



Annual Report 2019

SPELD Victoria



Specific Learning Difficulties Association of Victoria
Trading as SPELD-Victoria Inc

ABN 51178974489

Acknowledgement Kate Dilger, photography

Drawn image Sasha Heath, *Hello Tomato*



President's Report

This year marks 50 years since SPELD Victoria was registered as a public benevolent institution. This is an exciting time for us and an opportunity to reflect how far we have come as an organisation.

By any measure, this has been a challenging year. Our financial results, while demonstrating a continued and gradual turnaround of SPELD Victoria's financial position, were slowed by a number of challenges.

The time and resources committed to extensive recruitment efforts, combined with an ATO audit on superannuation for contractors and the integration of the back-office systems, has meant that we could not advance as quickly as we would have liked on structural change.

However, I am extremely confident that the effort put in by the team over this past 12 months will position us well to now reap the rewards of that investment next year.

Even with these head winds, SPELD Victoria achieved some remarkable performances. We doubled the number of Victorians using our services with over 4,000 individuals and families supported.

Over the same period our diagnostic assessment services grew by 13.6% and attendances at our workshops and webcasts increased overall by almost 50%.

Throughout the year we recruited heavily to build up our service and speciality capabilities. We welcomed Ashraf Samsudin, formerly from the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, as our Specialist Education Consultant.

Our staff Psychologist team grew with the recruitment of Laura Uebergang, Jo Spataro, and Dr Kelly Howard, while we also welcomed our first Speech Pathologist, Melinda Schambre, to the team.

This is a clear demonstration of our confidence to build unrivalled depth and capability in this space and to deliver on our Mission of helping Victorians with Specific Learning Difficulties to achieve their full learning potential.

However, none of this would be possible without the support and dedication of our staff, our educational psychologists and our many partners, volunteers and supporters and I thank them all for their efforts. We are looking ahead to a year of progress and renewal where we can reap the benefits of the considerable investment that has been made in the organisation in the past 12 months.

Matt Foran
President, SPELD Victoria

CEO Report



Introduction

Our second year at Donkey Wheel house was another year of consolidation and change with increasing demand for the services we deliver. The service mix remained similar albeit with the inclusion of speech pathology services, an expanded workshop and event program and outreach services.

However with some 10% (or 629,000) Victorians* impacted by Specific Learning Difficulties like Dyslexia, we know we have a way to go! [**Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017*]

Who we helped

Since the previous annual report the number of Victorians our services reached has doubled with over 4,000 individuals and families supported.

Our central location attracted families for diagnostics assessments from over 237 postcode areas across Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. The diagnostic assessment services grew by 13.6% (506 to 575) overall and were expanded to include Speech Pathology services, as well as some outreach to Ballarat, and Mildura.

Attendances at our workshops by parents, teachers and other professionals in Melbourne and in regional Victoria, as well as our webcasts increased overall by 49.6% to 784. In all over 42 workshops were provided, including workshops in Ballarat, Daylesford, Geelong, Mildura, and Sale; Brimbank and Knox.

We also provided consultancy services for two tertiary institutions namely Swinburne University and the University of New England, and this included Professional Development workshops for both universities.

Take-up of our information services offered through our Infoline and online chat facility grew by 25% with some 752 callers receiving support and advice. In addition our Family and Administration Support staff fielded close to 2,000 calls across the year.

