



# Annual Report

2022 - 2023



**If you've met  
one person with  
Autism, you've  
met one person  
with Autism.**

**- Dr. Stephen Shore**

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## Chair Report



**Daniel Munter**  
Chair  
(June 2023 – Present)

### **It has been an absolute rollercoaster for Different Journeys this past year.**

We have grown immensely since July 2022 in all facets; programs and events, carers support, impact, presence and internally as an organisation. The growth of the organisation is a real challenge, but the team has done amazing work to ensure that with our growth, that our values do not become diluted, and we continue to strive for our organisational mission to keep connecting the autistic community. It has been amazing to see the team grow across Victoria, including the valuable work that has been done in the Bendigo region.

To reflect on the year, I'd like to propose an analogy of Different Journeys being a cake. There have been so many ingredients this year – peer support dinners and events mixed with carers supports as our base, with a sprinkle of youth consultation work, a splash of autism advocacy, a pinch of employment supports and a healthy dash of innovation! However, the icing on the cake has been Mel's recognition as a recipient of the Order of Australia Medal – for her work in the social sector. It is amazing to see Mel get the recognition that she deserves for the work she puts in for Different Journeys.

I wanted to take a moment to thank Mel, Merrin and our team of staff and volunteers for all the hard work that you do year-round to make our events and programs such a success.

With the dedication of the team, the knowledge that you all hold and continue to grow, and our dedication to valuing lived experience, the Different Journeys' community will continue to thrive.

I would also like to use this time to thank our Board of directors, whose knowledge, expertise, drive, and support have guided the organisation for the past year. We appreciate your time, effort, conversations, and dedication to the organisation, and to continue working alongside you all. A special shout out for Nick Pritchard, for your support in chairing the organisation for the past few years, and your commitment to increasing and supporting Different Journeys governance functions. We would not be thriving in this growth period without your support and expertise.

We continue to look forward to serving Different Journeys and the autistic community.

Well Wishes,

**DAN**

**Daniel Munter**  
Chair: June 2023 – Present



# Chief Executive Officer Report



**Mel Spencer OAM**  
CEO and Co-Founder

## Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report.

As I was reflecting on the past 12 months, looking at stats and all the hard data funding bodies seem to want, it took me back to why we started Different Journeys. It had nothing to do with data. It was all about finding a place where our autistic and carer community felt safe and accepted. A place where we could celebrate our lives.

This is still the overriding factor and the number one consideration at Different Journeys. It is the absolute essence of everything we do. As you will see in this annual report, we have diversified and grown, and our autistic individuals and their families firmly remain at the heart of our peer-support organisation.

The impacts of our shared work with our community speak for themselves. Our autistic and carer community show their trust in what we collectively do by showing up again and again to our events, information evenings, one on one support sessions and other programs. It gives me great joy to

watch the positive interactions at our events, and to hear people's stories about how their lives are changed by our Different Journeys' community.

Creating a place where our community can be themselves and can control how they want to be at our events is fundamental to what we do. At our teen events we introduced a wristband system to communicate how interactive people wish to be. One young man had been successfully attending our events for six months by setting himself up at a table, popping his headphones on, and enjoying his meal and playing the Kahoot quiz without speaking to anyone. His mum was then able to have some precious time to herself. Our event was fully meeting the family's needs at the time in accordance with his needs and wishes as shown by his wristband.

At a recent dinner, he felt safe enough to approach another teen and initiate a game of connect our. From here things grew. He soon asked if he could write and present the Kahoot quiz.

With support, our young man got up on the microphone for the first time, read out all the questions and showed his great sense of humour. His mum was able to share in and celebrate his success.

The pride and confidence that we saw in this young man, and the joy his mum experienced is why Merin and I started Different Journeys. Our peer support community is all about creating opportunities like this. It's about celebrating everyone's journey on their own terms, whilst giving carers time out and time to celebrate with others who understand. We create a place to belong. A place where everyone is different.

Over the last 12 months we have successfully expanded our services and presence in Bendigo and surrounds. We now have six casual peer-support staff in Bendigo and demand for our carer and community services is increasing. Over the last 12 months we provided more than 40 events across Bendigo and Heathcote. These included Carer Cuppas at the Bendigo Club and Bendigo Tafe. Our regular Bendigo Teen Peer support event continues to grow, we delivered a range of parent and carer info events and established our new Blokes Dinner. I wish to acknowledge and thank our new partners at the Bendigo



Autism Aspergers Group (BAAG), Heathcote Health and Lifely for their support and assistance in making this happen.

Consolidating and expanding our suite of carer services has been a major theme for us this year. The need for carer services is overwhelming.

Far too many unpaid carers are left without a voice and without the supports they need. Far too many carers don't know who to turn to when they need help, are unsure how to connect into services or don't feel empowered to gain the support they are entitled to. By supporting our unpaid carers, we are in turn supporting our young people to allow them to be the best version of themselves they can be. Carers innately trust carers; those people who have walked a path similar to their own.

Through our one-on-one carer peer support program we walk alongside carers to enable them to navigate the fragmented and complicated support system. We empower them to take up opportunities and to engage with other carer families in similar situations.

We seek to change the trauma many carers live with by providing safe places where carers can access flexible peer support, based on their own needs. Our person-centred, stepped care approach allows carers to engage with supports at their own pace. Our education, information and celebration events provide inclusive, safe, and supportive environments in which to provide both peer-based and professional supports. Put simply – we look after each other.





“I’ve been there for 5 years, we are looking after people, looking after friends and families, the best part is we have a lot of events, BBQs to swim nights to dinner, to lunches and to all events.”

