VERY SPECIAL kids

Annual Report

2017-2018

Contents

Very Special Kids is a non-for-profit company limited by guarantee, accredited by The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards and is a Child Safe Organisation.

Very Special Kids is proud to display the Registered Charity Tick to highlight our charitable status through The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission's Charity Register.

On the cover:
Luke Brennan shares a special moment with his daughter Holly.

Very Special Kids welcomes people of all backgrounds and respects the families we support are different in many ways including country of birth, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religion and ability.

Our reason for existence

Life is precious but something most of us take for granted. After all, until we're confronted with the unthinkable it's natural to believe this won't happen to us. But that can change in an instant, especially when someone young who we love faces their mortality. A moment never forgotten and things could never be the same again.

But then something happens that you didn't know existed. Something that gets anyone, parent and child to see beyond their worst fears and numbness. To realise whatever time is gifted to them there's life to be lived and dreams to be fulfilled, and the whole family are part of this journey together

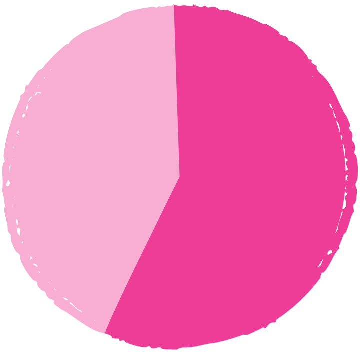
Because hope can appear in the most surprising and unfathomable of moments, through an experience that defies the worst possible outcome, through a rare compassion and care. That's when those in the toughest and most unforgiving time of their lives, see and understand there's hope in every life today and beyond.

Our values are the fundamental beliefs of our organisation and help guide our purpose

Lisa Evans and son Jack have been using Very Special Kids services since Jack was two-years-old.

Who we support

836 FAMILIES SUPPORTED



365 BEREAVED FAMILIES

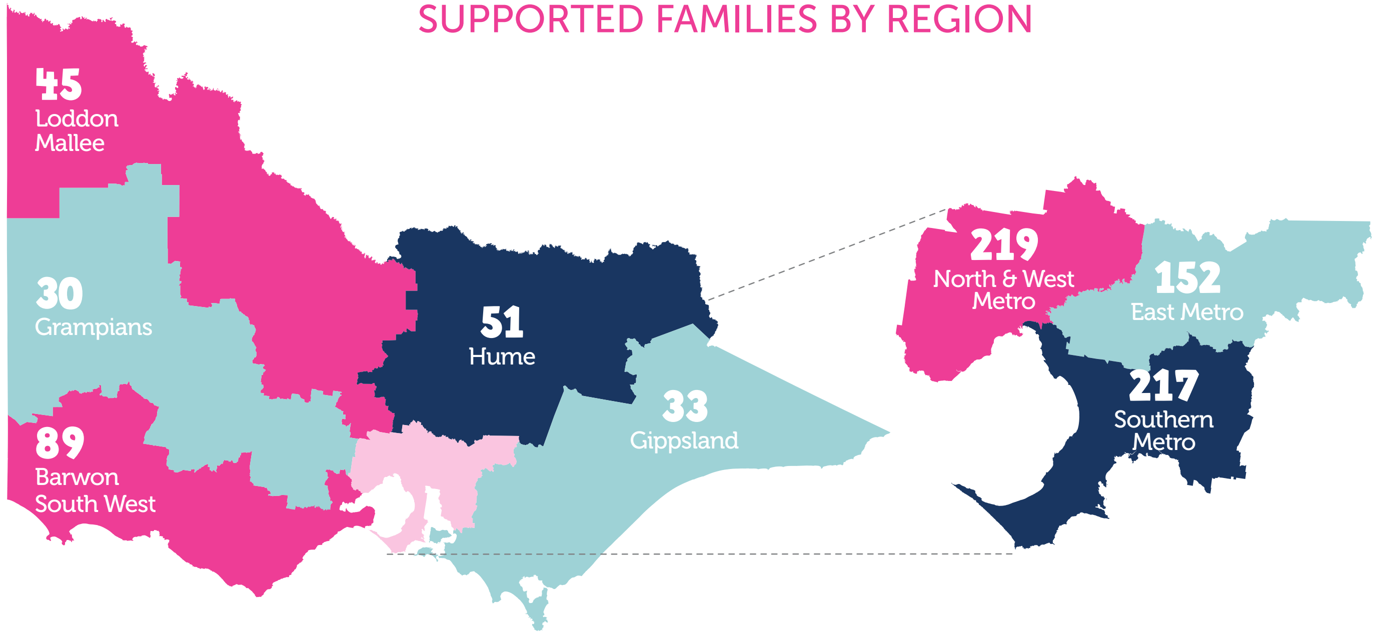
471 NON-BEREAVED FAMILIES

688 are families with **OTHER CHILDREN**

58 have **TWO CHILDREN** with **A LIFE-THREATENING CONDITION**

28 are **BOTH BEREAVED** and **NON-BEREAVED**

SUPPORTED FAMILIES BY REGION



There are approximately **2,000** families that qualify for our services.

It is **CRITICAL** that we continue to **RAISE FUNDS** to support **ALL FAMILIES IN NEED** across the state.

