

Aussie Hands Annual Report

2020-2021



The Aussie Hands
Foundation Inc

Aussie Hands is a volunteer run not-for-profit organisation.

OUR PURPOSE

Aussie Hands provides support, understanding and encouragement to individuals with a hand difference and their families. Aussie Hands achieves this through:

1. Supporting individuals with a hand difference, their families and community
2. Providing opportunities for connection, networking and sharing of information
3. Raising awareness and celebrating achievements of people with a hand difference

Supporting research into hand differences.

Board of Management

Karen Macdonald	President
Craig Parsons	Vice President / Secretary
Areeb Ovais	Treasurer
Larah Cornthwaite	Ordinary Board Member
Alicia Fenwick	Ordinary Board Member (Marketing & Communications Lead)
Lisa Ross	Ordinary Board Member
Elizabeth Borg	Ordinary Board Member
Dave Serpell	Ordinary Board Member / Vic Ambassador
Annette Smeaton	Ordinary Board Member / Vic Interstate Coordinator
Fiona Passmore	Ordinator Board Member
Hannah Cole	Ordinary Board Member
Kate-Louise Grey	Ordinary Board Member
Amir Neshasteriz	Ordinary Board Member – resigned April 2021

The Board of Management met on 5 August, 7 October, 2 December 2020, and 24 February, 28 April and 23 June 2021.

Membership

As at 30 June 2021 there were 1142 Aussie Hands members. Membership categories include individuals, health professionals, supporters and volunteers. Members are located in each Australian state and territory as well as internationally.

NSW 210, ACT 22, QLD 146, SA 43, TAS 34, VIC 384, WA 76, NT 3, International 193. Membership grew by 49 with the biggest growth in VIC.



Grants and Fundraising

The End of Financial Year (EOFY) fundraising campaign was completed and executed via Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and the Aussie Hands Member Newsletter with \$3,355 raised. Thanks to BraEasy for offering the lucky draw prize during the EOFY Campaign.

Aussie Hands gratefully acknowledges generous ongoing support from the Sentinel Foundation (\$10,000 donation), Print Obsession and Pixel Salad Studio.

Thank you to:

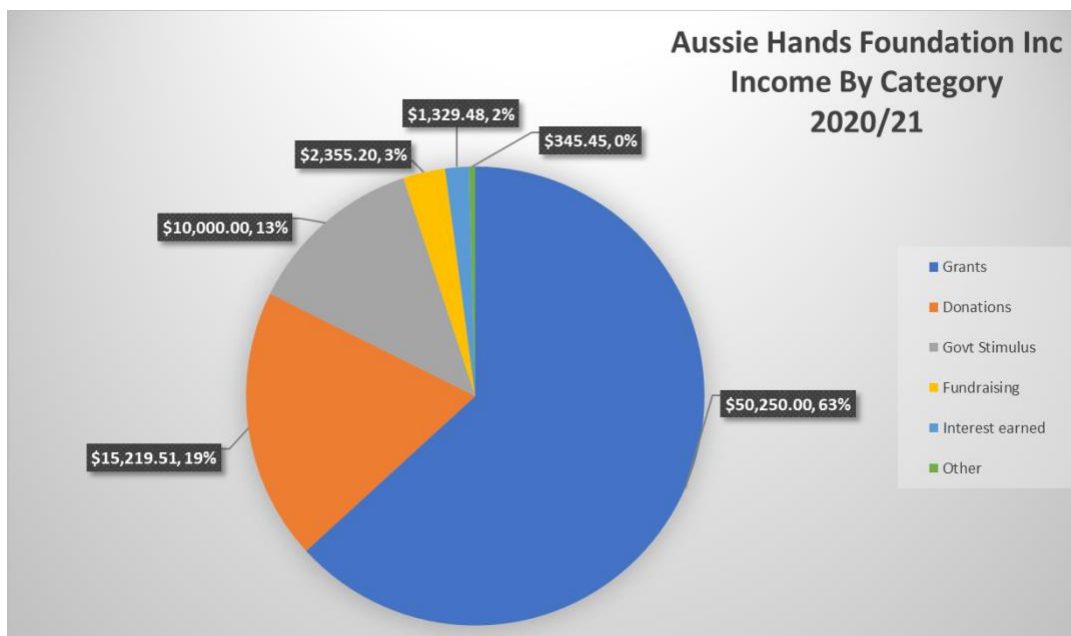
- Nathan McCosker and RADMX Club for \$5,000 raised during Limb Difference Awareness Week 2020
- Jacqueline Banki for \$1,000 as part of the @givenowaus competition during Giving Tuesday

Financial Report

Special thanks to Edwin Taitz, EzyAccounts for his service as Finance Officer, and to Treasurers Areeb Ovais and Robyn Antill. An independent audit was conducted by Mathew Simon (registered CPA No. 9527342) for the 2020-2021. Matthew provides his service on a Pro Bono basis, of which Aussie Hands is very thankful.