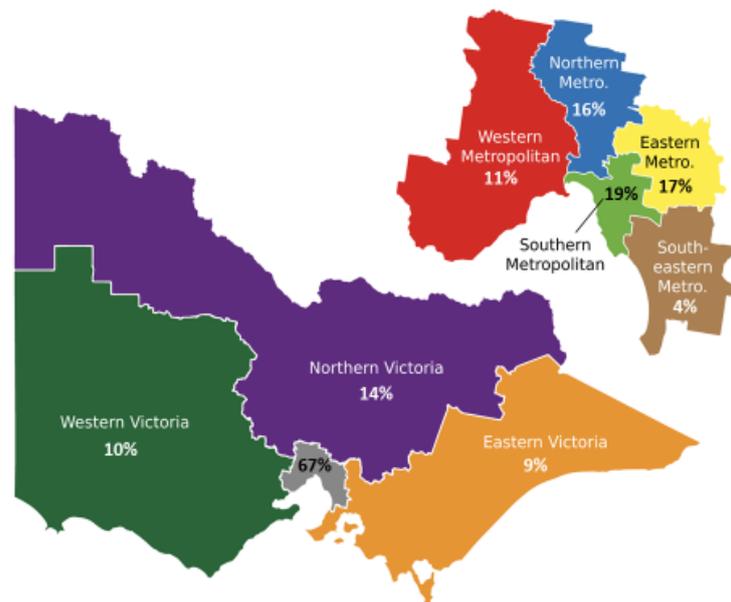
Learning Difficulties in Numbers

With SPELD Victoria rapidly approaching its 50th Anniversary year, the large task of reviewing our 50 years of data to see what could be gleaned from it began. First of all, consent protocols for research purposes have changed over the decades and so Dr Cathy Catroppa and Yasotha V designed new protocols.

By the end of the year the team were developing an Expression of Interest postcard reaching out to all those who have had diagnostic assessments with SPELD Victoria in the past, seeking consent to participate in future research projects. This is an important goal as we aim to improve the lives of the next generation grappling with Specific Learning Difficulties.

Over the year, psychologist Laura Uebergang began reviewing our data to understand the demographic breakdown of those seeking our diagnostic services. This is just the beginning of a very big project. However, what we now know is that of all those who came to SPELD Victoria for a diagnostic assessment in the last year: 55% were male and 45% female; and 72% were in Primary school; 28% Secondary.

We also now know where our visitors are coming from:



Partnerships and Consultancies



Graham Withers Charity Ltd

During the year SPELD Victoria entered into a new partnership with the *Graham Withers Charity Ltd*. Graham's own personal journey dealing with dyslexia, his highly successful career as an Australian drag racing champion and car parts manufacturing business have shaped his desire to support students from low SES backgrounds to access diagnostic assessments for SLDs. As a result, we collaborated with particular schools to achieve assessments for a number of students for whom there would have been no other pathway to achieve this critical learning profile and map. It has been so rewarding to partner with Graham's charity to achieve outcomes that we know will make positive change in the lives of these students.

Swinburne University

Our Memorandum of Understanding with Swinburne was active again this year in a number of ways with a joint webcast in Aug18 covering the topic *Transitioning to University and TAFE with a SLD*; delivery of a two-day Professional Development workshop in Feb19 on Specific Learning Difficulties for Swinburne staff by Ashraf Samsudin; participation in a panel discussion at Swinburne's Employability Week in Mar19; and we engaged Swinburne student Victor Lew to participate in a consultation process facilitated by Deloitte which involved a conversation with a group of 10-14 year olds with dyslexia on behalf of the Department of Education and Training. Victor's presence at this session was inspiring for these students. As reported by their parents, they had until then, never imagined it would be possible for them to aspire to university, simply because of their dyslexia.

We also engaged three further Swinburne students on internships: 2 Masters IT Interns to further support our integration project and a third Bachelor of Business student to undertake a benchmarking study on our former tutoring service.

University of New England

In FY2019 through the efforts of SPELD Victoria's Patron Emeritus Professor Keith Houghton, SPELD Victoria and the University of New England began a collaboration that started with Ashraf Samsudin delivering four PD workshops on SLDs for faculty and administration staff; the preparation of preliminary website information on SLDS for UNE's website; and participation in a university video on SLDs as an introduction for students.

Department of Education & Training (DET)

Our long valued partnership with the Department of Education and Training (DET) continued, and through this we delivered a Parents Program of 16 workshops (11 in Melbourne and 5 in regional Victoria); information and advisory services through Infoline, our online chat facility; and an online training program for teachers on Dyslexia and Interventions. We also continued to provide advice through the Disability Stakeholder Reference Group meetings, and on various matters including the *Inclusive Education Workforce Capability Strategy*; Education State Student Advisory Group, the English Online Interview, Melbourne Declaration Review and the DET Website Project.

