

# Guide Dogs Victoria Our Journey 2016-2017

**In 2017, Guide Dogs Australia is celebrating its 60th anniversary. That's 60 years of supporting people with low vision or blindness to live the lives they want to lead, with independence and confidence.**

At Guide Dogs Victoria, our journey is at an exciting crossroads, and the success we have built over the past five years has positioned us well to achieve many wonderful things in the years ahead.

Focusing on Financial Year (FY) 2016-17, we have delivered outstanding results across all areas of our operations. The people we support remain at the center of our decision-making and we are delighted to have delivered 25,146 hours of client service to Victorians with low vision or blindness this year. In delivering our vital services, we have also achieved a remarkable 90% customer satisfaction rating.

We proudly deliver our services to clients of all ages, and over the past year, our services have been broken down into the following areas:

- 23% Children's Mobility Services
- 37% Guide Dog Services
- 35% Adult Mobility Service
- 8% Occupational Therapy
- 7% Support Coordination

Supporting our service delivery, particularly to our Guide Dog Services area, we welcomed 140 new pups to our nursery, and 76 dogs graduated at our annual graduation ceremony. We now support a massive 272 working dog partnerships in Victoria.

The past year has also seen an exceptional result in our fundraising endeavors. We have received \$16 million in donations, which will support the delivery of our services for many years to come. We were also privileged to be chosen as the official charity partner for the 2017 Formula 1 Rolex Australian Grand Prix,

and through this partnership we raised \$73,000. We also partnered with Melbourne fashion labels Gorman and Elk, to design a range of dog coats, collars and leads. Through this innovative partnership, the brands raised over \$50,000 for Guide Dogs Victoria through the sales of their products.

The generosity of our supporter community has continued to grow, and the number of confirmed bequestors has risen over the year. Through leaving a gift in their Will, we now have 1,127 bequestors who are also valued members of the Otus Fellowship.

We also introduced new ways to generate donations and to raise awareness of our cause. We launched pay wave technology on our iconic collection dogs, making it easier for our supporters to donate to us via debit card. Our new schools program saw us visit 62 schools and 2,700 students over 2017 – spreading the word about what we do, and the community support we need to continue to deliver our vital services.

2016-17 secured Guide Dogs Victoria's position as the leader in the sector, with the organisation raising new levels of awareness in the community about the services we provide. We were awarded the Most Trusted Charity by Readers Digest for the fifth year in a row, and our media reach saw our message reach 51.7 million people.

Guide Dogs Victoria continued to engage with our supporter and client community through social media with 33,631 page likes on Facebook, 2,244 followers on Twitter and 1,104 followers on Instagram. Our website also experienced 132,944 visits, a huge 70.8% increase on last year!

In addition, we launched our 'More than Dogs' campaign, which aims to educate the public about the broad range of services we offer, over and above our amazing Guide Dogs.

Also in the public eye, we formally celebrated our 60th anniversary on International Guide Dog Day at Government House, with an event hosted by our dedicated and passionate Patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC, Governor of Victoria. Together we recognised the amazing contribution our volunteers have made to our organisation over the past six decades.

We take great pride in the partnerships we have built across all areas of our operations, and our very special partnerships with Yarra Trams and Public Transport Victoria have continued to strengthen over the year. Both organisations support not only our vision, but increasing the accessibility of public transport for all Victorians. We even had a special 60th anniversary puppy tram in Melbourne, which was decorated with pictures of our beautiful pups. It was certainly hard to miss and many Melbourne commuters loved the joyful and playful theming.

2017 was also a year of firsts, as Guide Dogs Victoria proudly launched the social enterprise, Dialogue in the Dark at Harbour Town, Docklands. Dialogue in the Dark is a globally recognised concept where visitors are led by a person who is blind through a series of simulated Melbourne environments, all in total darkness. It is a community education initiative that aims to create a more welcoming and inclusive Melbourne for people with low vision or blindness. Dialogue in the Dark a truly unique experience, which we believe everyone can learn from.

At Guide Dogs Victoria, we are able to deliver the results we have over the past year because of our dedicated and skilled team of staff and volunteers. As such, it is an absolute priority that we provide a safe working environment for our team, and for everyone who comes onto our site. In 2017, we achieved a huge milestone of one year lost time injury free. This is a result of the processes we have put in place, and the attitudes of all employees.

We not only want to provide a safe working environment, but also one that is happy and engaging for everyone – where our employees and volunteers understand the role they play in delivering on our mission. Each year we undertake an Employee and

Volunteer Engagement Survey to seek feedback from our team that we are on the right track.

We are pleased to report we have achieved a volunteer engagement score of 95% and employee engagement of 89% - results which really speak for themselves, demonstrating our commitment to meeting the needs of our clients.

Over the year we have also seen a growth in the number of people volunteering their time to support the delivery of our services. We are honoured to have 483 volunteers at Guide Dogs Victoria, who have provided 1,274,308 hours of their time in FY2016-17! Of course, this includes the tireless hours Puppy Raisers put in to ensure our pups are raised in a nurturing and supportive environment.

Several employees also had the honour of being recognised externally, reinforcing that Guide Dogs Victoria truly is a team of industry-leading professionals. A particular highlight was the recognition of our CEO, Karen Hayes, as she was inducted into the Victorian Honour Role for Women, recognising her contribution to business and the community, together with staff and volunteers who were recognised at the Victorian Disability Awards and the Premier's Volunteering Awards.

That concludes the highlights from FY2016-17 - a fantastic year for Guide Dogs Victoria, and in fact, a year in which we have achieved results not seen in our history! This is certainly a fitting outcome for our 60th anniversary and paves the way for what is to come from our forward thinking, and innovative organisation. For more details on our financial performance, please review the details of our Annual Report and Financial Report.