How we help

Providing Victoria's ONLY children's Hospice for respite and end-of-life care

27 NURSES

20 PERSONAL CARE WORKERS

4 ON-CALL DOCTORS

1 CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

2,295 NIGHTS OF RESPITE AND SPECIALISED CARE AT OUR CHILDREN'S HOSPICE

4.6 DAYS

is the average length of stay

Providing much needed emotional support and family counselling

18

QUALIFIED FAMILY SUPPORT PRACTITIONERS

across **9** OFFICES

with backgrounds in **SOCIAL WORK, PSYCHOLOGY, COUNSELLING, ART THERAPY AND PLAY THERAPY**

103 SIBLINGS

attended **5** SIBLING DAYS

to **CONNECT** with other children in a similar situation

5,911

FAMILY SUPPORT SESSIONS

55% increase

8,472

PHONE/SKYPE SESSIONS

55% increase

832

HOME VISITS

31% increase

Providing an award winning volunteer program

1,000 VOLUNTEERS SUPPORTED FAMILIES IN THEIR HOME, DURING HOSPITAL STAYS, AT OUR HOSPICE AND WITH FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES ALL ACROSS VICTORIA

259

people attended

11 VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SESSIONS

5

FAMILY VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAMS WERE COMPLETED

26,724

VOLUNTEER HOURS COMPLETED

Our work

When a child is diagnosed with a life-threatening condition, a family's world is turned upside down. The death of a child affects parents emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually and socially.

Siblings of the child who has died can also be profoundly impacted on some or all of these levels. The intensity and rawness of the family's grief can be bewildering, frightening and exhausting.

Very Special Kids supports families throughout their entire journey of caring for children with life-threatening conditions, from diagnosis through to adulthood or bereavement.

We run Victoria's only children's Hospice in Malvern where families can access planned and emergency respite, as well as end-of-life care.

We also provide professional support services to 836 families across Victoria including counselling, advocacy, sibling support, bereavement support, networking and peer activities and trained family volunteers.

> Our united holistic approach allows us to deliver quality, family-centered care that includes empathy and respect. — *Rebecca Meek,*
> *Very Special Kids Hospice Nurse*

Paediatric palliative care at Very Special Kids

PAEDIATRIC PALLIATIVE CARE

SPECIALIST SERVICE

As a **SPECIALIST** in **PAEDIATRIC PALLIATIVE CARE**, we offer specialist **HEALTH CARE** and **PRACTICAL SUPPORT** by providing direct care to children and their families through the **MANAGEMENT** of **PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS** in our Hospice and **PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES** through our Family Support Team.

HOLISTIC SUPPORT

We provide holistic support to the child and their entire family by addressing the **MIND**, **BODY** and **SELF** to ensure that **QUALITY OF LIFE** is considered at all points in the child's journey. This **HOLISTIC CARE** is also supported by **TRAINED VOLUNTEERS** who support families.

BEREAVEMENT

There is **NO TIME LIMIT** on bereavement support at Very Special Kids. Everyone experiences grief in a variety of ways and we offer a range of **COUNSELLING SERVICES** and **ACTIVITIES** tailored to each family member through the Family Support Team.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

We support the family for their **ENTIRE JOURNEY** from **DIAGNOSIS** to **ADULTHOOD** or **BEREAVEMENT** through our service delivery teams including nurses, social workers, counsellors and therapists.

FAMILY INCLUSIVE

Very Special Kids offers individual support and group program engagement as we understand the importance of addressing the individual child's **PHYSICAL**, **PSYCHOSOCIAL** and **SPIRITUAL NEEDS** along with the psychosocial and spiritual concerns of the whole family — **PARENTS**, **SIBLINGS**, **GRANDPARENTS**, **FRIENDS** and other significant people.

Our impact

Our care is available from the point of diagnosis all the way through to adulthood or bereavement. Very Special Kids is one of the few organisations and services to remain with families for as long as they need after their child has died, with the family deciding when they no longer need our services.

This support is significant as we walk alongside families during the most difficult and challenging time of their lives.

Our services provide the following impact:

IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE

Our team of doctors and nurses are experts in clinical and holistic pain management ensuring the level of comfort is maximised for the child. Children experience temporary relief from structured home-care routines and families have the peace of mind their child will receive specialised 24/7 care as well as much needed respite.

CREATION OF POSITIVE FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Very Special Kids facilitates opportunities for families to share special moments with their children outside a care giving role and to participate in fun and therapeutic family activities together.

INCREASED SENSE OF CONTROL

Families are supported to build a range of tailored coping skills and strategies which assists them to better manage at home, work, school and in social situations. Families are also equipped with resources and support to navigate the service system allowing for a greater sense of control.

IMPROVED CONNECTIONS TO A NON-JUDGEMENTAL COMMUNITY

Through participation in Very Special Kids programs and activities, families are able to form new and supportive social relationships, connect to others in similar situations and 'normalise' their day to day experiences in a non-judgemental space. By building trusting relationships with an experienced Family Support Practitioner, families gain strength and an increased ability to express their thoughts, feelings and needs.

INCREASED RESILIENCE

Families develop a sense of growth through their caring and grieving journey and gain a positive ongoing connection with other family members. With an increased confidence in their own abilities to cope emotionally, families are prepared for a "new normal".

> "Our counsellor Edwina is a huge part of our lives. She has helped us get through some very challenging times – where we were just drained and exhausted, I don't think we could have done it without her.
> *– Sue Makawe-Zaicz, Jazmin's mum*"

From our leaders

Very Special Kids continues to support children and families coping with tremendous challenges, and the previous year has seen the establishment of many significant projects that will define and strengthen our services in the future.