AUSPELD

Our participation as part of the AUSPELD network continued and deepened, and included participation in the wonderful DSF-WA conference in March 19, followed by the national tour of Dr Carol Tolman, USA (co-author of *LETRS*); the AUSPELD McDonald's promotional campaign featuring Roald Dahl books with fun activities, quarterly meetings and preparations for a further national tour with Carol Allen on *Creative Literacy* to take place in August 2019.

Business One

During the year we began a collaboration with Business One, a pro-bono graduate program where teams work on particular issues to come up with a business solution. Business One has been working with us on remodelling our tutoring service which we aim to relaunch in 2020.

Advocacy and outreach

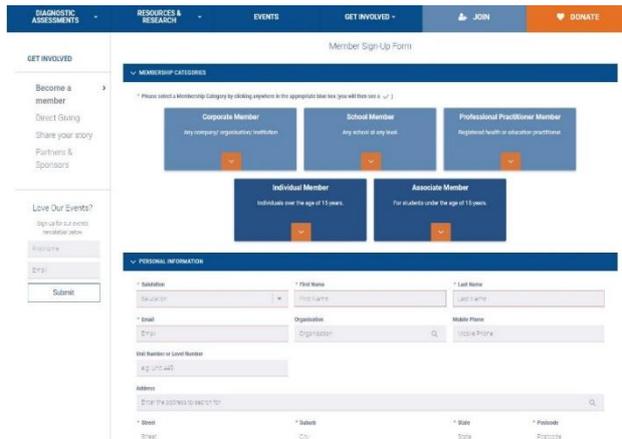
SPELD Victoria continued to respond to parent requests for help in advocating for their child's learning needs when they felt unable to do this effectively themselves. Our workshop *Helpful Guide for Effective School Communication* presented in Sale by Tessa Calder aimed to support Parents in this regard too.

Our outreach activities included regional workshops for Parents and Teachers; diagnostic assessments in Ballarat and Mildura; and presentations given for Parentline Victoria; the Australian Education Union PD Day; Learning Differences Convention; Brimbank/Melton Local Learning & Employment Network (BMLLEN) and WIRE online magazine.

Promotional opportunities were taken up through Monash University's SEED assistive technology exhibition; Swinburne University's Employability Week; the Education Convention; and Dyslexia Awareness Week.

Other Projects and Events

Website Integration Project



The screenshot shows a 'Member Sign-up form' with a navigation bar at the top containing 'DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS', 'RESOURCES & RESEARCH', 'EVENTS', 'GET INVOLVED', 'JOIN', and 'DONATE'. The form is divided into two main sections: 'MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES' and 'PERSONAL INFORMATION'. The 'MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES' section has a note: '*Please select a Membership Category by clicking options in the appropriate box (see below)'. It includes five categories: 'Corporate Member' (Any company/organisation/institution), 'School Member' (Any school at any level), 'Professional Practitioner Member' (Registered health or education practitioner), 'Individual Member' (Individuals over the age of 18 years), and 'Associate Member' (For students under the age of 18 years). The 'PERSONAL INFORMATION' section includes fields for 'Surname', 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Email', 'Organisation', 'Mobile Phone', 'Old Number or Local Number', and 'Address'. The 'Address' field is split into 'Street', 'Suburb', 'State', and 'Postcode'.

Having launched our new website in the prior year, we added text to speech functionality in FY2019. Then work continued with Vertic to integrate the finance package into the Customer Relations Management System. This was achieved at the start of FY2019.

Work then proceeded on developing a new booking system for the diagnostic assessment service. By the end of the year we were testing the new system and preparing to migrate data across.

Progress on this complex project supported by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust would have been slow indeed but for the efforts of our Finance Officer, Avani Sorathia, Isabella Falkiner, Family & Administration Support Officer and two Masters IT Interns from Swinburne University.

Bringing the arts to SPELD Victoria



Visitors to SPELD Victoria continue to be inspired by Chris (Roy) Taylor's wonderful *BE Yourself* mural, so much so at the end of the year he was developing a poster version that could be used to engage children of all ages. Our goal to publish a colouring-in book stands and we will continue to pursue this in the coming year. See the back page of this report for Chris' celebratory poster!

Chris (Roy) Taylor' BE Yourself Mural at Level 3, 673 Bourke St



During the year our visitors began to enjoy artist Sasha Heath's first of two murals commissioned specifically for our diagnostic assessment rooms.