Bring on 2024 and let’s see what else we can achieve together. I’m really excited about the new opportunities that are already happening – our growing carer peer support, our new relationships with new supporters, and an emerging advocacy role.

None of what we have achieved to date would have been possible without a great team. All our Different Journeys’ members, volunteers, staff, and program participants are part of our success. Each and every one of you.

You are making an enormous difference. Your impact is life changing.

Inclusion is connection. Without connection, we don’t have community. By connecting with each other we grow an inclusive celebratory community.

Cheers,

**MEL**

**Mel Spencer OAM**  
CEO and Co-Founder

Our Different Journeys’ team has expanded significantly to allow us to deliver over 200 events in the past year. This is an extraordinary achievement. It has been inspiring to watch the improvements to our recruitment and onboarding processes. We have made them more neuro-affirming, accessible and inclusive.

We do not do what we do alone. We partner with many great people and great organisations to best serve our carer and autistic communities. This enables us to achieve our service delivery and advocacy goals. Our partnerships also model to our own community that help and support comes in many different forms and that we need to be flexible and accessible. We are grateful to all our partners, supporters, volunteers and people watching from the sidelines.

The more people we engage with, the better the support will be in the future for our autistic and carer communities.

Our goal is to broaden our programs into new locations. To do this we need to find more diverse and sustainable funding. We want to keep creating more flexible, responsive and empowering ways for our autistic and carer communities to meet their own needs.

Advocacy is crucial. We need to keep finding ways to constructively tell our stories. We need to help policy makers, funders and service providers to understand our reality and assist them to better empower and support us. We must keep talking out our challenges and celebrations.



# A Celebration of Autism.

## What we do and how we succeed

Different Journeys adopts a social model of disability and seeks to change the societal constraints which disable Autistic people, including a lack of community information and understanding. Leading Autism expert Tony Attwood says, "People with Autism don't suffer from Autism, they suffer from the way people treat them".

When an individual encounters difficulties, the social model does not ask what is wrong with the person. Instead, our approach considers how the surrounding environment may be impacting that person. Our work seeks to identify and change how institutions such as schools, workplaces, and services, in conjunction with cultural norms disable Autistic people and their carers due to a lack of understanding, acceptance, and accommodation.

Our peer-support work therefore focussed on both supporting and empowering individuals, as well as taking sustainable partnership action to inform others about the actions and approaches that are needed to enable the full participation of Autistics and carers in all areas of community life.

Different Journeys is a conduit which provides the wider community with opportunities to connect with us, to embrace our Autism community and to find ways to support, empower and enable Autistic people and their families.



"We came to Different Journeys for the swim nights and we found that having the space just for autistic people and the people who love us is much more accessible and much more calming than being in a general public space where we're kind of at the mercy of other people's noises and movements and also, questioning looks and behave as our authentic autistic self.

There's some of a sense of being one big family and everyone starts to get to know each other; I've made some friends outside of Different Journeys who I catch up with outside of these events. So it's a stepping stone into the community and greater belonging. I want to say the more the merrier! Please come and be our friend!"

# What we do and how we succeed

**We are neurodiverse and carer affirming in all we do and say.**

## LGBTQIA

We supported and strengthened queer voices and participation in our organisation through dedicated roles, consultation days, resources, and events. Our practices were designed to support gendered and non-binary spaces which are safe and inclusive. We focused on supporting queer young people who experience disproportionate isolation and limited access to services. This included building community-safe resources, and queer-friendly neuro-accessible print and digital resources for the benefit of our whole organisation now and into the future.

## BENDIGO

**By Leah Thomas, BAAG**



During the last 12 months BAAG working with Different Journeys have been continuing to build their strong membership via our Carer Cuppas, Bendigo Teen dinners and Bendigo Blokes Dinners. Highlights from our events are:

- Our Carer Cuppas keep growing every month.
- The strong friendships that have developed between our carers that attend regularly.
- So many people have commented how they don't feel alone since coming to our events.

Being able to provide The Blokes Dinner, our male carers are so often forgotten, it's wonderful to see so many interested and wanting to attend.

We hope to start a regular Bendigo Adults event due to continual requests for this to occur, but need funding to do so. BAAG continues to research options for one off family events. We welcome your ideas & suggestions!

## COVID

We developed and provided information about COVID Positive Pathways at our events and via our digital resources. We demonstrated how to provide targeted care and support for autistic people with COVID who need help to recover or who experience barriers to accessing care. We highlighted that COVID medicines are now available for at risk people with disabilities to manage COVID at home and prevent them from needing hospital care.

## GROWTH/HIGHLIGHTS

**We grew our neurodiverse and carers teams.**

**Our Carer service is now statewide.**

**The Carers Cuppas have seen a massive expansion.**

**We started a Blokes dinner.**

**Covid Impacts - creating videos and support for the neurodivergent community.**

**Our CEO Mel Spencer receiving an Order of Australia Medal recognising her work within the autism and carer space.**

**Family Camp - trying to explain in words the sense of belonging and shared community at Family Camp is almost impossible – it was life changing.**

**Christmas Gift Wrapping at Knox Westfield. Having supportive spaces offered to enable our community to participate in a way that acknowledges and meets their needs.**

# Impacts



**232**  
events run

**4000**  
unique individuals  
connected with  
across Victoria



**41**

representation from  
41 different Local  
Government Areas



**1010**  
carers worked  
with individually

**56%**  
autistic

**36**  
Employees

**22%**  
lgbtqia+

**15%**  
lgbtqia+

**20**  
Volunteers\*

**61%**  
carers

**25%**  
carers

**55%**  
autistic



**1,000**  
12 month increase  
of new FB members



**12,000**  
Social Media people reached  
each month^



**1,000**  
Individual website  
users per month^

### - EVENTS CATEGORIES INCLUDE -

**Autistic Teen peer support • Autism Family Camps • Autistic Adult peer support • Carers Cuppas • Carer education events • Carer support events**

