of their chosen method of communication.

Mission Statement

To empower parents in NSW to support their deaf or hard of hearing children in reaching their full potential through information, support networks and representation.

Key Priority Areas

- Strengthening parent support networks
- Contributing to a statewide and national voice for parents of NSW
- Enhancing the identity of PODC and its operational structures

Organisational Expectations

- Empower parents to become self advocates
 - Provide strong representation on behalf of parents in NSW
 - Influence government policy in the areas of health, education and disability
 - Build parent capacity through a range of information and advocacy provision
 - Raise community awareness of deafness
 - Bring together families
 - Increase the parent support networks across NSW
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President's Report



What a year it has been! As I reflect on the past year and what we have achieved, I am constantly inspired by fellow management committee members, staff and members of PODC. We could not have done so much without your support.

I would like to acknowledge the ongoing financial contribution of the NSW Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC), our funding body, and also of Deaf Children Australia who have supported us until 30 June 2013. As of 1 July, PODC has become financially independent and we wish to thank the CEO, Damien Lacey, the Board of Deaf Children Australia and the wonderful team for their fantastic support and work for the last six years.

PODC's activities and initiatives during the past year include:

- Ongoing support for Parents of Deaf (POD) groups;
- Supporting POD related activities including 'Play in the Park' and Dads' Night Out;
- Supporting the Parent to Parent Mentoring Program with Deaf Society of NSW;
- Supporting Deaf Society of NSW and Deaf Australia with the National Week of Deaf People events;
- Advocacy and support for families;
- Publication of Sound News;
- Sharing information on PODC's Facebook page;
- Regular attendance at Interagency meetings with Deaf Society of NSW, Ephpheta Centre, Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association NSW, Deaf Australia NSW, RIDBC Thomas Pattison School and Shepherd Centre.

There were six Management Committee meetings this year and I sincerely thank the 2012-2013 Management Committee for their valued contributions and support: Leesa Cluff (Vice President), Mark Buirfield (Secretary), Amanda Li (Treasurer), Anna Messariti, Sarah Klenbort and Julie Frenidin.

I am deeply appreciative of the exemplary work, well beyond the call of duty, of our Information and Advocacy Coordinator, Kate Kennedy, assisted by Allison McNally, our Administrative and Marketing Assistant.

Thanks also to the parents who have participated in the POD group meetings and PODC events.

Our plans for 2013/2014 include:

- Be NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) ready;
- Continue partnerships and relationships with various organisations including Deaf Society of NSW, Shepherd Centre, RIDBC, Ephpheta Centre, Australian Hearing, ASLIA NSW and Deaf Australia;
- Participate in Hearing Awareness Week and National Week for Deaf People activities;
- Continue supporting POD groups and POD related events;
- Provide support and advocacy to our members;
- PODC roadshow for regional members.

As a President of Parents of Deaf Children (PODC), I have enjoyed the wonderful privilege of meeting wonderful parents, educators, professionals and colleagues whom main goal is to better the educational and

social outcomes for our children.

Being a parent is the most difficult job in the world. There are no courses or training on how to raise children. We have our own life experiences and gut instincts to fall back on. It is our job to raise children so that they grow up to be productive and healthy adults who contribute to society and treat everyone with respect. An easy task? No. We make mistakes but we would not miss being parents for the world.

Being a parent of a deaf child does add an extra layer of complexity. As many new parents out there can relate, we would hope that the world that we bring our children to is equal and safe. After all, being equal and safe is a human right. However the reality is that deaf children across the world are often left behind in terms of access to education and broader social inclusion. As research shows, children thrive in an accessible educational and social environment. The challenge is how can we make the educational and social environment accessible for deaf and hard of hearing children?

Therefore, parents of deaf children rely on the support from the broader community to ensure that their deaf child receives access to good education and feels included in the community. Parents seek advice from professionals, educators and members of the Deaf community to work out the best possible solution, to ensure that their deaf child has a chance to grow up to be a productive and healthy adult.