By the end of FY2019 Sasha was working on a second mural which was completed in late July.

Sasha Heath, assessment room mural, at Level 3, 673 Bourke St

Our members

Membership services

Over the year we reached out to our Members through four seasonal editions of Member E-News plus numerous supplementary updates and breaking news items. Member discounts continued to be offered for all workshops and events, and we also extended member discounts to resources such as C-Pens and some books. We have further plans in this regard for FY2020.

With preparations for our 50th Year underway no Members only events were held in FY2019. However our engagement level with members and beyond via social media platforms increased with Facebook activity reaching over 293,000 and 11,363 engaged users.

Completion of the transition from one membership system to another as recorded in the previous Annual Report was not concluded in FY2019 and will now occur in FY2020.

Our team

Throughout the year our team grew and changed. Firstly, we were delighted to welcome Nor Ashraf Samsudin from the Dyslexia Association of Singapore to the team as our Specialist Education Consultant. Ashraf's focus has been on the whole expanded workshop program, education consultancy services, and the completion of his induction to and delivery of the Sounds-Write structured synthetic phonics program.

Our staff Psychologist team grew with the additions of Laura Uebergang, Jo Spataro, and Dr Kelly Howard; and we were delighted to welcome Melinda Schambre, our first Speech Pathologist to the team in the New Year.

In March we welcomed Ellen Hooper to the role of Marketing & Events Coordinator as Denise McGowan moved interstate to be with her partner; and Isabella Falkiner who took on the role of Family and Administration Support Officer when Rita Elias headed back to university. In between times Sonalee Weerasinghe filled in capably at the front desk.

In addition we hosted three more Swinburne University interns who assisted SPELD Vic's activities: Chris Zhong and Umer Irfan worked on the back office integration project; and Drew Burns focused on a benchmarking and marketing study for the diagnostic assessment service.

Lastly, over the year, SPELD Victoria was fortunate to be supported by three key volunteers. Ricki Vinci took the lead on a "*Pick My Project*" application worth \$200,000. We were excited to be shortlisted from 2,500 applications down to 187, and very sorry not to be one of just 10 projects funded, that required a voting process that was not dyslexic friendly! Our two other volunteers were Susan Read who spent time exploring the archives to understand the historic and social context for the establishment of SPELD Victoria in 1969; and Melissa Roberts from The Advertising Room who came on board to assist our 50th Anniversary celebration activities including our first digital auction.

Governance

The Committee composition confirmed at the AGM2018 remained in place throughout FY2019. Their ongoing commitment to SPELD Victoria's mission has certainly contributed to the progress made, and I record here my thanks for their support.

There were two new members to Subcommittees - namely Laura Uebergang, SPELD Victoria Psychologist who joined the Research Committee in May; and Melissa Roberts who joined the Communications & Public Relations Subcommittee in June as preparations for our 50th Anniversary celebratory event were gearing up.

A summary of the work focused on by the Subcommittees was as follows:

Communications & PR	Preparations for the 50 th Anniversary Year
Operations	Benchmarking study on diagnostic assessment services;
Research	Permission protocols; data demographics;
Remuneration & Nominations	No meetings in FY2019
Risk and Audit	Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the financial management and reporting systems

The Research Committee's purposes are to remain informed of current research developments in the area of Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs) including Dyslexia; and to assist SPELD Victoria to progress research goals either through accessing research grants directly or through partnerships. To that end, the year focused on doing the groundwork to ensure SPELD Victoria's legacy and current records are stored in a way that enables the potential for future research to take place.

SPELD Victoria Subcommittee Membership from July 2018			
<i>Risk & Audit</i>	<i>Operations</i>	<i>Communications & Public Relations</i>	<i>Remuneration & Nominations</i>
Claire Britchford (Chair)	Graham Holdaway, (Chair)	Stephanie de Campo, (Chair)	Matt Foran (Chair)
Matt Foran Fiona Hinrichsen Ian McCubbing	Jenny Ward	Matt Foran	All Committee members as required
<i>Research Committee</i>			
Emeritus Professor Keith Houghton (Chair) Dr Cathy Catroppa; Matt Foran ; Dr Michelle Ronksley-Pavia; Dr Neil Alexander-Passe; Laura Uebergang* (*from May19)			

Financial Position

The Financial Statements record that the end of FY2018 result was a deficit of \$101,237. This reflects a \$57,000 improvement on the prior year, through increased service and sales revenues, new partnerships and a stabilisation of our operating grant from the Department of Education and Training.