### - TYPES OF EVENTS -

**Autistic Adult peer Support events • Autistic Teen peer support events • Carers including Carers Cuppas and 1:1 peer mentoring support and Blokes dinner • Information and Education Sessions • Autism Bowls Events • Autism Swim Events • LGBTQIA+ events • Community Education • Advocacy**

\*who work regularly and are not also employees  
^on average

## Vision, Mission, Purpose



### Mission

To create ways for the autism community to connect, empower and support each other and replace isolation, prejudice and ignorance with connections, hope and community.



### Vision

A future where the autistic community freely participate in public life facilitated by the community awareness and understanding.



## How we change our plan, into a reality

- ✓ We support celebrations
- ✓ We provide connections.
- ✓ We create and build communities.
- ✓ We change people's lives.
- ✓ We exchange isolation and prejudice with connection and community.
- ✓ We listen. We engage and involve our community in the design and delivery of everything we do.



## Board Members



**Nick Pritchard**  
Chair until 23/5/2023



**Daniel Munter**  
Chair from 23/5/2023



**Mel Spencer OAM**  
CEO/co-founder



**Merrin Ayton**  
Co-founder



**Jesse Baker**  
Secretary



**Matthew Parker**  
Treasurer



**Stacey Rabba**  
Board member



**Ru Ying Cai**  
Board Member



**Fred Brumhead**  
Consultant to Board



# The Different Journeys Community.

## A word from our carer peer support team

**Megan joined Different Journeys in July 2021 as the organisation's first Carer Peer Support Officer.**

Megan cares for multiple people in her family across different generations and caring conditions. We asked Megan to describe her role as a Carer Peer Support Officer.



**Megan**  
Carer Peer  
Support Officer

*"My role as a Peer Support Officer is to connect with people who care for others. Typically, these people are either not connected to services or don't know how to connect with services. They also don't know what services and supports to connect with.*

*There is so much information out there, carers don't always know where to start and sometimes, just having an informal conversation with someone about what is going on in their lives, enables them to retain information more readily.*

*I use my life experiences, my journey as a carer, my knowledge and my extensive network of others who have also been on this journey of knowing what services and supports they can ask for and how to ask for them.*

*I know how hard it is and what it feels like to be isolated and not know where to start. I have also been there; I inform and empower others and reassure them they are not alone and they will be ok.*

*I don't have all the answers, but I endeavour to align carers with as much information as I think they need. Importantly, I share what I know and provide each carer with the reassurance that they are doing great job and that there are people here to support them in their journey.*

*As carers, we all have a different journey."*

**MEGAN**

**Megan**  
Carer Peer Support Officer

## Case Study 1

### Young Family

**Carolyn, Damien, Wil and Jai Young regularly attend our Autism Family Swim nights.**

Both boys are energetic, enthusiastic, fragile, autistic, have an intellectual disability and limited speech.

Both boys have thrived as active members of our Different Journeys community. They love attending our swim and other events. They have grown in confidence and become more independent.

It is marvellous to see the way the boys embrace our events. Jai ensures that we capture his diving on video every time he attends. Both boys now individually go up and choose their meals and how it is served, showing independence, choice and control over what they eat.

The boys have also moved from sitting by themselves to happily sitting amongst everyone and feeling comfortable being part of a group. Every aspect of the swim event is a highlight to Wil. He loves the drive in the car - especially the trip home when all the street and building lights are shining brightly.

This family also are regulars on our Family camps that we deliver in partnership with Interchange Outer East, and Carolyn can often be seen at our Lilydale Carers Cuppas.

*"This is one of the best activities and social event we come to... the boys love water play and since they have started coming along they use to sit and eat by themselves afterwards. Now they sit with other families which is so awesome ....your organisation has done an amazing job to provide this opportunity for our boys and other families like ours."*



## Case Study 2

### Emma & Ellie - Volunteer Mentoring

**Ellie and Emma have been regular participants at our events for several years.**

After attending for a while, they both signed on to become Different Journeys' volunteers and more recently agreed to join our Volunteer Mentorship Program.

Ellie and Emma helped us develop and test out our program. They allowed us to try things out and learn as we went. Ellie and Emma put a lot of faith in us and have given us lots of constructive feedback as we all learned together.

We met with Ellie and Emma regularly and provided them with exposure to a range of experiences and different elements of our organisation.

We tailored our mentoring program based on what Ellie and Emma individually liked. This empowering approach is critical to our success.

They both identified that the new skills and knowledge they have gained have included:

- An understanding of employment systems and how to participate in them (including recruitment).
- Familiarity with core compliance knowledge in Australian workplaces (OH&S, behavioural



standards, privacy and information handling standards, etc).

- Managing time and tasks according to conventional workplace standards.
- Participating in meetings and carrying out follow up tasks.
- Reading, interpreting and following workplace policies.
- Knowing how to present themselves in the workplace.
- Contributing to project design, implementation, and evaluation.

- Understanding event management and coordination.

It has been such a privilege to watch these two individuals grow in confidence and self-esteem, provide us with constructive feedback and fully embrace their roles as regular volunteer team members.

It has been marvellous to watch Ellie and Emma try new things and take on new roles, including working with the art therapist at our recent family camp.