It is a cliché, but I always believe that it takes a village to raise a child. In my son's case, he attends a local school where he can access the curriculum using both English and Auslan. His teachers, classmates and parents of classmates are learning Auslan so that they can communicate with him directly without having to rely on an interpreter. He has a mixture of friends – some sign and some don't. He is willing to participate in all sort of activities whether there is an interpreter or not. He knows when he does not understand and is not afraid to ask someone to repeat. He loves watching captions on television and reading books to his younger brother. He loves to sing and dance. He also will not take no for an answer especially when it comes to inequality. And he is not even six. This is a big thank to the village that he is growing up in.

Therefore, as a parent of a deaf child, I have a favour to ask you. You as a member of PODC, please support each other with raising our children to become adults that we can be proud of. We cannot do it without your support. Let's work together and be a village to ensure that our deaf children are equal and safe.



Leonie Jackson
President

Treasurer's Report

2013 has been a year of transition for PODC. Our partnership with Deaf Children Australia has come to an end and we are once again operating as an independent organisation. I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous support we received from DCA over the years that we've been in partnership. In particular in areas of management and finance. DCA's support has brought PODC back on its feet and in a position to continue to advocate for parents in NSW in a strong stable position.

PODC's membership has continued to grow in 2013. Income from membership fees has risen from \$3250 in 2012 to \$5056 this year. AHDC continues to support us to the amount of \$88,966. I'm sure you're all aware of the major upcoming changes in the disability sector with the introduction of NDIS. We've been given some early indication that our current funding from AHDC might not continue beyond 2015 when the NDIS is scheduled to rollout. However, with the recent change in government, and early feedback from the trial sites indicating a cost blowout for the NDIS, the timetable of the rollout remains uncertain. The staff and the management committee of PODC will closely monitor the progress as it unfolds. We will also need to consider looking at alternative funding sources and possible partnerships with other organisations.

PODC's expenses for 2013 financial year remained steady, with an accumulated surplus sitting at \$26,800 at the end of 2013 financial year. However we will need to plan for possible added costs associated with our independence in the 2014 financial year. The greater degree of autonomy and transparency we have now also means additional responsibilities for the management committee and staff to ensure we remain viable financially in a changing environment. I have no doubt that its a task the committee and staff are more than capable of achieving.

Resolutions

With that I recommend:

- That the financial report prepared by Julia Chaplin and Lyn Rose be accepted.
- A vote of thanks to the DCA finance team for all their work.

Amanda Li
Treasurer



Coordinator's Report

Parents of Deaf Children is committed to building parent capacity and skills through information, support and advocacy services to assist them in parenting their child who is deaf or hard of hearing. The organisation is overseen by a management committee of parent volunteers and staffed by two part time workers. PODC has 120 members and many more supporters made up of families and professionals in NSW and Interstate.



Support

POD Groups (Parent Support Groups)

Aimed at providing opportunities for parents and carers to share and network, POD Groups are run by parents for parents. They provide a safe venue to share information, build friendships and learn about how others parent their deaf child. This year, with the help of parent leaders, PODC coordinated 5 POD groups. These meet regularly in the following locations: POD North West, POD Central Coast, POD Northern Sydney, POD Macarthur and POD Mid North Coast.

Parent to Parent Mentoring Program

Run by the Deaf Society of NSW (DSNSW) in partnership with PODC, this program continues to grow and develop. The program is designed to match parents of newly diagnosed deaf children with a mentor who can provide them with the necessary support at this much needed time or at any time through their future journey. PODC provides training and support for hearing parents to become mentors. We also assist the DSNSW to match and coordinate this program. This financial year, 55 parents were matched with mentors and additionally, we trained 10 new mentors.

Getting the Children together

Parents asked for more opportunities for the children to get together, As a result, PODC organized four plays in the park in this year, providing a social network for young deaf children and their families.