2017–18 has been a year of preparation with the initiation of a number of long term strategic projects designed to further enhance our credibility, independence, robustness and service provision.

Our Hospice is now over 20 years old and many aspects of the care we provide have changed over time. To better support the varying conditions of the children in our care and to ensure the facility can be purpose-fit for the following 20 years, we are closing in on a major project plan to undertake a significant upgrade to our Hospice. With the support of research from Melbourne University School of Design and the incredible ongoing financial support of Chain Reaction Challenge Foundation, we are receiving invaluable professional assistance in finalising this important project plan.

We are working on designing a Theory of Change model that will assist in our measurement and messaging of the Social Impact of our breadth of clinical and family care. We have also undertaken a brand review kindly supported by Clemenger BBDO. These projects, along with many others will put us in a good position as we continue preparing for our next strategic plan that will be finalised in 2018–19.

2017–18 Achievements

In February we launched a new support service for regional families, Road to Respite. Thanks to a multi-year grant from the William Buckland Foundation, and in a wonderful partnership with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, we are providing free transport assistance to regional families to make respite care more accessible. We also established a new family support counselling office in Pakenham to support the increasing need of families in South East Melbourne and West Gippsland.

We continue to be accredited against the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards, having undertaken an audit in late 2017, and a full onsite audit in late 2018. We were successful in achieving a high level of accreditation, the same as hospital standards and remain committed to increasing the quality of our care.

Art With Heart was a new fundraising event trialled in June and was an amazing success. This art exhibition was supported by a number of renowned artists, attracted many new donors to Very Special Kids and connected them to our purpose. Many of our major fundraising activities also exceeded expectation, including the 24 Hour Treadmill Challenge and the emerging Autumn Classic.

Very Special Kids enjoyed a fantastic financial result in 2017–18, not only due to the success of our events but thanks to some very generous major gifts and to an increase in operational funding from the Department of Health and Human Services. A significant operating surplus was realised and is well timed as we draw closer to our intended upgrade of the Hospice.

Pillars of our success

As has been the case since our inception in 1985, it is the various people connected to Very Special Kids that defines our culture and strengthens our resolve.

Again we are indebted to over 1,000 volunteers who help support our families and reduce our operating costs. Volunteers are the backbone of Very Special Kids, and critical to creating a positive atmosphere around our challenging work.

It takes a distinct intrinsic quality to work at Very Special Kids and we want to acknowledge the continual devotion of our staff across all areas of care, support and fundraising.

We have an incredible staff culture that we remain eternally grateful for and will never take for granted. Our Board continue to steer Very Special Kids through a busy and changing landscape that is the charity sector and we acknowledge their personal commitment to our mission.

Our individual donors, community partners, Trusts and Foundations and corporate supporters continue to provide important financial and in-kind support. We are forever grateful for the strong and supportive partnership from the Victorian Government and Cabrini Health which remains critical to our ongoing service provision, as well as Seven Network, ALH Group and Commonwealth Bank for their support all year round.

Last but not least, we wish to recognise our families who are our true inspiration. Our relationship with you is uplifting and we thank you for your engagement, feedback, regard and hope. We wish you never needed our support, but know we remain committed to your journey.

Peter Polson, Chairman
Michael Wasley, CEO

The future

We remain committed to continuous improvement and sustainability, to ensure we will be here to help families in the future. The Board and management team are working on many major initiatives in 2018–19 including:

- Finalising the preferred method for upgrading the Hospice
- Further research into end-of-life support focusing on family reflections and wishes
- Re-engineering our brand purpose and evidence of the social and economic impact of our family support
- Developing our 2019–2022 Strategic Plan
- Generating $8.8million to maintain current levels of support

Our highlights

The Chignell family from Bendigo benefit from the launch of the new Road to Respite service.

Road to Respite reaches greater regional families

Thanks to funding from the William Buckland Foundation, Road to Respite is a joint initiative of Very Special Kids and the Royal Flying Doctor Service providing free-of-charge transport for regional children with life-threatening conditions to Very Special Kids Hospice.

This unique partnership is helping overcome the barriers that restrict regional families from accessing much-needed support services, reducing fatigue in carers and increasing the health and well-being for families.

> "Having Eadweard picked up and dropped off by the van was fantastic. It took a lot of stress out of driving a long distance and freed up a significant amount of time for respite and meant I could give our other children my undivided attention." — *Sarah Chignell*

Achieving national safety and quality health standards

Very Special Kids completed an on-site accreditation audit against the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards and achieved the highest level of standards which is on par with Australian hospitals. Hospitals and health service organisations across Australia are required to comply with these standards to ensure they are providing safe and high-quality care.

For an organisation of Very Special Kids nature and size, the auditors were most impressed with the quality and safety of our services, how we connect with families, and how we live our values every day. This outcome provides families, health professionals and our community of supporters with assurance that Very Special Kids is delivering the very best possible care.

Pakenham office opens

Over the past three years, there has been a significant change in the geographical location of Very Special Kids families with increased referrals received in the outer South Eastern suburbs of Melbourne. To meet this growing demand, a new office opened in Pakenham in November 2017 as well as hiring a new full time Family Support Practitioner to support the families in this region. We now have a total of 8 external offices across the state.