Total income	Total Expenses	Surplus/Deficit
\$79,499 Includes \$10k Government Stimulus	\$ 69,729	\$9,770
<i>Current Assets</i>	<i>Non-current Assets</i>	<i>Total Assets</i>
\$ 84,273	\$ 0	\$ 84,274
<i>Current Liabilities</i>	<i>Non-current Liabilities</i>	<i>Total Liabilities</i>
\$ 10,526	\$ 0	\$ 10,526
		<i>Total Equity</i>
		\$ 73,747



Individual Capacity Building Project

Online Resource Toolkit and Peer Support Network being launched March 2022

Aussie Hands was awarded a \$100,500 Individual Capacity Building Grant by the Australian Government last year. The purpose of the grant is to develop an innovative online toolkit and peer support network to empower, enable and facilitate inclusion for people with a congenital hand or upper limb difference and their families.

Online resources will focus on topics to support expecting and new parents, young children starting childcare or school, and teenagers. The aim is to equip members to confidently participate in all aspects of life including extracurricular activities, educational and employment opportunities, and engagement with their communities.

A peer support network will connect individuals to provide support on life stage topics contained in the Online Toolkit. This will connect members, provide direct access to role models and provide further strategies, support and encouragement. Think of it like our [Facebook Group](#), but even more interactive!

Developing the resources in the ICB Project Team are: Project Manager Jacqueline Banki, Project Officer Cassie Muller and Digital Communications Officer Vinnie Chen. Governance for the Project is undertaken by the ICB Project Steering Committee, Chaired by Brooke Young. The Grant commenced on 1 December 2020 and will be completed by 30 June 2022.



'NDIA ILC Individual Capacity Building Program
– an Australian Government initiative'



Australian Hand Difference Register (AHDR)



Since commencing in mid-2017, the AHDR now has over 2230 children who were born with a hand/arm difference participating from Children's Hospitals across Australia. The Register aims to:

- Find out how many children are born with a hand/arm difference in Australia
- Learn more about possible causes and risk factors
- Gain information to help plan services
- Identify possible participants for future research

A congenital upper limb difference is a hand or arm difference that is present at birth. An upper limb difference is present in approximately 0.2% or 1 in 600 of babies born. Sometimes it is detected by ultrasound before birth, but more often it is not found until the birth of the baby.

Head of Hand and Microvascular surgery at Royal Children's Hospital, Associate Professor David McCombe said: 'In most cases, the cause is not known but with ongoing research we are learning more about the development of the limbs and what happens in congenital differences.'

'The AHDR is a vital tool that will help us better inform children with a congenital difference and their families. Through the AHDR we are developing a national collaborative research network that we are confident will give us answers to questions about causes and outcomes. As clinicians we would encourage as many families to participate and support the AHDR as much as possible,' added Associate Professor McCombe.

The Register is managed by researchers at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, located at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, and includes children from NSW, QLD, SA & WA – with more recruitment planned. The Register has been funded to date by support from the Aussie Hands Foundation Inc, the Australasian Foundation for Plastic Surgery, and the McNally Foundation.

Further information on the AHDR can be accessed at <https://www.mcri.edu.au/ahdr>

Marketing and Communications

Social media platforms used to communicate with members and promote awareness about hand/limb differences plus share information were Instagram and Facebook and LinkedIn.

- ❖ Instagram: 1610 followers (increase of 92%)
- ❖ Facebook: 974 members (increase of 10%)
- ❖ LinkedIn: 154 followers (increase of 127%)
- ❖ Website: aussiehands.org

The Amazing Race Australia competitor and new Aussie Hands member Skye-Blue Henderson participated in a Q&A which was posted on the Aussie Hands Instagram and gained a high-level of engagement.



Through persistent and clear messages, Aussie Hands has built a growing Australia-wide and international presence via Instagram. Many similar organisations such as Lucky Fin Project, (USA) and Reach Charity (UK) co-share content with Aussie Hands in building a wider global community advocating for diversity and inclusion for those with a hand/upper limb difference.