Information

Information Sessions

PODC provided a range of information and workshop sessions for parents in 2012/13 including:

- The Role of the Teacher of the Deaf and how it assists your child
- Building Resilience in Your Child
- Getting Started with Proloquo2go
- Sport for Deaf Kids
- Meet the Stewarts (A Family Share Their Journey)
- Assistive Devices and Captioning
- School Readiness
- Advocating for Your Child in School

Sound News

PODC published three editions of Sound News in the 2012/13 year. The magazine provides parents with parent stories, information and editorial and its circulation is 293.

Website and Facebook

Our website and Facebook pages are the way we connect with our membership and with the broader community. This year Facebook in particular has played a key role in connecting families to our information and resources in a timely manner. Social media is where the parents are gathering and we are

developing a profile there, although there is more work to do to harness this tool.

Advocacy

Advocacy for Families (Individual Advocacy)

PODC offers an individual advocacy service to assist and support individual families and parents to escalate issues of concern in relation to their child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Our role is to support parent to raise their concerns to professionals and government, to make change for their child. We have an ongoing relationship with the Department of Education and Communities to raise issues and concerns relating to deaf education across NSW.

This year PODC received and responded to an average of 3 enquiries or concerns a week, from families on a variety of issues relating to parenting and educating their child with hearing loss. The breakdown of these concerns or enquiries over this year, shows a range of issues, for example: concerns about Betterstart funding, school support concerns, such as teacher of the deaf changes, questions about school choices and concerns about lack of service for children with unilateral HL, to name a few.

Our responses have been varied but have ranged from gathering information for parents to assist them with decision making, attending school meetings with parents as their advocate, escalating concerns to the Department of Education or the Department of Disability Services, letter writing to agencies to escalate a parent concern, to name a few.

Systemic Advocacy

PODC continues to be a voice for parents at a systemic level, via submission writing and campaigning on issues relevant to our membership and deaf children. This year, the focus has been on providing representation to the Federal and State Governments regarding the NDIS and the impact on families of early diagnosed deaf children in the proposed new person centred system. There has been a continued focus on building alliances in the broader disability sector in order to equip our organisation and the families of deaf children, with information and support in moving to the NDIS and a person centred approach.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the members, especially the parents, who make up the PODC community, and who continue to give their ideas, time and experience to help us run this organisation. They do this whilst juggling work, and of course family. Thanks to you all.

I would also like to thank our fantastic management committee, who continue to give their time and their skills to make our organisation tick. I want to especially thank Leonie Jackson our President, Leesa Cluff, our Vice President, and Amanda Li, our Treasurer. This year, their involvement has been called on perhaps more than in any year in recent times, and they have always been there, as have the entire committee. I personally would like to thank my staff member, Allison McNally, who has done a fantastic job in her first year. We work together well as a team and the organisation is lucky to have her skills and her warmth. I also want to acknowledge the support of Ann Porter, from Aussie Deaf Kids, who has been a fantastic mentor and advisor to our organisation over this last year, as in the past.

We have embarked on an interesting time of change. Change in the disability sector means changes for our organisation too. A key focus for next year is to work with parents to be NDIS ready. We know from parents experience with Betterstart that the new funding arrangements can mean more complexity for families not less, and we aim to be the organisation that parents can turn to for unbiased support and information as they progress to the NDIS.



Kate Kennedy
Coordinator, Information and Advocacy

Management Committee and Staff

Leonie Jackson – President

Leonie is the mother of two very active boys. Her oldest son is a Deaf bilingual child and attends his local public school with interpreter support. Leonie herself is also a Deaf bilingual adult and has 18 years teaching experience at the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC), and was Assistant Principal of the Thomas Pattison School, a bilingual K-10 school for 8 years. In 2006, Leonie received a Churchill Fellowship to conduct a research trip in the UK and USA to look at the possibility of live captioning solutions for the classroom and is currently working at Ai-Media as Head of Education Access. In this role, Leonie is leading Ai-Media's focus to close the existing gaps in the classroom for deaf and hearing impaired students.