Increased attendance at industry conferences

Our team have a wealth of knowledge and expertise across a range of paediatric palliative care issues. Over the last year we have shared our insights and attended the National Palliative Care Conference in September 2017 and the Paediatric Palliative Care Conference in March 2018. Both conferences provided the opportunity to share our multidisciplinary approach during end-of-life care offered in the Hospice.

Physiotherapist hired for Hospice

Thanks to funding from the Barr Family Foundation we were able to hire a permanent part-time physiotherapist to work with children staying at the Hospice. Belinda Luther, is now at our Hospice five days a week and works to improve children's motor development, strength, range of motion, fitness, gait difficulties, balance, coordination and respiratory function.

> "I love working with the nurses, carers and collaborating with the art and music therapists as it enables a much more fun and holistic approach to my work, which is benefiting the children."
> – *Belinda Luther*

Physiotherapist Belinda Luther works with children staying at the Hospice.

Volunteer Alan Hall is one of over 1,000 volunteers supporting Very Special Kids.

Committed to improving

This last year we have refreshed our key performance measures used across the organisation and are now reporting these measures in a way that will drive improvement in service quality and efficiency. We have also reviewed our health information management system with the intention of moving to electronic medical records in the Hospice as well as developing a Diversity Access and Engagement Plan to ensure the services we provide are accessible and responsive to the individual needs of all families.

Expanded regional volunteer training program

Due to the need for Family Services Volunteers in regional Victoria we have expanded our volunteer training program by equipping our regional Practitioners to provide training to potential volunteers as they become available. We have successfully held two training programs in Bendigo and Ballarat and with six new volunteers, they have gone on to provide invaluable in-home family support.

Excellence Award for unique volunteer program

Very Special Kids became the proud recipient of Volunteering Victoria's 2017 Excellence Award recognising our unique and highly successful volunteering program. The Excellence Award is awarded once-a-year to an organisation for demonstrating a commitment to going beyond best practice in volunteer management.

Eadweard's story

Ten-year-old Eadweard Chignell is a friendly and cheeky child who loves animals and laughing when his brothers and sisters get in trouble.

But Eadweard isn't like other boys his age, he was born with early infantile SCN1A encephalopathy, an extremely rare genetic disorder, so rare he's one of only eleven in the world. Eadweard can't walk or talk, has regular seizures and requires 24-hour-care for all his basic needs.

Parents of five, Sarah and Stuart from Bendigo say the Very Special Kids Hospice is their only respite.

"When Eadweard was really little because of the types of seizures he has, we were often up all night. It got to the point we were so exhausted we needed to look at our options" says Sarah, Eadweard's mum and full time carer.

"At first I was reluctant to visit Very Special Kids Hospice because we already spent so much time in and out of hospital, I wanted to make sure it was different.

From the moment we walked in I was absolutely blown away. The nurses were just so welcoming.

They showed us where the oxygen was and the suction and I just felt so reassured. I remember looking around thinking it didn't look like a hospital; it was colourful, fun and all the sensory aspects like the music and art therapy, were incredible."

But over the years, the greatest benefit for Sarah and Stuart has been the chance to take a break and recuperate from the round-the-clock responsibilities of caring for their son.

"We can experience life-threatening events on a daily basis and it is traumatic" says Stuart.

"There have been times where I've needed to check on Eadweard every hour of the day to make sure he's still breathing. He could go from completely fine to appearing on death's door and vice versa.

The fatigue accumulates and combine that with the trauma and lack of sleep, it just gets to you after a while. There was a point we were considering relinquishing care but that's where Very Special Kids support has been so invaluable. The Hospice gives us the chance to take a breath and we couldn't cope without it."

Since Very Special Kids launched the Road to Respite program in partnership with The Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Hospice has been even more accessible for the Chignell family.

"Having Eadweard picked up and dropped off by the Road to Respite van is fantastic. It takes a lot of stress out of driving a long distance from Bendigo and frees up a significant amount of time for respite meaning we can give our other children our undivided attention" explains Sarah.

The Chignell family also attend many family days and activities provided by Very Special Kids giving them a chance to connect with other parents and siblings facing similar challenges.

"With Very Special Kids there's just so much versatility. The nurses and volunteers are so supportive, genuine and understanding of Eadweard's needs but also the needs of the whole family."

> "There was a point we were considering relinquishing care but that's where Very Special Kids support has been so invaluable. The Hospice gives us the chance to take a breath and we couldn't cope without it. — *Stuart Chignell*"

The Chignell family.

Kevin and son Curtis enjoy time together in the playground

Curtis' story

When parents of four, Jacqui and Kevin Dyt were told their five-year-old son Curtis would have less than a year to live they were both devastated and in complete shock.

During a time of stress and so many unknowns, Very Special Kids was there to support the Dyt family by providing tailored counselling support and a peaceful haven when the time came to say goodbye.

In addition to providing families with respite care, Very Special Kids Hospice also provides medical care at the end of a child's life, in a home-like environment with support from a dedicated team of doctors, nurses and carers.

The support for every family is different, and we work with families to make the last days of their child's life special in their own way, give advice on planning for what comes next, and offer ongoing bereavement support.

Curtis' parents first noticed something was wrong with their little boy when he kept falling over.

"It seemed to happen a bit too often" said his mother Jacqui. "One time he fell and split his head open on the coffee table and we had to rush him to hospital.

