

# 2021 Annual Report



JOHN PIERCE CENTRE  
*Spirit of the Deaf Community*



# John Pierce Centre HISTORY

## **Spirit Of The Deaf Community**



### **Father John Pierce**

#### **The first chaplain to the Deaf Catholic Community**

The origins of the John Pierce Centre (JPC) date back to 1935 when Father John Pierce was appointed as the first Chaplain to the Catholic Deaf Community in Victoria by Archbishop Mannix. In those times, all the major denominations conducted missions of various sorts to the needy people of Melbourne; included in these were the deaf and blind.

Prior to 1979, Deaf Catholics were regular visitors at various churches in Melbourne including Armadale and St Francis, Melbourne. From 1973 to 1979, a monthly Mass was held at Jolimont at the Victorian Deaf Society.

In 1979, Fr Peter Robinson, Dr Pierre Gorman and Mr. Bryan A'Hearn were the driving force behind the setting up of John Pierce Centre at Ripponlea. A board of directors was set up as a Company limited by guarantee on 29th December 1979. The Centre was officially opened and blessed on Ephpheta Sunday, August 1980.

In 1995, The Catholic Deaf Community moved to the parish of Prahran and relocated to a refurbished church, St Francis Xavier, which had a multipurpose chapel and offices.

**JPC has over 40 years of experience of supporting Deaf people who frequently are isolated within their local communities and even within their own families. We provide opportunities for people to learn more about the challenges of parenting through education programs and playgroup. These services complement our visits to older, frail, sick and isolated Deaf people. Our pastoral care supports the well-being of our community and our community centre, all Deaf people and their families; sharing strength, friendship and the spirit of the Deaf Catholic Community.**

## **Mission Statement:**

Inspired by Jesus Christ and the traditions of the Catholic Church, the John Pierce Centre seeks to empower all Deaf people and their families within Victoria to live their lives to the full

## **Our Vision:**

To Promote Community through Education, Spiritual, and Family Support

## **Values:**

- To be inclusive of Deaf and hard of hearing people and their families
  - To be fair and ethical in all of our dealings
- To have a team of staff and volunteers filled with passion and compassion
- To be open to working with other organisations, individuals and corporations
  - To manage our resources with efficiency and effectiveness
    - To create a safe environment
- To be accountable and transparent in our governance and business practices



# Directors' Annual Report

On behalf of the John Pierce Centre (JPC) Board of Directors I am pleased to present our annual report for the 2021 year.

At the time of preparing the report, the JPC Accounts for the 2021 year have been subjected to the usual practice of a full independent review in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Auditing Standard ASRE 2415 and the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Act 2012. No issues were identified and the JPC continues to be in a financial position wherein the organisation is able to pay its accounts as and when they fall due.

In 2021,

During this reporting period the JPC met the continuing significant challenges that COVID 19 presented. Ever present in each decision made and at the core of the operation was and remains the community we serve. This would not have been possible without the continuing dedication of the JPC Staff, Board and volunteers, innovating, evaluating and delivering services so our community remained connected. I would like to personally express my thanks and appreciation for the privilege of working alongside my fellow Board Directors, JPC Staff and our volunteers.

\* Our Executive Manager Carmel Philips has kept the Board apprised, led the JPC Staff and community under some continuing very challenging conditions and is to be commended for her resilience and dedication.

\* Brother Shane Wood continues to provide his valuable support and input to the Board.

\* Margaret Urquhart retired after many, many years of service to the JPC in a number of different roles, including as a member of our Board. Most recently Margaret has been helping us with the JPC archiving project and has also taken minutes for us at the-Management Committee meetings (and other meetings when we needed help). We thank Margaret for her wonderful contribution and wish her all the best.

\* Theresa Counsel retired after nine years of volunteer service as the JPC Chair however, Theresa has kindly stayed on as a member of the Finance sub-committee.

\* Brian Tooth retired from our Board after many years as Treasurer and Chair of our Finance Committee. We thank Brian for his strong contribution over the years wish him all the very best.

\* Financially we continue to remain focused on a prudent approach to our everyday management of the JPC.

\* The Management, Strategy and Finance sub committees continued to meet the JPC requirements.