## Success Stories

### JORDAN

Jordan is a young 22 year old autistic man who has transitioned from being a Different Journeys' event attendee to a volunteer to becoming one of our employees.



It has been super exciting to watch Jordan's development, skill building, development of transferrable skills and growth in his all-round awesomeness.

Jordan recently shared the following reflection...

*"I was always the odd kid in school, so it was nice to meet people like me, other people with social limitations and people would be working around that. So it's like, bonding over a movie that's more profound, I suppose.*

*My first time at Different Journeys, that was nice, I enjoyed it. So we sit there and we chat, play video games, movies, everything. That was good.*

*It's a place to meet people that are different, people are like you. Growing up in school, again, I was always the odd one. There weren't a lot of people like me, so it was nice meeting people that were in the same boat.*

*They understood what level I was talking at, and it was like meeting someone on the same wavelength, it was great. That's what I'm pretty excited about and if you're looking for somebody or you're looking to make friends that are on the same wavelength as you and kinda understand things the way you do, Different Journeys is a good place to start!"*

### DAVID & MATT

David and Matt met at our Different Journeys' Maroondah Adult Event in 2018.

They are now best friends. They both came looking for some connections with other autistic people in similar circumstances. As David said, he wanted to find out who else was out there.

*"It gives you a chance to meet other people who are pretty much on the similar, or the same spectrum, that I'm actually on. It's just the opportunity to meet new people. I've got a friend named Matt, he's 29 years old, and he's hyperactive, and very fun to hang out with.*

*You get a chance just to socially interact with other people, that's on whatever wavelength, or autism spectrum that they may be on. Chances to meet people and just basically share interest, any special interests that they have, whether it could be Marvel, Lego or whatever.*

*And it's basically so truly interactive and the change to also play some board games if need be."*



*"Getting to know how other people manage differences and difficulties and also being able to share the good stories too, the great experiences in learning what worked for others and wondering if that would work for us and just investigating and researching. It's been a really good information help for us too."*

## A Parent's Perspective

### GEORGIE

**My son had left school and started looking for work and was extremely frustrated, not finding any work and not having a friendship group.**

Once you leave school, if you don't keep any friends that you've made there, you lose your friendship group.

When we first came to Different Journeys, I didn't know anything about disability support, NDIS support, or what was out in the community. We were just winging it by ourselves. The only government support we knew of was the basic unemployment support through Centrelink.

My son got different things out of attending events than I did. Feeling not alone any more. I've made friends, as well. Other carers that understand what you're commenting about. Because autism is so different. It's not a medical thing that people can understand that you can get better from. Most people have never worked with somebody with autism, they have no idea what you're going through. They just go "oh - disability - ok".

Yes, Different Journeys peer-support is a real sharing thing. Different people have tried different things, different agencies, different support networks, different support people so it's a real sharing thing. The longer I was there, the more confident I got. After a while we were up and running and didn't need as much help anymore.

I do remember the first time at Different Journeys because we had to stand in the queues for the meals and standing in the queue was where I met a couple of people who just spoke to me so openly and honestly. I was like - this is awesome.

**"I kept going and supported new people who would come in. You'd get parent who would come in who were totally overwhelmed and you'd sort of feel you've got to give them a hug and let them know it will get better and you've got support now. It's really life changing, for some people."**

We're part of the big family. I don't know how to put it into words. The tribe. We often call it "the tribe". To belong to a group that understood you and helped you, more importantly, not just understood you but helped you. And listened because sometimes you just want to be listened to.

In a very non-judgmental environment, that's a huge one. They're a safe space, I don't have to worry about the kids or what's happening. It's just a safe space, that room, when you enter is a safe space. If you're having a bad day or bad week you know in that room is someone who will give you a hug, someone will listen and let you get it out.



**"I'm sitting here listening thinking that as much as we are connecting carers, we also need a roadmap for employers and agencies to make changes."**



## Community Involvement

Different Journeys prides itself on being able to represent the views on our community on a variety of local and statewide committees and boards.

**Lilydale Suburban  
Revitalisation Board**

**Boronia Suburban  
Revitalisation Board**

**Victorian Autism Plan  
Advisory Group**

**Carer Employment  
Strategic Advisory  
Group**

**Outer Eastern  
Melbourne Carer  
Employment Steering  
Group**

**Bendigo Carer  
Employment Steering  
Group**

**Vic Gov Carer  
Advisory Group**

**Autism Education  
Strategy Advisory group**

# Growing the Different Journeys Community

2022/23 has seen exciting developments within this space.

## Carer Peer Support

Thanks to support from the Victorian Government and due to combining into a consortium with VMCH, we have been able to expand and grow our Carer Peer Support team. We now have 7 in the team that includes a diversity of CALD, LGBTQIA, Mental Health, Education and Health - all with a lived experience focus of caring for an autistic individual. We deliver Carers Cuppas in 5 separate locations as well as our 1:1 peer support program which is individually tailored to meet everyone where they are currently at, in their journey.



## Adult Autism Peer Support Events

Our adult events range in scale and it is the most requested event in many locations where we create a place of belonging and sense of safety to be ourselves. It's a place where we can gain support, information and services.

## Teen Autism Peer Support Events

These events include the whole family whilst being specifically targeted to autistic teens. These events build skills and connections to community. We create pathways to transition participants from enjoying peer supported experiences to independently accessing broader community venues and activities. We want people to celebrate who they are and allow them to be the best version of themselves that they can be.



## Autism Bowls Events

Unlike many other sports and physical activities that can be challenging for neurodiverse community members with poor motor skills, lawn bowls is a low-impact, therapeutic exercise that people with autism can access. It improves fitness, coordination, and confidence for participants of all ages. Our bowls events bring about greater community connection and peer support and help redress the crippling isolation so many of our autistic community and their carers live with.