His face also started to droop on one side, his walk became unsteady and he began to choke on food and water. We kept going back to the hospital but the doctors couldn't pinpoint it" explained Jacqui.

Shortly after Curtis' fifth birthday he had a CT scan and an MRI that revealed his condition and his family's world fell apart.

"We were told he had an inoperable brain tumour with no cure and less than a year to live. It was completely numbing."

Curtis was diagnosed with one of the deadliest childhood cancers, Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG), a life-shortening disease which is found on the brain stem mainly in children, aged five to 10.

The Dyts were then referred to Very Special Kids to access counselling and ongoing support during what was the most difficult time of their lives.

Jacqui and Kevin along with their other children Lucas (now 15), Isaac (now 14) and Curtis' twin sister Jasmine (now 7) were paired with a Family Support Practitioner Edwina to provide counselling support tailored for each family member, including Curtis.

"It was comforting to know Edwina was there for us. She helped work through all our unanswered questions which was a huge relief", said Jacqui.

As Curtis became weaker, the family had to consider where they wanted him to be when he died.

"We were feeling really overwhelmed and reluctant by the whole thing, but as time went on we understood and realised Very Special Kids was where we wanted him to be."

"When we arrived at the Hospice, there was a sense of calmness and relief that we were finally in a place that could look after his needs better than we could.

"I was really stressed about administering his medication on top of managing the other kids and my own emotions knowing we were going to lose him, but the nurses put us at ease and enabled us to focus on just being a mum and dad."

Our whole family stayed at the onsite accommodation next to the Hospice, which meant we could spend time together but have the security of the nurses next door to help administer Curtis' medication and attend to his needs which really took the pressure off.”

When the time came to say goodbye to Curtis, Jacqui described the moment as heartbreaking but calm and gentle.

> “Once he passed, the staff at Very Special Kids gave us as much time as we needed. The level of compassion and care was amazing. Curtis was able to stay with us in the family accommodation for another three days which gave us time to really say goodbye.”

As Curtis became weaker the family's focus was to create as many memories together as possible. Through a partnership with the Art Cabriolet, Very Special Kids offered Creative Art Therapy sessions providing the opportunity to express emotion and create visual legacies.

> We created memory boxes and did craft activities together as a family. We were on a short time span so those moments became absolutely precious.
>
> *— Kevin Dyt*

Bereavement support

Today, the Dyt family continue to access a range of services through Very Special Kids bereavement support program.

> “Edwina has really been with us for our whole journey and continues to facilitate our grieving process. She's a great sounding board providing advice and assistance, as well as a great source of information when we don't know where else to turn.

We went on a weekend away with other bereaved parents recently and it was really comforting to meet other families that actually understand us because they've lived similar experiences.

The kids also participate in the Sibling Program and love it. It's a day of fun for them but the most important aspect is they don't feel like they are alone as they have the chance to meet other kids going through the same issues.”

Coping with the death of a loved one is an ongoing journey and Very Special Kids will continue to be there for the Dyt family for as long as they need.

“It's been a really slow process to try get back to normality but Very Special Kids has certainly made it easier. The level of compassion and care has been amazing and we are just so thankful.”

121

parents attended a **BEREAVED PARENT WEEKEND OR ACTIVITY TO CONNECT WITH OTHER FAMILIES** facing similar challenges.

Our volunteers

Retirees Denise and Rainer Kallenberger, aged 68, have been volunteering at Very Special Kids for two years travelling across Victoria driving our giant piggy banks, helping with fundraising initiatives and Rainer has recently completed training to be a Family Services Volunteer.

Can you tell us a treasured memory you have from volunteering?

D: Each and every time I am approached by a member of a family wishing to express appreciation for current, or past support they have received from Very Special Kids. It immediately delivers a resurgence of energy into my efforts for them.

R: Being part of the Family Support training. As a former prison officer for more than 22 years I sometimes questioned humanity. Whilst doing the Family Support training I met fellow participants I never thought I would meet. I look up to them for who they are and what they stand for.

What motivated you to become a volunteer?

R: I have been volunteering for other organisations long before I started with Very Special Kids. However, I have never found myself feeling connected to them. I saw the Giant Piggy Bank in Bourke Street and gave it a go. Now I am regretting each day not being aware much earlier of Very Special Kids.

What is your favourite thing about volunteering?

D: Driving and towing a Giant Piggy trailer around the countryside. Secondly, sharing rare and quality time at home in Australia with my husband all while helping others… What an absolute bonus and joy the role of volunteering with Very Special kids is — the icing on the lamington!

When she's not working as a nurse and midwife, 24-year-old Laura Purcell volunteers her time at Very Special Kids helping create happy memories for children in the Hospice.

What do you do as a volunteer for Very Special Kids?

L: I spend a few hours a week in the Hospice, playing games, reading, painting and going on walks with a lot of the children. I have also been a volunteer on the adolescent sibling program and during Sibling Days. We link children in similar situations with each other, giving them an opportunity to make friends who have similar challenges and are all coping with having a sick sibling.

What is your favourite thing about volunteering with Very Special Kids?

L: I absolutely love the fun that comes with volunteering, whether it's playing with the kids in the Hospice or their siblings on camps. I feel we really get a chance to play, develop positive relationships and make some happy memories with these kids. It makes it all worth it to see them smile.

Can you tell us a treasured memory you have from volunteering?