\* We are focused on refreshing the JPC strategy over the next 6 months to reflect the different world we now live in and to position us to continue supporting our community for the coming decade.

\* We have also created an updated JPC Constitution to be more inclusive of the Deaf and hard of hearing community and to ensure we can provide relevant community support in the coming years.

As this is my first report as Chair I would also like to thank all of you who have supported me over the last year with the JPC. I would especially like to thank my fellow Directors who have been steadfast and professional in their stewardship of the JPC.

We live in challenging and changing times. I would encourage us all, hearing and Deaf to continue to work as a team with understanding and compassion of each other in the Spirit of our Founders.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese, committed financial supporters, stakeholders, advocates and benefactors, without whom we could not meet our pastoral and community needs.

The JPC remains a unique Centre with compassion and inclusion at its core, positively impacting all those with whom it comes into contact - a demonstration of faith in action.

I commend the John Pierce Centre Board of Directors report for 2021.

Trevor Hughes, Chairperson, John Pierce Centre



Mr Trevor Hughes  
Chairperson



Mr Brian Tooth  
Outgoing Treasurer



Mr Dean Sinclair  
Incoming Treasurer



Br Shane Wood Board  
Minute Secretary

# Treasurer's Annual Report

Another very challenging year!

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the John Pierce Centre Ltd financial report for 2021. Like a lot of businesses (and the community in general), we were materially impacted by COVID-19 for the second year running. Unfortunately, we were not entitled to much in the way of government funding e.g. \$6,150 (compared to \$248,796 in FY20). This made things challenging as a number of our key revenue sources, such as hall hire, fundraising and specific grant opportunities were impacted due to lockdowns and COVID in general. As such, our overall revenue came in at \$357,335, which was \$31,266 below our budget and significantly lower than pre-COVID years - FY19 (\$395k) and FY18 (\$407k).

To help with the effects of revenue falls, Carmel and the team worked admirably on reducing expenses by \$38,122 year on year however, the net overall result was a loss of \$41,864 for the year.

☑ Government support of \$255k in 2020 and 2021 has been extraordinary in helping us over the past two years, and also the upcoming year. The Board is conscious that the lingering effects of COVID will remain with us for a while, and that we need to actively manage our fiscal position to avoid ongoing depletion of our cash reserves. Additional initiatives are underway and to improve our future position.

A renewed focus on fundraising and specific grants in the second half of the year;

Greater focus on how we invest our cash reserves; and

Further cost saving initiatives.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all those that have contribute to JPC over these difficult



Ms Sonya Tissera-Isaacs



Mr Damien Backholer



Ms Evelyne Albrecht



Ms Lucille Bennetto

# Executive Manager's Report

## Challenging times

Executive Manager's Report for AGM 2021

We all faced another year with rolling lockdowns during 2021, bringing with it many challenges for smaller charities like the John Pierce Centre – however vaccinations were the priority to ensure our safety.

JPC was closed to the community for most of the year but was able to re-open from time to time when government guidelines permitted, most of our gatherings and work meetings were via Zoom.

The highlight of our year, we were able to celebrate 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in December with a mass conducted by our Archbishop and previous JPC Chaplains, followed by lunch and an afternoon of joyous reflection on the JPC and its wonderful community. The day was a huge success where we launched our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book. A huge thanks to JPC Staff team did a great job putting it all together.

During the year we also conducted a Deaf Community survey to help inform our strategic planning process.

Sadly, there were a couple of staff departures in 2021. Deb Wadsworth who is pursuing a new career path. JPC thank her for her time in managing JPC. Christine Elder who has retired after working for JPC for 17 years. An amazing service to JPC and the Deaf community. Many thanks to Deb and Christine.

During the year Sophie Duncan come on board as the Office Manager. Sr Janette Murphy returned to JPC as a pastoral care worker after almost 10 years of absence. Margherita Riccioni joined us in a new role as Strategic/ Grants Officer. They all has been an energetic and very welcome addition to our team.


As you can appreciate being in an older building can present challenges. We have been in discussion with the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne regarding our roofing repair/replacement works that are due to be completed by end of 2022.

I would like to thank and acknowledge to the Board of Directors for their support during 2021.