News articles on the website included:

- Aussie Hands speaks out about 'The Witches' movie, November 2020
- Aussie Hands Awarded Major Grant, October 2020
- Limb Difference Awareness Week, October 2020
- Why are some children born with a hand/arm difference? Insights from the Australian Hand Difference Register, July 2020
- Regular Story of the Month and Individual Capacity Building Project Updates

Articles appeared in the following publications:

Ross House 2020 Annual Report, December 2020

Source Kids <https://sourcekids.com.au/>

- Shevaughn & Steph luckiest mums in the world, 31 May 2021
- How Mat Bowtell (FREE 3D Hands) creates joy combining altruism and engineering expertise, 5 February 2021
- Aussie Hands speaks out about The Witches movie, 20 November 2020
- Claire always believing in herself, 16 November 2020
- Callie Cuts Through the Anxiety of Starting Kinder, 30 July 2020

Limbs4Life <https://www.limbs4life.org.au/>

- Claire Bampton Profile, April 2020

Witches - Media Campaign

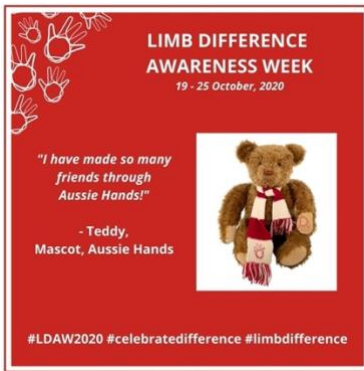
AHF played an active role with other limb difference charities in calling out the negative stereotypes being portrayed by Ann Hathaway in the Witches movie. Part of her 'scary' features were her hand differences. The power of the limb difference community and Paralympians forced an apology from Warner Bros and Ann Hathaway. This collaboration raised our profile and showed the strength of community and hopefully showed that being different isn't scary.

Amazing Race

We all barracked for Skye-Blue and her brother as contestants on the Amazing Race. Seeing a person with a hand difference competing and being challenged like all the other contestants sends a powerful message to our younger members that they too can aim high and their difference will not hold them back. Skye-Blue became a member and will be a great role model for our teen members particularly as they start to go through the teenage years and body image becomes a key focus.

Aussie Hands Brochure was updated in 2020 and is also available on the website.

Limb Difference Awareness Week – October 2020



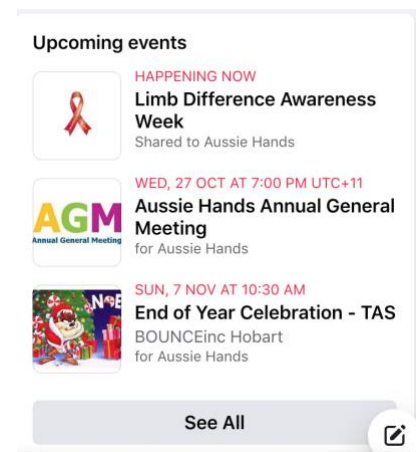
'Celebrate Difference' was the theme of the second Limb Difference Awareness Week held in October last year.

Each Aussie Hands family with a child under 12 years of age was sent a book '*Little Miss Jessica Goes to School*' written by Aussie Hands Patron, Jessica Smith. It tells the story of the first day of school for a little girl named Jessica who has an arm difference. The book aims to break down stigmas associated with disability, body image, friendship and self-esteem. Families were encouraged to share the book and their own stories with their schools and community. This was a great success and positive feedback was received from members on the initiative.

The combined [20-day LDAW2020](#) countdown, with the 20th Anniversary celebrations of Aussie Hands, resulted in nationwide and international engagement across social media, increased member applications and a success online launch event.

Media coverage included [Source Kids](#), Radio 2GB in Sydney, and we also went live on Instagram with our Patron, Jessica Smith OAM streaming from her current base in Dubai.

Facebook Group



The Aussie Hands Facebook Group provides a safe place for people within the hand difference community to share stories, experiences and support each other.

Across the year members have been active within the Facebook Community sharing stories, tips and tricks on how they perform a range of everyday tasks such as bike riding, hair tying, exercise, sport and playing musical instruments.

Our Aussie Hands members also used the group to ask for advice and support each other with discussion around a wide-reaching range of topics like milestones and challenges for children with hand differences, starting school and kindergarten, dealing with challenging questions and surgery or prosthetic aid options.

With the group growing by over 91% to almost 1000 members, and the lack of travel and opportunities for face-to-face contact, the Facebook Group has proven to be a vital part of the Aussie Hands community and a key way for our diverse membership to connect and engage with each other.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Our scheduled activities were disrupted again in 2021 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, with restrictions causing many events to be cancelled. Fortunately, some fantastic events were still able to go ahead.