L: A few weeks ago there was a little girl having her first Hospice stay and she became visibly nervous when her mum went to leave. I picked her up in an attempt to comfort her and she cuddled me straight back and stopped crying. Her mum said that she was really surprised and that her daughter didn't usually let anyone hold her. It was really special that I helped that little girl feel safe and comforted in that moment.

For over three years, Ashley Sibbing aged 25, has been volunteering her time as a special friend for Elise Jealous who has a younger sister with a life-threatening condition.

What do you do as a volunteer at Very Special Kids?

A: I'm linked in with the Jealous family as a support and friend for Elise. Elise's sister needs extra support and care, and I hang out with Elise every couple of weeks to give her a bit of time where it's all about her.

What is your favourite thing about volunteering with Very Special Kids?

A: Definitely the bond I've made with the Jealous family. They're really just like my family now and I always have fun seeing them.

Do you have any words of advice for others thinking about volunteering?

A: It's really rewarding seeing the joy and friendship you bring to these families and any time you give will be greatly appreciated. Very Special Kids are a great support as well and are more than happy to work in with your needs.

We have a

1 STAFF TO 10 VOLUNTEER RATIO

with more than

1,000

volunteers supporting our families or fundraising. Our volunteers are the **BACKBONE OF VERY SPECIAL KIDS.**

Our fundraising

Thank you to our incredible community of supporters for raising over $8.8 million to help families as they face the unimaginable. We are incredibly humbled by the generosity and loyalty of many individual donors, the business community, philanthropic Trusts and Foundations and community groups who help us make a meaningful impact year after year.

Corporate and team events

24 Hour Treadmill Challenge

Held in May, the 24 Hour Treadmill Challenge brought more than 1,200 participants together to keep 36 treadmills in continuous motion for 24 hours to raise an incredible $966,290! This event continues to grow year after year thanks to Novofit and many dedicated supporters.

2013	2014	2015
$310,000	$465,000	$642,560

2016	2017	2018
$735,320	$873,253	$966,290

Autumn Classic

In only its second year running, the Autumn Classic saw eight teams of six riders participate in a virtual cycling race to take out the highly acclaimed title and trophy while almost tripling the tremendous fundraising efforts to over $130,000.

Footy Fever Debate

A humorous debate between high-profile football personalities and comedians entertained more than 300 corporate guests at the MCG. Presented by Seven News, the Footy Fever Debate has recently featured Emily Angwin, Brian Taylor, Lawrence Mooney, Tom Browne, Cameron Ling, Wayne Carey, Dave O'Neil and Greg Champion.

Community focused events

Piggy Bank Appeal

Since it commenced in 1998, the Piggy Bank Appeal has raised more than $19 million by bringing together businesses, community groups, volunteers and whole towns across Victoria.

Five Giant Piggy Banks, each stretching to three metres in height and weighing in at 700 kilograms, travelled around Victoria with a team of dedicated volunteers to raise $1 million for children with life-threatening conditions. ALH Group venues and Commonwealth Bank branches created an extensive network across Victoria to hold fundraising events, sell merchandise and collect community donations.

Annual Fair

Held in November on the beautiful grounds of Very Special Kids, the annual Fair once again provided an opportunity to put on a special day to bring the community together.

Fashion Sale

The Very Special Kids Fashion Sale in November and June provided bargain hunters the opportunity to enjoy retail therapy that's good for their wallet and heart. All clothing was donated from Australian brands on sale at up to 90% off.

Long term partnership with ALH Group

Very Special Kids has enjoyed a long term relationship with the **ALH Group** since 2012 when they became a Major Partner of the Piggy Bank Appeal. Prior to this, their venues were supporting us when the Piggy Bank Appeal started in 1998 when they were part of the Tattersalls group.

Over $2 million has been raised since 2012 from their participation in the 24 Hour Treadmill Challenge, local community events such as family days, music festivals, and collection of public donations through raffles, food and beverage promotions, collection tins and selling merchandise. The support of ALH Group staff has been significant at every level.

Over the past 12 months, ALH Group have increased their focus on fundraising and have raised $531,236.87. Special thanks to Russell Evans, Josie Eeles and their fundraising committee.

Other community events

We ran other events throughout the year including a Ladies Lunch, Golf Day and Art Exhibition. We also worked with many other organisations as their charity partner including events such as Walk for Phil, A2MilkTM Upstream Challenge and The City of Stonnington's Mayor's Gala. This incredible support raised much needed funds for Very Special Kids.

Commonwealth Bank gives back

Commonwealth Bank (CBA) have been supporting Very Special Kids as a Major Partner of the Piggy Bank Appeal since it started in 1998. CBA staff through their 261 branches have been collecting donations and selling merchandise as well as hosting piggy trail stops. The CBA Staff, Social and Charity Club Inc have been supporting us through their Diamond Bank Ball and a number of CBA staff volunteer at our annual events each year.

Since 1998, CBA staff and customers have raised over $3 million. Special thanks to Karen Boase, Colin Watson and Mary Nicholls.

Strong physiotherapy outcomes result in more funding

Through a generous multi-year grant, **The Barr Family Foundation** has enabled Very Special Kids to employ a part-time physiotherapist for children staying in our Hospice.

Individual physiotherapy sessions are tailored to each child's needs and include physiotherapy interventions for children with respiratory issues and neurodevelopmental treatment such as strengthening, stretching, balance and mobility exercises. Our physiotherapist also collaborates with our music and art therapists which can result in better outcomes for the child.