## Autism Family Swim Events

Current statistics show that autistic individuals are 160 times more likely to drown than a neurotypical person. This is showing the need for, and importance of, our Autism Swim Events. Our swim nights at local community pools enable neurodiverse families to participate in recreational activities they otherwise could not access. They are also vehicles for peer-support, connection and community. We close the pool to the public and is solely accessible for our community. This also provides the venues we work with more information and education about supporting the autism community

## LGBTQIA+

Research shows that neurodiverse people are significantly more likely to identify as LGBTQIA+. Autistic young adults social and communication differences can pose challenges for dating and relationships. If our autistic members are LGBTQIA+ these differences can exacerbate the challenges they experience in understanding, accepting, and expressing their sexuality and gender identity.

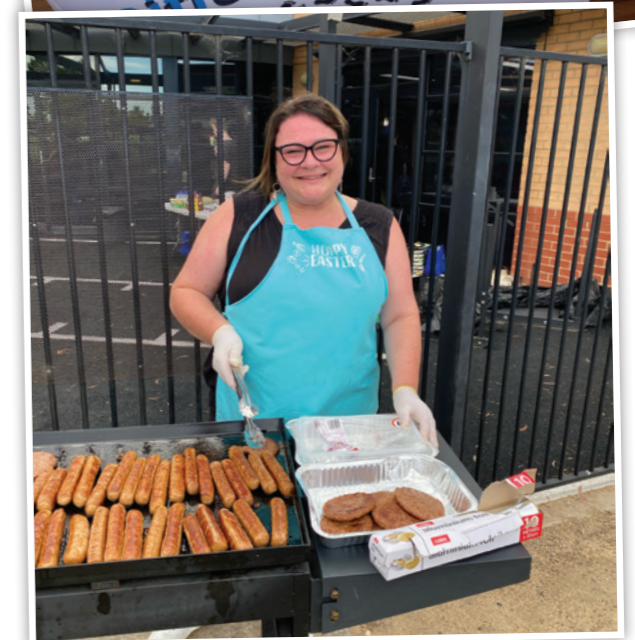
We engage LGBTQIA+ support staff at events to provide peer support to all participants and to contribute to the celebration of our diverse community. We also proudly run dedicated LGBTQIA+ events.

## Expos/Festivals/Gift Wrapping

We have had a greater presence at more expos and festivals over the year showcasing our own personalised tent, due to our generous supporters Pressroom Partners. It's been great to watch the involvement of our community being able to safely experience and try new things within our support circle. Our continued opportunity to raise much needed \$ through our Christmas gift wrapping with Knox Westfield is truly appreciated.

## Advocacy

We have successfully and sustainably advocated for Autistics and their parents, and caregivers. We work with our community to actively listen to their needs and to determine the key issues impacting on Autism that our advocacy effort will target. Our advocacy work is strengths-based, positive and constructive. We broadly advocate for our autistic community with the government, private, and community sector service planners and providers who deliver health, disability, education, and employment services.