However it also reflects about \$30,000 less than we aimed for due to delays in implementing the structural changes needed to the business model, as we underwent an ATO audit on superannuation for contractors; additional time invested in recruitment; and time lost on the integration of the back-office systems project as we had to prioritise a new invoice payment option for events and workshops.

Donations reflected a similar position to the prior year with key fundraising efforts deferred to our 50th Anniversary Year activities.

Although the net assets remain relatively strong, they are earning less.

In summary, the result demonstrates continued and gradual turnaround of SPELD Victoria's financial position, and the clear need to focus on an operating surplus for the end of FY2020.

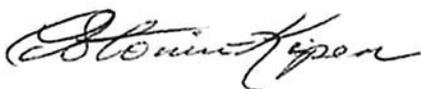
Events subsequent to the end FY2019

As the financial year ended and with the distractions of the last quarter over, we were collectively focused on the upcoming 50th Anniversary Year celebrations at the State Library of Victoria, which occurred on Monday 26th August – the date on which 50 years ago SPELD Victoria was registered as a public benevolent institution.

But before we reached this milestone we did some more recruitment for two additional Psychologists and two Family & Administration Officers following the departures of Maureen Younan and Isabella Falkiner. We also welcomed Rupinder Kaur, our 6th Swinburne University Masters IT intern.

In summary – it was a year where clear progress was made due to everyone's efforts, despite valuable time being lost on some critical non-productive work distracting attention and resources away from the year's highest priorities. The end of year financial outcome reflects this. However, by the time we reached our 50th Anniversary event, the investments in structural change were all but in place to ensure a better outcome next year. I trust it will be so.

My thanks to the whole SPELD Victoria team – Committee, staff, contractors, volunteers, interns, presenters, consultants and suppliers - all of whom contributed in their own way to improving life for those with Specific Learning Difficulties. In particular I thank Claire Britchford, Treasurer for her contribution to SPELD Victoria over the last three years who is stepping down from the Committee at this year's AGM.



Claire Stonier-Kipen, CEO

Acknowledgements

SPELD Victoria is grateful to all donors and partners for their support. We acknowledge that this assistance is making a difference to the achievement of SPELD Victoria's Mission to help all Victorians with Specific Learning Difficulties.

Donors

Albion Nth Primary School	John Vincent	Patricia Minton
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Good Thnx	Lucy Rizzi	Tania Stone
Hamish Keane	Lynda Court	Vicky Rabak
Jane Taylor	Mark Lipman	Violetta Thomson
Jayne Dullard	Melanie McIntosh	Winston Hall
Jenny Ward	Melissa Sugrue	
Jody Dzwonkowski	My Giving Circle	Anonymous X 19

Organisational Supporters, Partners and Collaborators

AUSPELD	Department of Education & Training
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust	Swinburne University of Technology
	University of New England
Amaze	Graham Withers Charity Ltd
BMLLEN	Knox City Council
Boon Wurrung Foundation	Norton, Rose & Fulbright
Business One	Scanner Pen Inc
Campus Consultancy	SenateSHJ
Digital Philosophy	The Age
DSF Literacy & Clinical Services	Vision Australia
Gardiner and Field	White & Case

Workshop and Events Presenters

Alison Clarke	Jo Spataro	Melinda Schambre
Anthony Gartner	John Vincent	Dr Michelle Ronksley-Pavia
Ashraf Samsudin	Judy Buchan	Nathalie Parry
Carol Allen, UK	Judy Hornigold, UK	Peta Collins
Dr Carol Tolman, USA	Kate Day	Melinda Schambre
Claire Stonier-Kipen	Kim Bloor	Susie Hilliard
Daryl Greaves	Kristin Anthian	Tessa Calder
James Bourton	Lisa Watts	Victor Hew
Jemima Hutton	Mandy Nayton OAM	Yasotha V







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