Leesa Cluff - Vice President

Leesa is a mother of two boys, one of whom is deaf with additional needs. Leesa is currently a mentor with the Parent to Parent Support Program, run by the Deaf Society of NSW and has previously been involved in the stakeholder committee with Deaf Children Australia. She is currently on the management committee of Cubby House Toy Library for children with additional needs

Amanda Li – Treasurer

Amanda is the mother of three children. One of her children is Deaf and attends a bilingual Auslan/English school in Sydney's North West. "I've had very little experience with deafness prior to my daughter's diagnosis, it hasn't been easy and it has certainly opened my eyes to the state of our education system. I believe that parents are the best advocates for their children and by becoming involved in PODC, I'd like to provide support and information to other parents and help them ensure their children reach their full potential." Amanda practises as a dentist part time. She has recently completed the Diploma of Auslan and is studying to become an Auslan Interpreter.

Mark Burfield – Secretary

Mark is the father of four children. The first was born profoundly deaf in 1999, received a cochlear implant in 2001 and a second in 2010, and is currently in a public secondary school hearing support unit. Mark's primary concern is the maintenance and improvement of services for the hearing impaired at all stages. He is State Commissioner for Scouts with Special Needs, Secretary of the P&C Association at his two middle children's school, and works as the Secretary and bookkeeper of the "Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, Australia" and "Universal Peace Federation Australia".

Anna Messariti - Committee Member

Anna Messariti is currently on the management committee of PODC. Her son Xavier, who is four and a half years old, has a bilateral, moderate hearing loss. Xavier was diagnosed when he was 13 days old and has been aided since he was five weeks old.

Anna is currently the Company Producer for *Version 1.0*, a theatre company based at *Carriage-works*. Until recently, she was a Producer/Executive Producer for ABC Radio Drama. Prior to working for the ABC, Anna worked in independent film production. She produced the successful short film (35mm), *The Projectionist*, by writer/director Michael Bates.

Julie Frendin – Committee Member

Julie is the mother of two gorgeous girls. Eleven years ago, Julie's eldest daughter was diagnosed, at the age of three, with a moderate to severe hearing loss. There began a journey, and a learning curve. Julie has 23 years of experience as a teacher, including Itinerant Support Teacher for Hearing, K-6 classroom teaching and executive teaching roles in both public and independent schools. The story of Julie's daughters is published in *Additional Needs! Additional Love!* by May Sharp. Julie is an advocate for community awareness, passionate about listening to families and helping to provide quality family and educational experiences for children and young people with hearing impairment.

Sarah Klenbort - Committee Member

Sarah is the mother of two children, Kaitlyn (6 years old) and Rhiannon (2 years old). When Kaitlyn was two years old, Sarah found out that her eldest daughter was deaf and that her hearing loss was progressive. She was initially devastated, however when she discovered the deaf community, everything changed. Kaitlyn is now bilingual – she speaks and signs. Kaitlyn attends her local public school and also attends Thomas Pattison School for the deaf one day a week.

Sarah admits that it has been a continual struggle to keep up Auslan due to the lack of resources and for this reason, she joined PODC to try to open up the signing options for other families with deaf children.

Professionally, Sarah teaches literature at Sydney University and writes fiction novels and short stories.

Kate Kennedy – PODC Co-ordinator, Information and Advocacy

Kate is a parent of three teenagers, two of whom have a hearing loss. She was a past Committee Member for three years prior to taking the role of Information and Advocacy Co-coordinator. In her professional life, Kate has worked in the IT training arena for many years and has had her own small business in the past. She feels strongly about the need for unbiased information and support for parents of deaf children so that they can make informed choices about their child's future.

Allison McNally — Administration and Marketing Assistant

Allison has recently returned to employment after taking time off to raise her three young children, now aged 7, 5 and 4. Prior to having a family, her background was in public relations and event management. Allison currently works two days per week and is very happy to be working again with such a dynamic and forward thinking organisation.