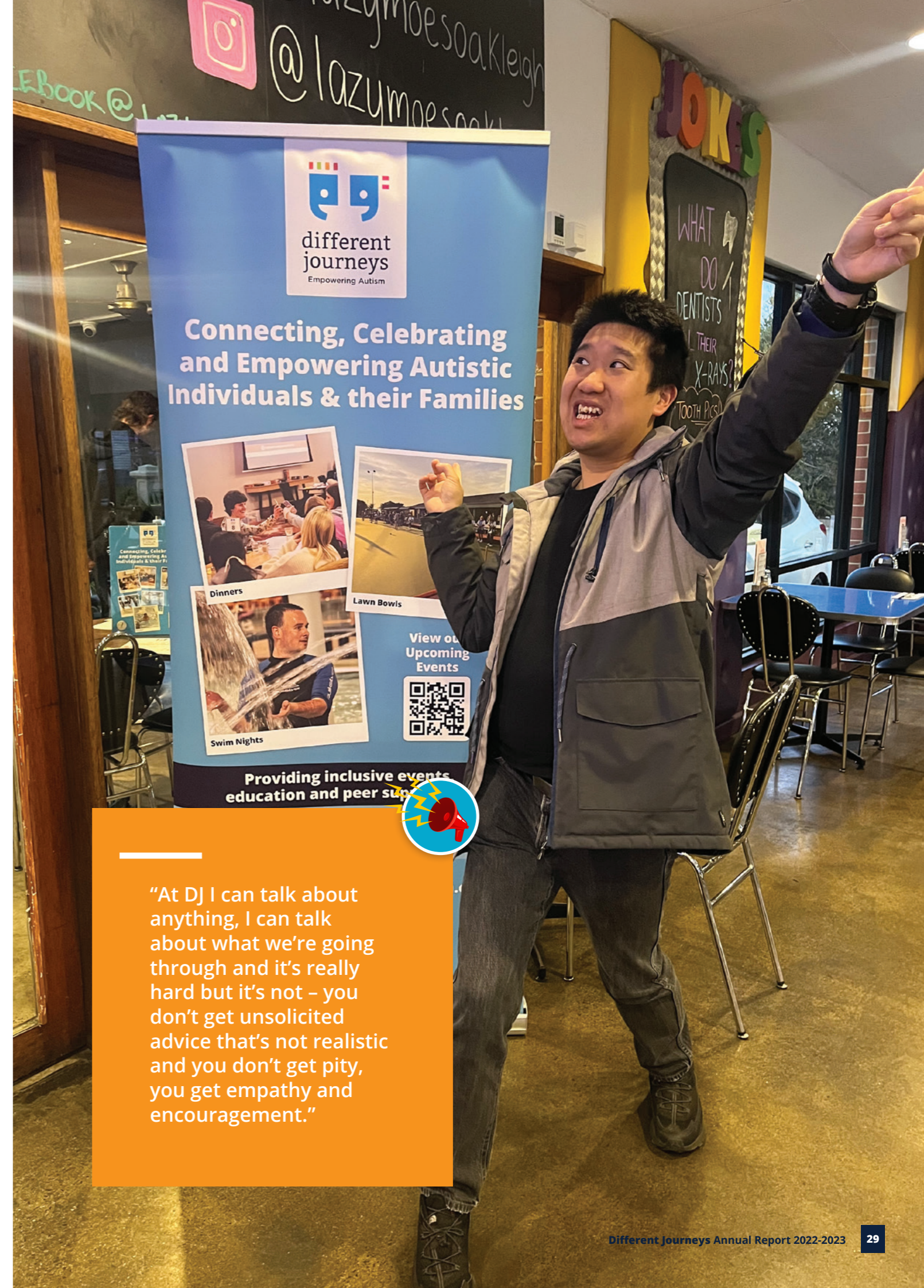
## Partners And Supporters

**Thank you to our autism community which includes our autistic individuals and their carers and supporters.**

our unwavering dedication empowers our autistic individuals to thrive socially. You make a lasting impact and create brighter futures. Together we build a more inclusive world where everyone can socialise with confidence.

**Your support changes lives!**

- Amaze
- Belgravia Leisure
- Bendigo Tafe
- Blue Fit
- Boronia Rotary
- Box Hill Tafe
- Castlefield Community House
- Chirnside Park Bowling Club
- Club Kilsyth
- Consulting by Design
- Department Families Fairness and Housing
- Department of Health
- Diamond Creek Bowling club
- Engage Grant
- Greensborough RSL
- Headspace Greensborough
- Heathcote Community House
- Heathcote Health
- Interchange Outer East
- Investor Relations Strategy
- Kincome
- Knox City Council
- Lively
- Life Saving Victoria
- Maroondah Council
- Mullum Road Clinic
- Multi Marketing Solutions
- MyAbility
- Nillumbik Council
- Pressroom Partners
- SodaStream
- Stephanie Crawford and Associates
- Swinburne Tafe
- The Bendigo Club
- VMCH
- Westfield Knox
- Your Library



“At DJ I can talk about anything, I can talk about what we’re going through and it’s really hard but it’s not – you don’t get unsolicited advice that’s not realistic and you don’t get pity, you get empathy and encouragement.”

# Financials

## STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grants/Funding Agreements	1,424,220	400,208
Donations received	24,883	3,701
Interest	6,084	135
Other	98,623	76,654
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,553,810</b>	<b>480,698</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Accounting fees	12,325	15,727
Advertising and promotion	29,863	3,992
Bank charges	393	653
Board Fees	162	772
Cost of sales	221,249	81,260
Depreciation expense	1,113	931
Professional Fees	107,614	96,972
Salary Packaging Cost	2,881	52,772
Salaries and wages	569,299	187,203
Superannuation	56,552	24,631
Other costs	87,562	46,872
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,089,013</b>	<b>511,785</b>
Current period surplus/(deficit) before income tax	464,797	(31,087)
Income tax expense	-	-
Net current period surplus/(deficit) after income tax	464,797	(31,087)
Other Comprehensive Income	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income for the period attributable to members</b>	<b>464,797</b>	<b>(31,087)</b>

## STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Trading receipts	1,484,922	470,274
Payments to suppliers and employees	(1,221,374)	(244,136)
Interest received	6,084	135
Interest costs	-	-
<b>Net cash generated by operating activities</b>	<b>269,632</b>	<b>226,273</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Payment for property, plant and equipment and other assets	-	(2,234)
<b>Net cash (used in) investing activities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(2,234)</b>
Net increase (decrease) in cash held	269,632	224,039
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial period	486,367	262,328
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial period</b>	<b>755,999</b>	<b>486,367</b>
Reconciliation of cash flow from operations with surplus after income tax		
Surplus/(deficit) after income tax	464,797	(31,087)
Non-cash flows		
Depreciation and amortisation	1,113	931
(Profit)/loss on sale of property, plant and equipment	-	-
Changes in operating assets and liabilities		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables and prepayments	(62,804)	(10,289)
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	(166,940)	248,624
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	33,466	18,094
	<b>269,632</b>	<b>226,273</b>



# How to give to Different Journeys

**“Inclusion is connection. Without connection, we don’t have community. By connecting with each other, we grow an inclusive celebratory community.”**

**– Mel Spencer OAM, Co-Founder and CEO**

Different Journeys is a small not for profit organisation. We are a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and have Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status. We operate on small budgets and are reliant on government grants to do our work. We welcome donations, support and bequests to help us achieve our vision – ‘A future where autistic people fully participate in public life facilitated by community awareness and understanding.’

### What will your donation achieve?

By donating to Different Journeys you are supporting us to help reshape the current statistics for autistic people and their carers which related to employment, education, mental health and suicide ideation and change these statistics for the better. These high rates of co-occurring mental health conditions in autistic people coupled with inadequate support, have led to the ‘mental health crisis’ in autism (Mandy, 2022).

We want to keep our event costs down so they are affordable for everyone. Not everyone is on the NDIS. Your donation will mean we can run events at more locations, with more people, more connections and more inclusion for everyone.