I wish to give my thanks to all of the staff, including Fr Wayne Edwards who continues to strengthen our faith, provide deep insights, Deaf community members, volunteers, donors, funders and stakeholders for their continuing support over the last 12 months.

Carmel Phillips

Executive Manager



# Supporters Acknowledgement

On behalf of the JPC staff and Board, we would like to sincerely thank the many people and organisations that have supported the important work of the John Pierce Centre throughout 2021

Our sincere appreciation goes out to the

ongoing and first-time donors to our Ephpheta Appeal

long term private benefactors

local, state and federal government funding bodies including the City of Stonnington, Department of Social Services and the Public Records Office of Victoria, for their grants to support our project work

philanthropic organisations who through their granting have made some of our core work and project initiatives possible including the Gorman Foundation, Ephpheta Foundation, Deafness Foundation and the Victoria Law Foundation

sponsors of our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary luncheon including the MRC Foundation, Deafness Foundation, Expression Australia and Auslan Services

many partners that support our work including Deaf Victoria, Expression Australia, Deaf Children Australia, Melbourne Polytechnic, Victorian College of the Deaf,

Faith organisations including Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, St. Patricks Cathedral East Melbourne, St. Dominic's East Camberwell. St. Paul Apostle Catholic Community Endeavor Hills, Catholic Social Services Victoria.

Donors of various goods and services including Toorak Uniting Church, Endeavour Hills Uniting Church

All those who volunteered their time and services, to help JPC in 2021. Volunteers play a vital role at JPC to ensure our services can run smoothly and have a positive impact on the lives of Deaf people in our community. The dedicated Board members commit regular times to support the governance and management of JPC. Our staff contribute many volunteer hours above their usual work time to support community activities and opportunities to connect. Volunteers assist with our varied social groups, our 40th Anniversary luncheon and other activities.

Special mention to all the Auslan interpreters and Deaf interpreters who have worked with JPC throughout 2020.

At JPC we are proud to share our community language of Auslan and to build connections with the wider community. Much of this is achieved through utilising interpreters. They assist JPC to improve awareness of the needs of



AuslanServices



Funded by

Victoria Law  
Foundation



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

# Community Activities

These community activities were created to respond to a need of those who were experiencing isolation. A centre that welcomes Deaf and hard of hearing people in a way that makes them feel secure and confident. It provides opportunities to develop community bonds and strengthen spirit whilst engaging participants to develop new skills.

JPC is able to provide a Deaf Space that is suitability matched to meet a Deaf person's way of seeing and being in an environment and allows for easy communication. JPC acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the pastoral care team and group coordinators in delivering a variety of engaging activities and support for vulnerable community members.

2021 had continuing challenges caused by Covid pandemic lockdowns and restrictions in Victoria. Coordinators worked hard to adjust the group plans to connect remotely as best they could with individuals and families. Their flexibility is a credit to the JPC and the community appreciated the remote support and engagement in activities during an extremely isolating time.

## Pankina

Pankina is an Aboriginal word meaning 'be happy' and it is the perfect word to describe the happy, friendly cheeky group of Deaf seniors! It has been running for over almost 30 years and it has become a second home for many of our Deaf seniors.

In 1992, three people Bruno Broglio, Isabel Gooding and Margaret Riley-Williams expressed a concern of a lack for seniors to meet somewhere and the idea for the Pankina group began.



Pankina is a social club open to deaf members of any age. The group runs each fortnight with activities including Bingo and Cards day along with lucky numbers on the board. It is a popular group that enjoy getting together fortnightly to catch up and communicate in their first language of Auslan. Pankina reopened in March 2021 and continued until May 2021 and was closed again in June then opened in July and closed again from August till December due to lockdowns. Due to government restrictions, the group was unable to organise any outings.

Fortunately the group were able to meet for the annual December Christmas lunch. The group has large numbers in attendance usually between 40-70 community members. It is one of the few



## Deaf Art

This is a regular community art activity held on Fridays each term. It is designed to support participants to develop not only their creative skills but also the confidence and general wellbeing. Classes are taught by Deaf and hearing teachers and are Auslan accessible. The project was founded with funding from Cabrini and has been continued since then. In 2021, the group activities were adjusted to be done remotely from home during lockdowns and was

held onsite when possible. Each week there was a new art/craft focus and the supports social wellbeing for many isolated individuals. The group has been growing in popularity and regularly has 10-15 in attendance.