National

- Springtime Catch Up via Zoom, 13 September 2020
- Aussie Hands Turns 20 & Limb Difference Awareness Week Launch, 18 October 2020
- Limb Difference Awareness Week, 19-25 October 2020
- Managing Appearance Interactive Workshop via Zoom, 29 November 2020

New South Wales

- End of Year Event, Nurragingy Reserve, 29 November 2020
- Picnic and Egg Hunt, Regional NSW & VIC, 21 March 2021 Picnic and Egg Hunt, Bicentennial ParConcord West, 28 March 2021
- Winter Event, Conoelands Orchard, June 6 2021

Victoria

- Picnic and Egg Hunt, Port Melbourne, 28 March 2021
- Winter Catch Up, Lollipop's Playland and Cafe, 27 June 2021

Queensland

- Spring Event, GOMA Children's Art Gallery Visit, 13 September 2020
- End of Year Event, Kurrawa Pratten Park, 10am, 22nd November 2020
- Egg Hunt, Toowong, 28 March 2021
- Horse Riding, Samford, 14 April 2021
- QAGOMA Children's Art Centre 'Pre-opening' Visit + Workshop Sunday 16th May or Sunday 23rd May 2021

Western Australia

- End of Year Brunch, Tomatoe Lake, 13 December
- Get Together, Tomatoe Lake, 19 April 2021

Tasmania

- Beginning of Year event, Supa world, 7 February 2021
- Bounce Trampoline Park, 13 June 2021

A massive thank you to our Aussie Hands Interstate Coordinators for their contributions, commitment, and creativity. Their efforts have benefited members enormously.

NSW Mandy Scott and Verity Whitson, NSW/VIC Anastasia Hookway, QLD Emma Glencross and Michelle Swain, TAS Emma Halliday and Rachael Potter, VIC Annette Smeaton and WA Kim Austen.



PATRON & AMBASSADORS



Our patron, Jessica Smith, continues to be an outstanding role model for AHF members. While living in the UAE, Jessica has participated in podcasts for AHF and championed us in her work as a motivational speaker and advocate for disability inclusion.

COVID restrictions have had an impact on the activities that AHF has been able to undertake and in person events have not taken place to the extent they did in the past.

Hopefully we have turned the corner on this and those events can take place in 2022. If you are interested in becoming an Ambassador for AHF please contact info@aussiehands.org.

Special thanks to our wonderful ambassadors Tom Covell (NSW), Amanda Palmer (TAS) and Dave Serpell (VIC, NT) for their continued efforts in engaging with the community and being a wonderful inspiration to all Aussie Hands members.



Volunteers & Staff

Thank you to the many volunteers who give of their time and expertise. Aussie Hands is a volunteer led organisation, each person provides invaluable assistance to the achievement of our objectives.

Over 29 volunteers supported the activities of Aussie Hands in 2020-2021. Special recognition goes to Member and author Andrea Murray who posted 203 birthday cards to Aussie Hands children around Australia and internationally, Cassie Muller for her work as the Events and Volunteer Coordinator and our amazing Interstate Coordinators NSW Mandy Scott & Verity Whitson, NSW/VIC Anastasia Hookway, QLD Emma Glencross & Michelle Swain, TAS Emma Halliday & Rachael Potter, VIC Annette Smeaton and WA Kim Austen. who hosted Aussie Hand events around the country, Colleen Birtwistle for

storing and distributing the merchandise from the Aussie Hands online shop, Jacqueline Banki, Carla Callista, Fiona Passmore, Lily Toengi-Andrews, Tasha Natalia, Tiffani Novelia and the Marketing & Communications team, Vinnie Chen who was responsible for IT, web maintenance, administering the online shop & newsletter distribution, Rita Rahman for her work with the CiviCRM database and Aida Viziru, Web Master for her support of the Aussie Hands IT platform.

Thanks to departing board members Alicia Fenwick, Areeb Ovais and Craig Parsons for their contributions over several years. Special thanks to Karen Macdonald, who is stepping down from her role as Chair of Aussie Hands, for her remarkable guidance and governance of Aussie Hands so successfully over the past year.

We also bid farewell to our amazing National Coordinator Belinda van Bibra, who has gone above and beyond in her role to help the administration of Aussie Hands.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020-2021

- COMMENCEMENT AND PROGRESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT
- A TOTAL OF 18 EVENTS HELD NATIONWIDE ONLINE AND IN PERSON
- SECOND LIMB DIFFERENCE AWARENESS WEEK HELD 19-25 OCTOBER 2020
- 203 BIRTHDAY CARDS POSTED TO CHILD MEMBERS OF AUSSIE HANDS
- PROGRESS OF THE AUSTRALIAN HAND DIFFERENCE REGISTER INITIATIVE
- MANAGING APPEARANCE INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP HELD 29 NOVEMBER 2020
- TRANSITION TO ONLINE EVENTS DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC
- INCREASED MEMBERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND LINKEDIN PLUS INCREASED STORIES PUBLISHED
- ACTIVE MEDIA PRESENCE DURING THE WITCHES CAMPAIGN