### Donate

[my.differentjourneysautism.com/donations](https://my.differentjourneysautism.com/donations)

### Volunteer

[www.differentjourneysautism.com/vacancies-volunteering](https://www.differentjourneysautism.com/vacancies-volunteering)

### Share and like

 /differentjourneysautism

 /organisation/differentjourneys/

 /differentjourneysautism/

Different Journeys is a registered charity under ACNC (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission) and has DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) status. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible and a receipt from Different Journeys will be provided.



DIFFERENT JOURNEYS INCORPORATED

SPECIAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL REPORT 2023

DIFFERENT JOURNEYS INCORPORATED

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COMMITTEE'S REPORT

The committee members submit the financial report of Different Journeys Incorporated for the financial period ended 30 June 2023.

Committee Members

The names of committee members throughout the period and at the date of this report are:

- Nick Pritchard (Chair – 20/10/2022)
Mel Spencer
Merrin Ayton
Jesse Baker (Secretary)
Daniel Munter (Deputy Chair)
Matt Parker (Treasurer - appointed 15/9/2022)
Ru Ying Cai
Judi Venten
Jodi Runje (Chair – resigned 11/10/2022)
Kean Spencer (Deputy Chair – resigned 12/2/2023)
Kevin O'Shaughnessy (Treasurer – resigned 27/7/2022)
Aspasia Stacey Rabba (appointed 24/4/2023)

Principal Activities

The Association was incorporated on 22 September 2020. The principal activities of the Association during the financial period were to provide support activities to the Autistic community.

Significant Changes

No significant changes in the nature of these activities occurred during the period.

Operating Result

The surplus after providing for income tax for the 2023 financial period amounted to \$460,117 (2022: deficit of \$31,087).

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the members of the committee.

[Handwritten signature]

Dated this ..... day of ..... 2023

DIFFERENT JOURNEYS INCORPORATED

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grants/Funding Agreements	1,424,220	400,208
Donations received	24,883	3,701
Interest	6,084	135
Other	98,623	76,654
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,553,810</b>	<b>480,698</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Accounting fees	12,325	15,727
Advertising and promotion	29,863	3,992
Bank charges	393	653
Board Fees	162	772
Cost of sales	221,249	81,260
Depreciation expense	1,113	931
Professional Fees	107,614	96,972
Salary Packaging Cost	2,881	52,772
Salaries and wages	569,299	187,203
Superannuation	56,552	24,631
Other costs	87,562	46,872
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>1,089,013</b>	<b>511,785</b>
Current period surplus/(deficit) before income tax	464,797	(31,087)
Income tax expense	-	-
Net current period surplus/(deficit) after income tax	464,797	(31,087)
Other Comprehensive Income	-	-
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ATTRIBUTABLE TO MEMBERS</b>	<b>464,797</b>	<b>(31,087)</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

DIFFERENT JOURNEYS INCORPORATED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
AS AT 30 JUNE 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash on hand and at bank	4	755,999	486,367
Accounts receivable and other receivables	2	73,635	10,831
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>829,634</b>	<b>497,198</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	3	1,258	2,371
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>1,258</b>	<b>2,371</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>830,892</b>	<b>499,569</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Accounts payable and other payables	5	317,758	484,698
Employee provisions	6	53,017	19,551
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>370,775</b>	<b>504,249</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>370,775</b>	<b>502,249</b>
<b>NET ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)</b>		<b>460,117</b>	<b>(4,680)</b>
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>			
Retained surplus/(deficit)		460,117	(4,680)
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>		<b>460,117</b>	<b>(4,680)</b>

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

DIFFERENT JOURNEYS INCORPORATED

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	Retained Surplus \$	Total \$
<b>Balance at 1 July 2021</b>	26,407	26,407
Total comprehensive income for the period attributable to members of the entity	(31,087)	(31,087)
<b>Balance at 30 June 2022</b>	(4,680)	(4,680)
Total comprehensive income for the period attributable to members of the entity	464,797	464,797
<b>Balance at 30 June 2023</b>	460,117	460,117

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

DIFFERENT JOURNEYS INCORPORATED

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Trading receipts	1,484,922	470,274
Payments to suppliers and employees	(1,221,374)	(244,136)
Interest received	6,084	135
Interest costs	-	-
Net cash generated by operating activities	269,632	226,273
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Payment for property, plant and equipment and other assets	-	(2,234)
Net cash (used in) investing activities	-	(2,234)
Net increase (decrease) in cash held	269,632	224,039
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial period	486,367	262,328
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial period	755,999	486,367
<b>Reconciliation of cash flow from operations with surplus after income tax</b>		
Surplus/(deficit) after income tax	464,797	(31,087)
<b>Non-cash flows</b>		
Depreciation and amortisation	1,113	931
(Profit)/loss on sale of property, plant and equipment	-	-
Changes in operating assets and liabilities		
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables and prepayments	(62,804)	(10,289)
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	(166,940)	248,624
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	33,466	18,094
	269,632	226,273

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023**
**Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies**

The committee have prepared the financial statements on the basis that the association is a non-reporting entity because there are no users dependent on general purpose financial statements. The financial statements are therefore special purpose financial statements that have been prepared in order to meet the requirements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act 2012* and associated requirements. The association is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian Accounting Standards.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements specified by all Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations, and the disclosure requirements that are mandatory under the Australian Accounting Standards applicable to entities reporting under the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act 2012* and the significant accounting policies disclosed below, which the committee have determined are appropriate to meet the needs of members. Such accounting policies are consistent with the previous period unless stated otherwise.