## Deaf Men's Group

Opportunities for Deaf men to come together is also a priority of the JPC where there is time for men to sit in a friendly space and chat, catch up with mates and discuss a range of topics and provide support for each other. The Deaf Men's group met in the early months of 2021 but due to decrease in numbers, did not return in the second half of 2021. Up to approximately 10 men are in the group and are supported to self govern to run a number of activities including card games and quizzes, as well as outing opportunities.



JPC recognizes the specific needs of men in the community and are supported by the pastoral team members to ensure social and mental wellbeing.

## Ladies Day Out

The Ladies' Day Out group are always looking for exciting opportunities around Melbourne to get out and about and enjoy the local cuisine and sites.

It is an opportunity for Deaf women to support one another, take time to catch up and grow connections and just be in a space where they can communicate freely in Auslan.

In 2021 the ladies group was impacted by government covid restrictions. However, when possible the group went on outings or attended at JPC for social gatherings. The group has approximately 30 women who attend the group.



*A Day Outing to Maling Road, Canterbury*



PIC•COLLAGE

## Signee Tots Playgroup and Family Activities

2021 was a challenging year for the Signee Tots group due to the covid pandemic. Being the second year of rolling lockdowns many families were fatigued with the challenges of home schooling whilst working from home. As well as a reduced capability of young children to participate in online activities, a reduced level of activity support was provided some families stepped away from the Signee Tots group. More one on one support was offered to parents as a space to talk through family issues and the challenges that they were facing. 10-12 families were supported throughout the year and children were able to reconnect at the end of year Christmas event which was enjoyable for the young children coming back together.



as



## Liturgy in Our Community

**Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and Deaf culture is at the forefront of John Pierce Centre faith development, ensuring that Auslan access is available at every liturgical celebration and culture is weaved through each of our events and celebrations.**

### Sacraments

Mass is held on the third Sunday of each month as well as special events such as Christmas, Easter and memorial days and provides a Deaf Interpreter and Auslan-English Interpreter, to support the priest, so that it is accessible to all Deaf, hard of hearing and hearing members of our community. Due to covid restrictions some masses were held only via livestreaming, whilst others were able to have parishioners attending as well as still providing livestreaming for those that were unable to attend. Providing these Masses online was an important connection to our parishioners to ensure they were able to continue in their faith and have Auslan access. Especially given the extreme isolation of many individuals.



### Emmaus (Liturgy preparations)

'Emmaus' is the name of the group that prepare the liturgy for the Mass each month. Due to decreasing attendance of community members for this group due to age as well as covid impacts, the group consisted of staff during 2021. Liturgical Coordinator Gail Finn, provided regular Auslan videos of readings from Mass as well as prayers developed to support the religious and faith development of the community whilst isolated at home. Videos were put up online (JPC website and Facebook) and were watched by many of the community.



Discussions in Auslan are crucial to the faith development of members and we thank the supportive team that worked with Gail to prepare and produce the videos, including Fr Wayne Edwards (Chaplain to JPC), Sr Janette Murphy and Teresa Paulet.

### Memorial Service

Our 2021 Memorial Mass, was held in November onsite and via livestreaming. It is an important Mass which provides the opportunity for people to pay their respects to members of the Deaf community who have passed in the twelve months prior. It was especially important in 2021, as many people were unable to attend funerals of friends and family that had passed, due to the Covid restrictions in Victoria. It is important for our community to have a safe space to share love and comfort in their time of grieving.

Fr Wayne Edwards led the service, in prayer and reflection, to grieve and to give thanks. Plaques were added to the memorial stone in the garden at JPC in 2021 and blessed during the service.



### Support for Funerals

Often, JPC has been the first point of contact for people who have lost a loved one. Staff guide community members through the grieving process. Our Pastoral workers assist where possible in breaking the communication barriers with family members or funeral directors to ensure Deaf individuals can fully participate spiritually in the farewell. We have assisted people in requests for Auslan interpreters. Deaf Community members can use their NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) funding to book interpreters, or over 65s can receive interpreters via Expressions Australia's Government funding. Fortunately the team were mostly able to attend onsite to support families in 2021.