Based on strong outcomes, Very Special Kids was invited to apply for additional funding from the Barr Family Foundation and we are thrilled our multi-year funding request was recently approved. This will enable additional hours of physiotherapy to be available during the week and on call on weekends and weeknights. The funding will also enable Very Special Kids to purchase a range of specialised physiotherapy equipment to optimise the results of the sessions.

> "The Barr Family Foundation was established to help support children and their families in Victoria who have chronic illnesses or are disadvantaged. Very Special Kids are exemplars in this space and the Barr Family Foundation are pleased to support the programs at Very Special Kids that help make little lives a little easier." — *Michael Barr, Chairman The Barr Family Foundation*

Art Therapy program made possible thanks to generous funders

Very Special Kids runs a Creative Art Therapy program for children staying in our Hospice which has been made possible through generous multi-year funding contributions from the **Crown Resorts Foundation** and the **Packer Family Foundation**.

Run in partnership with the Art Cabriolet, the Creative Art Therapy program runs four days per week in the Hospice over 46 weeks. Each session is facilitated by a Transpersonal Art Therapist and includes photography, writing and editing, painting and clay sculpting.

Art Therapy enables expression beyond words while also building a legacy for children in palliative care. The program provides the opportunity for communication, choice and control regardless of the child's level of functioning.

> "It's not hard to be enthusiastic with an organisation like Very Special Kids. The concept, and especially the people who carry out that concept, are so impressive it's impossible to not be moved." — *Bonnie Ashton, General Manager Crown Resorts and Packer Family Foundations*

184

ART THERAPY SESSIONS
took place this year.

How to support

In addition to our appeals and events, there are many other ways you can support Very Special Kids to continue to provide invaluable services free-of-charge to families.

MAKE A REGULAR TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIFT
monthly, quarterly or yearly

ATTEND OR SUPPORT ONE OF OUR FUNDRAISING EVENTS
Piggy Bank Appeal, 24 Hour Treadmill Challenge, Autumn Classic, Footy Fever Debate, Golf Day, Ladies Lunch, annual Fair and Fashion Sale

ORGANISE YOUR OWN FUNDRAISING EVENT
with family and friends such as a fun run, trivia night, food and wine function, movie night, concert or fashion show

ASK FOR DONATIONS IN LIEU OF GIFTS
for your birthday, wedding, bar/bat mitzvah or any other celebration

DEVELOP A CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP
through sponsorship, cause-related marketing, workplace giving, volunteering or in-kind support

COLLECT DONATIONS IN A PIGGY BANK
at your work, school or home

VOLUNTEER
by becoming a trained Family Support Volunteer or assist with fundraising and administration as a Friends Volunteer

LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL
to ensure your legacy will live on

MAKE A DONATION

Via website:
vsk.org.au

By post:
Mail a cheque or money order payable to Very Special Kids,
321 Glenferrie Road,
Malvern, Victoria, 3144.

By phone:
Call 03 9804 6222 to make a credit card donation over the phone.

Donations of $2 or more are fully tax deductible.

Our partners and supporters

The kindness and generosity of the business community, individual supporters and Trusts and Foundations is vital in funding the work of Very Special Kids.

Very special partners

THE MILLER FOUNDATION

THE BAKER FOUNDATION

Media partners

Very special supporters and event partners

NORMAN, MAVIS &
GRAEME WATERS
PERPETUAL CHARITABLE TRUST

Supporters who contributed over $5,000

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- Emco Capital Pty Ltd
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- Icon Group
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- Orange Business Services
- Paccar Australia
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- Viva Energy Australia
- WE-EF

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- Campbell Foundation
- Crown Resorts Foundation PAF
- Dorman Family Foundation
- Flora & Frank Leith Charitable Trust
- Gandel Philanthropy
- Geelong Community Foundation
- Kingfam Foundation
- Marjorie May Kingston Trust
- Norman, Mavis & Graeme Waters Perpetual Charitable Trust
- Packer Family Foundation PAF
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- The Baker Foundation
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- The Johnstone Family Foundation
- The Marian & E H Flack Trust
- The Miller Foundation
- The William Angliss (Victoria) Charitable Fund
- William Buckland Foundation

Comunity supporters

- Alphington Grammar School
- City Of Stonnington
- Corcous Club (Mayday Lunch)
- Freemasons Monash Lodge
- Rotary Club Of Altona City
- The Flinders Challenge
- The Upstream Foundation
- Walk For Phil
- Westend Market Hotel

ALH Group venues

- Bayswater Hotel
- Bundoora Hotel
- Burvale Hotel
- Commercial Hotel– Werribee
- Deer Park Hotel
- Doncaster Hotel
- Excelsior Hotel Motel
- Mac's Hotel
- Manhattan Hotel
- Manningham Hotel
- Morwell Hotel
- Pascoe Vale Hotel
- Pier Hotel
- Prince Mark Hotel
- Royal Exchange Hotel
- Seaford Hotel
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- Skyways Hotel
- Village Green Hotel
- Waltzing Matilda Hotel
- Westside Hotel
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- Seven Network (Operations) Limited
- Smoothfm
- Srg 2.9 Pty Ltd
- Sussan Group
- The Just Group
- Toyota
- WTFN

Financials

As we aim to support more families across Victoria, we must continue to strengthen our financial position through diversification of income streams and continuously look at how we can improve, innovate and do this in the most effective and efficient way.