PODC Balance Sheet

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE

| | 2013 | 2012 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Cash at Bank | | |
| Cheque Account - St George | 5,274.26 | 5,947.59 |
| Gift Fund 471 Account - St George | 735.36 | 18,789.06 |
| Fundraising Account - St George | 846.79 | 5,836.57 |
| Term Deposit Account | 20,000.00 | - |
| TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS | 26,856.41 | 30,573.22 |
| TOTAL ASSETS | 26,856.41 | 30,573.22 |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES | | |
| Reimbursements to DCA* | - | 720.46 |
| Net GST Payable | 56.00 | (77.00) |
| TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES | 56.00 | 643.46 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES | 56.00 | 23,958.83 |
| NET ASSETS/(LIABILITIES) | 26,800.41 | 23,958.83 |
| EQUITY | | |
| Accumulated Surplus at the start of the year | 29,929.76 | 26,316.57 |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for year | (3,129.35) | 3,613.20 |
| ACCUMULATED SURPLUS | 26,800.41 | 29,929.76 |

* 2012 comparative amended for error referred to in Statement of Income and Expenditure.

Income and Expenditure Statement

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE

| | 2013 | 2012 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| INCOME | | |
| Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care Funding* | 88,966.71 | 109,551.72 |
| Memberships & Donations | 5,056.50 | 3,250.45 |
| Sales | 377.82 | - |
| Interest Received | 73.18 | 175.59 |
| DCA subsidy/(contribution) | 8,302.30 | (668.43) |
| TOTAL INCOME | <u>102,776.50</u> | <u>112,309.34</u> |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| Accounting & Business Support - DCA Recovery | 6,408.00 | 7,058.04 |
| Advertising and Promotion | - | 301.79 |
| Bank Charges | 291.99 | 210.23 |
| Cleaning | 978.25 | 1,677.00 |
| Client Support Services | 471.80 | 143.63 |
| Committee Expenses | 400.00 | 9,385.82 |
| Entertainment | 387.81 | 1,076.45 |
| Insurance | 1,887.45 | - |
| Interpreting | 2,747.07 | 5,899.90 |
| Office & Meeting Expenses | 836.43 | 1,463.17 |
| Membership Fees Paid | 71.72 | 59.09 |
| Motor Vehicle Expenses | 1,716.37 | 1,066.93 |
| Printing, Postage & Stationery | 7,603.46 | 7,749.36 |
| Publications and Information Resources | 680.89 | 832.50 |
| Rent & Utilities | 2,080.51 | 1,714.52 |
| Salaries | 69,981.11 | 56,676.80 |
| Superannuation | 1,960.29 | 4,981.77 |
| Workers Compensation | 638.67 | 1,043.86 |
| Recruitment Expenses | 225.00 | |
| Staff Training & Amenities | 1,010.98 | 506.81 |
| Telephone & IT | 3,626.84 | 2,816.68 |
| Travel and Accommodation | 1,630.40 | 3,431.11 |
| Sundry Expenses | 270.81 | 600.69 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | <u>105,905.86</u> | <u>108,696.15</u> |
| SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) | <u>(3,129.35)</u> | <u>3,613.20</u> |

* 2012 includes grant income of \$23,315.37 received but not recognised in error as income in the prior year's Statement of Income and Expenditure. The correction of this error has been reflected in these financial statements in the 2012 comparative by increasing income and reducing the amount shown as creditors in the Balance Sheet, respectively by \$23,315.37.

Acknowledgements

Parents of Deaf Children relies on a government grant provided by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) to provide support, information and advocacy services for families. We acknowledge with gratitude their financial support and also that of Deaf Children Australia.

We also rely on memberships and tax deductible donations. We would like to thank Rosalie Judith White and Robyn Herps for their kind donations to PODC.

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