## Faith through Language

**JPC continues to provide pastoral care to the Deaf community, individuals, families and extended family members. Our mission is to strive to empower all Deaf people and their families to live their lives to the full.**



### **Pastoral Care for the Aged and Unwell**

JPC Pastoral Team continues to have a large demand for assistance to the growing population of elderly Deaf people, Deaf families, those who are isolated, and those on a disability support pension. Misinformation, communication barriers and cultural barriers have been identified as major causes of frustration, sadness and loneliness amongst the sick and elderly. The extra isolation and distress caused by the Coronavirus meant the team worked harder to contact individuals to provide pastoral support, and offer comfort, compassion and guidance. Providing opportunities to connect with community often give relief to many and is integral in our work.

The JPC Pastoral Team continues to support those who are sick or in hospital, and to those in aged care. This support also extends to the families of these residents and includes the sacraments of communion and anointing of the sick as well as assisting in communication with those around them.

JPC was unable to provide outreach sacraments at Regis Lake Park (Blackburn) due to strict covid restrictions in aged care centre and for the safety of residents. JPC is acutely aware of the risks to mental health due to physical and language isolation and made regular contact with residents as much as possible via video calls and texts.

### **Mass for You at Home**

In 2021 Mass For You At Home, which is a televised Mass service, was produced by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne for January, February and March. JPC supported the production by providing the Auslan Interpreters. Subsequently changes were made for the production of the program and Woolongong diocese took over the filming and production of the show, which ceased JPC's involvement. Interpreting services were to be provided by NSW based group. JPC are proud of our association with this project over 49 years, bringing mass in Auslan into the homes of the Australian Deaf community each week. We are glad to see the program and Auslan Interpreting continue into the future.



# Special Projects and Events

## Archiving Project

Sr Bernadette Wallis and Mike Wilson worked diligently throughout 2021 to begin the process of sorting and archiving paperwork and documents from the 40 years of JPC history. Margaret Urqhart worked on the photographs of JPC's 40 years, sorting and putting them into albums with labels and dates.



## 40 Years Anniversary

JPC reached 40 years of service in 2020 but due to the covid pandemic, celebrations were delayed until December 2021. A celebratory Mass service was held at St John's church in East Melbourne with mass presided over by Archbishop Peter Comensoli; and a luncheon afterwards for Deaf community, stakeholders and supporters. Approximately 100 people attended the function to recognise the unique service provided by JPC for the Catholic Deaf Community in Victoria.



## 40 Years Anniversary Book

In remembering 40 years of service to the Deaf Community, a 40 years anniversary history book was developed which was a compilation of personal stories, information and photos of the years of service.



## Partnering with CAM for Mass

Due to the continued impacts of covid restrictions, JPC continued to partner with the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne to provide Auslan Interpreters for weekly mass services at St Patrick's Cathedral, which is aired on Channel 31 and youtube. In 2021, the Auslan team was expanded to include Deaf Interpreters on screen. Progressing Deaf lead faith to include Deaf interpreters means that information can be presented in a culturally nuanced way that connects deeply with the community. JPC are proud of the progressive model that is being cultivated in the area of faith and Deaf connection.



## Newsletters

JPC produced and distributed (by postage and direct email) three editions of the newsletter. (April, August and December 2021). The newsletter contains community news, spiritual reflections and event announcements. Some community members still appreciate hard copy of the newsletter in the post, others receive an email notification and the public can access the latest versions via the JPC website. A “text” only version is also published for members of our community with limited vision.

## Social Media (Facebook, Vimeo and Website)

JPC uses multi platform media to communicate with our network of community and stakeholders. Our website, Facebook and newsletters are key points of contact and utilised regularly to distribute information. Where possible, information shared has also been produced in Auslan video format and distributed in these channels. The social media posts include reminders about regular community activities upcoming events, special religious celebrations, and reflections, messages about faith, happiness and well-being. JPC also uses this space as a method to share any community news from other Deaf related organisations in Victoria and Australia.

## E-news

Three e-Newsletters were tailored for the stakeholders of our JPC community. During 2021 we increased stakeholder numbers from 79 to 128 contacts. We communicated information about community activities, special events and progress on innovative projects that have been put into place with the help of funding from JPC supporters.