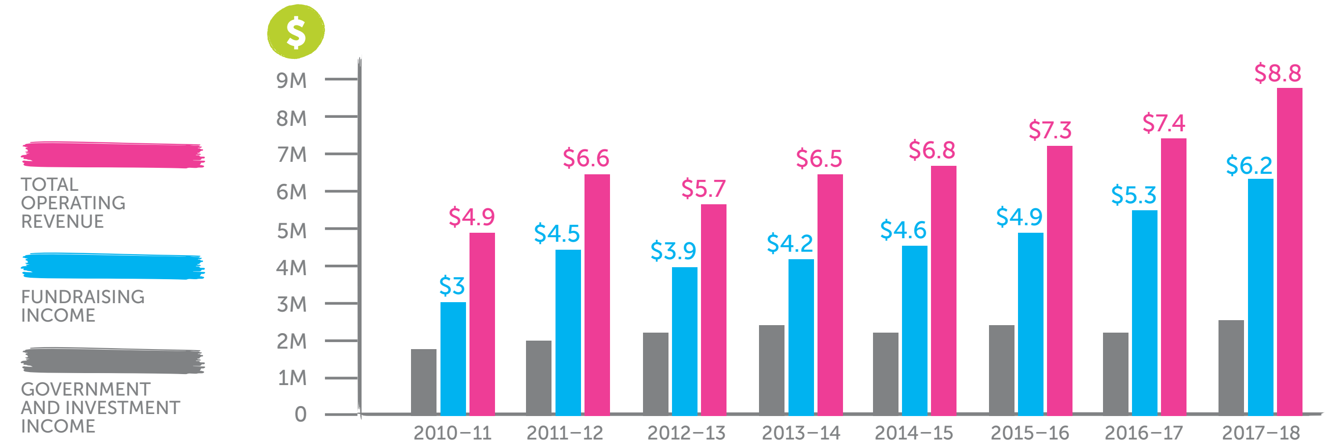
It costs Very Special Kids $8.8 million each year. With government funding covering approximately a quarter of this amount, we need to raise a further $6.3 million this financial year to continue to provide our vital free-of-charge services to Victorian families.

In 2017–18, Very Special Kids enjoyed an excellent financial result due to the success of our events and fundraising including some very generous major gifts and an increase in operational funding from the Department of Health & Human Services. At the same time expenses were contained to budget.

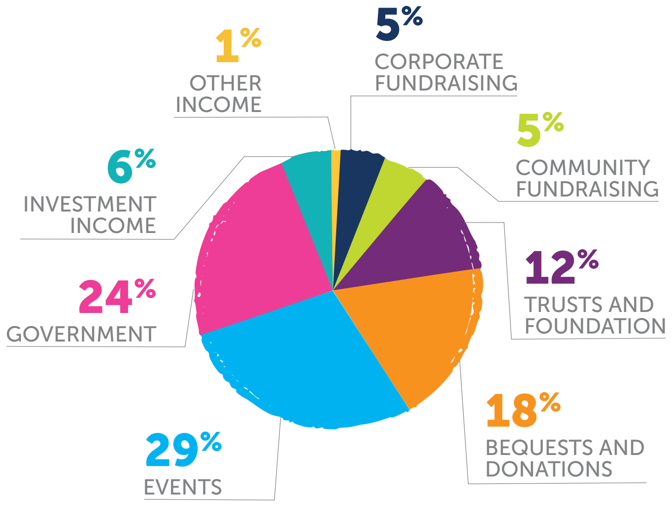
A significant operating surplus is well timed as we get closer to our intended Hospice upgrade. As we move into a period of growth and focus on continuous improvement and sustainability, this will ultimately improve our model of care and the quality of services provided.

Thank you to our generous and loyal supporters who help us make an impact year after year.

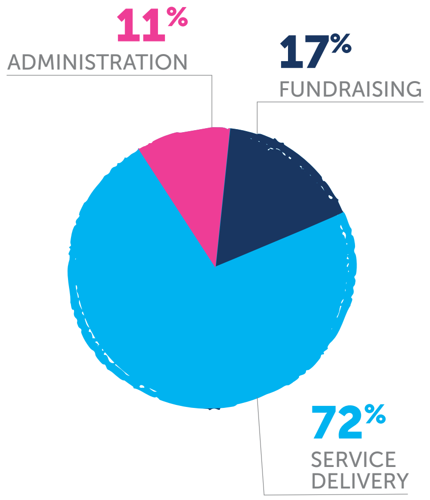
Fundraising income



Where our income comes from



Where the money goes



The full 2017/18 Financial Report is available online at ***vsk.org.au****.*
We would like to thank KPMG for continuing to audit our annual financial report on a pro bono basis.

Our people

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VERY
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kids

Children's hospice
and family support

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Very Special Kids Hospice
321 Glenferrie Road
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mail@vsk.org.au

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0428 989 122

Peninsula
1973 Frankston-Flinders Road
Hastings
0417 151 096

Barwon
Kurrambee Myaring
Community Centre
12 Merrijig Drive
Torquay
0400 007 693

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Port Fairy Community
House, Railway Place
Port Fairy
0428 393 162

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2 Olympic Way
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0417 543 514

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0428 240 031

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