The financial statements, except for the cash flow information, have been prepared on an accrual basis and are based on historical costs unless otherwise stated in the notes.

The following significant accounting policies have been adopted in the preparation of these financial statements.

**a. Income Tax**

The Association is believed to be exempt from income tax.

**b. Property, Plant and Equipment**

Leasehold improvements and office equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all Property, Plant and Equipment is depreciated over the useful lives of the assets to the Association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use.

Leasehold improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements.

**c. Impairment of Assets**

At the end of each reporting period, the committee reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, an impairment test is carried out on the asset by comparing the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value in use, to the asset's carrying amount. Any excess of the asset's carrying amount over its recoverable amount is recognised in the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income.

**d. Employee Provisions**

Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to the end of the reporting period. Employee provisions have been measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liability is settled.

**e. Provisions**

Provisions are recognised when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured. Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation at the end of the reporting period.

**f. Cash on Hand and at Bank**

Cash on hand includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with banks, and other short-term highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023**
**Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (cont'd)**
**g. Accounts Receivables and Other Debtors**

Accounts receivables and other debtors include amounts due receivable from donors. Receivables expected to be collected within 12 months of the end of the reporting period are classified as current assets. All other receivables are classified as non-current assets.

**h. Revenue and Other Income**

*The Association has applied AASB 15: Revenue from Contracts with Customers (AASB 15).*

Where the Association has a contract with a customer, the Association recognises revenue when or as it transfers control of goods or services to the customer. The Association accounts for an arrangement as a contract with a customer if the following criteria are met:

- the arrangement is enforceable; and
- the arrangement contains promises (that are also known as performance obligations) to transfer goods or services to the customer (or to other parties on behalf of the customer) that are sufficiently specific so that it can be determined when the performance obligation has been satisfied.

Grants are recognised on an accruals basis upon confirmation of grant entitlement. Grants received that relate to periods which straddle balance dates have been treated as grants received in advance and appear as other current liabilities in the statement of financial position.

Other Revenue is recognised when the amount of the revenue can be measured reliably, it is probable that economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the entity and specific criteria relating to the type of revenue has been satisfied.

*All revenue is recognised at the point of sale/service recognition, and is sourced in Australia.*

*There are no unsatisfied performance obligations.*

Interest revenue is recognised on a proportional basis taking into account the interest rates applicable to financial assets.

*All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and service tax (GST) except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office.*

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023**
**Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (cont'd)****i. Goods and Services Tax (GST)**

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except where the amount of GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivables or payables. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO is included with other receivables or payables in the statement of financial position.

**j. Accounts Payable and Other Payables**

Accounts payable and other payables represent the liability outstanding at the end of the reporting period for goods and services received by the Association during the reporting period that remain unpaid. The balance is recognised as a current liability with the amounts normally paid within 30 days of recognition of the liability.

**k. New Accounting Standards for Application in Future Period**

There are no new Accounting Standards issued by the AASB that are not yet mandatory applicable to the Association, that are expected to have a significant impact on the Association when adopted in future periods.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023**
**Note 2: Accounts Receivables and Other Receivables**

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Accounts Receivable	73,635	10,831
	73,635	10,831

**Note 3: Property, Plant and Equipment**

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Office Equipment – cost	3,342	3,342
Less accumulated depreciation	(2,084)	(971)
	1,258	2,371

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2023**
**Note 4: Cash on hand**

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Cash at bank	755,999	486,367
Total cash on hand	755,999	486,367

**Note 5: Accounts payable and other payables**

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Trade creditors	30,369	33,493
Superannuation AP	21,267	8,304
PAYG	21,442	6,760
Income In Advance	225,539	436,141
BAAG funds held on account	19,141	-
	317,758	484,698


**Note 6: Employee Provisions**

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Annual leave	53,017	19,551

**Annual Statement of Committee**

We, Mel Spencer & Matthew Parker, being members of the committee of Different Journeys Incorporated certify that:-

The statements attached to this certificate give a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of Different Journeys Incorporated during and at the end of the financial period of the Association ending on 30 June 2023.



Matthew Parker

Signed



Signed

Dated:

**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT JOURNEYS INCORPORATED**

**Report on the Audit of the Financial Report**

**Opinion**

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Different Journeys Incorporated ("the Association"), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the statement of comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the period then ended and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the committee members declaration.

In our opinion, the financial report of the Association is in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission Act 2012 including:

- a. giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the period then ended; and
- b. complying with Australian Accounting Standards the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission Act 2012.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the independence requirements of the and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We confirm that the independence declaration required by the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission Act 2012 which has been given to the committee members of the Association, would be in the same terms if given to the committee members as at the time of this auditor's report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

**Emphasis of Matter- Basis of Accounting**

We draw attention to note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist the association in meeting its requirements under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and the Australian Auditing Standards. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our report is intended solely for the association and should not be distributed to or used by parties other than the association. Our opinion is not modified in respect to this matter.

**Responsibilities of the Committee for the Financial Report**

The Committee of the Association are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the Corporations Act 2001 and the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission Act 2012 and for such internal control as the Committee determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Committee are responsible for assessing the ability of the Association to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the committee members either intend to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS REPORT  
TO THE MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT JOURNEYS INCORPORATED (cont'd)**


**Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the auditing in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of the Committee use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, determined whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Associations ability as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report, or if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the business activities within the Association to express an opinion on the financial report. We are responsible for the direction, supervision and performance of the Association audit. We remain solely responsible for our audit opinion.

We communicate with the committee members regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



Stannards Accountants and Advisors



Michael Shulman  
Partner

Date 28 September 2023





### Get In Touch

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