## Religious Signs Website Resource

The website is a resource of signs specific to the Catholic Deaf community in Victoria and is regularly accessed by Auslan Interpreters to increase their knowledge of sign variety in order to provide suitable interpretations for deaf people. It is also used by teachers, clergy and community to support learning and faith development.

## Video Series to Support Connection to Faith

During the continued isolation when the community could not attend Mass or spend time sharing faith, JPC continued to develop video series to provide opportunity for mindfulness and reflection. Regular prayer videos were signed in Auslan by a Deaf staff members with an English script for holistic access for the community.

Many thanks to Fr Wayne Edwards, Gail Finn, Katrina Mynard, Sr Janette Murphy and Teresa Paulet for their work and commitment. The videos brought comfort and reflection to the community during such a challenging time and we received positive feedback from the community.

# JPC Staff

## 2021



**Mrs Carmel Phillips**  
Executive Manager



**Mrs Sophie Duncan**  
Office Manager



**Ms Gail Finn**  
Operations Assistant and  
Liturgy Co-ordinator



**Fr Wayne Edwards**  
Chaplain



**Ms Katrina Mynard**  
Pastoral Team  
Coordinator



**Mrs Melissa  
Thompson**  
Community Worker  
- Family Support



**Mrs Diane  
Backholer**  
Community  
Activities  
Co-ordinator



**Ms Teresa Paulet**  
Communications  
Co-ordinator/  
Interpreter



**Ms Janette Murphy**  
Pastoral Team



**Ms Margherita  
Riccioni**  
Grants Officer



**Ms Deb Wadsworth**  
Strategic Manager  
*(resigned April 2021)*



**Mrs Christine Elder**  
Office Manager  
*(resigned April 2021)*



JOHN PIERCE CENTRE  
*Spirit of the Deaf Community*

*You can support the work  
of JPC...*

## MAKE A DONATION

By supporting John Pierce Centre, you are creating a positive change.

Financial donations are welcomed and can be made by visiting [www.jpc.org.au](http://www.jpc.org.au) or calling our Office on (03) 9525 1158.

Cheque, money order or telephone donations can be made to John Pierce Centre.

You may also like to donate online at [www.givenow.com.au/jpcdonations](http://www.givenow.com.au/jpcdonations)  
All donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible.



## VOLUNTEER

We welcome volunteers' involvement at JPC.

Volunteers can contribute their skills to JPC whether it's by being a JPC Board member, assisting on special events in our calendar or participating in a local community activity.

## LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

By leaving a gift to John Pierce Centre in your Will, you will have a lasting impact, supporting John Pierce Centre Deaf Community for years to come.

For more information, please contact our Administration Office on 03 9525 1158.

## KEEP UP TO DATE

Receive updates by subscribing to John Pierce Centre eNewsletter at::

[www.jpc.org.au/community/newsletters/](http://www.jpc.org.au/community/newsletters/)

And follow us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/JohnPierceCentre/>

A Company Limited By Guarantee - ABN 55 005 611 601



[www.jpc.org.au](http://www.jpc.org.au)

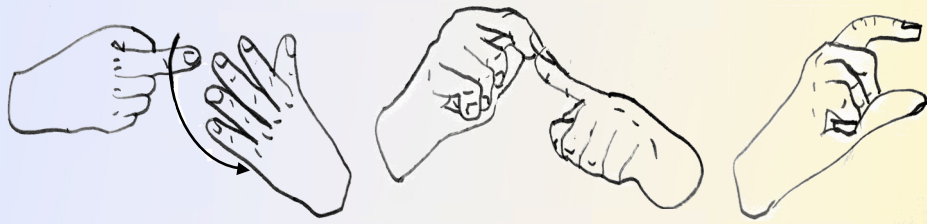


[admin@jpc.org.au](mailto:admin@jpc.org.au)



[/JohnPierceCentre](https://www.facebook.com/JohnPierceCentre/)

John Pierce Centre / 25 - 35 High Street / PO BOX 443 Prahran, VIC 3181 / Phone: 03 9525 1158



JOHN PIERCE CENTRE  
*Spirit of the Deaf Community*

