



# **Annual Report**

## **2024**

**JOHN PIERCE CENTRE**  
*Spirit of the Deaf 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

### Inclusivity

Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing people, their families, our volunteers, staff, and other stakeholders feel respected, supported, and valued.

### Integrity

Being honest, ethical and consistent with our core values in both our words and actions

### Compassion

Showing kindness and empathy in our relationships with the Deaf community, our partners and other stakeholders

### Collaboration

Contributing our time and skills in working, with other individuals and organisations to support the overall wellbeing of the Deaf community in Victoria

### Accountability

Being responsible for our actions, behaviours, performance, and decisions at an individual and organisational level



# Directors' Annual Report

On behalf of the John Pierce Centre (JPC) Board of Directors I am pleased to present our annual report for the 2024 year.

At the time of preparing the report, the JPC Accounts for the 2024 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.

During 2024, I am pleased to be able to say that the John Pierce Centre continued to provide a broad range of services and activities to support our community. Of course, this was only possible with the dedication and hard work of the JPC Staff, Board and Volunteers who ensure we can continue to deliver our services and support to our community. On behalf of the Board, I would like to express our thanks and appreciation to our JPC Staff and our Volunteers for their ongoing wonderful work and dedication.

Our Executive Manager Sophie Duncan does a great job managing the Centre and keeping the Board apprised. Sophie leads the JPC Staff and Volunteer community with her engaged energetic and committed approach and is to be commended for her resilience and dedication.

Brother Shane Wood continues to provide his valuable support and input to the Board for which we thank him.

Financially, we remain focused on a careful approach to managing the finances and resources of the JPC and I would like to thank Dean Sinclair and Sophie Duncan for their hard work in this regard.

The Strategy & Management subcommittee provided its ongoing support to the JPC team and the Board in its governance role.

We continue to focus on implementing our strategy to ensure JPC has a sustainable role in supporting our community going forward.

We were privileged to have a new Director, Gemma Cameron join our Board in December. I am sure you will join with me in extending her a very warm welcome.

I would also like to thank my fellow Directors for their continuing contributions, support and professional commitment in their stewardship role for the JPC.

It is a pleasure to see our JPC team and community in working together across all our activities with understanding and compassion for each other in the Spirit of our Founders.

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

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

I commend the John Pierce Centre Board of Directors report for 2024.



**Trevor Hughes**  
Chairman

## JPC Board of Directors 2024



Dean Sinclair  
Treasurer



Br Shane Wood  
Board Minute  
Secretary



Evelyne  
Albrecht



Roshan  
Abraham



Gemma  
Cameron

## Outgoing Directors



Sonya  
Tissera-Isaacs



Lucille  
Bennetto

# Treasurer's Annual Report

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the John Pierce Centre Ltd Special Purpose Financial Statements for 2024. The year proved to be strong in terms of profit and net operating cash flows. We achieved a net profit of \$36,258, driven by revenues of \$397,251 and expenses totalling \$360,993. This positive result was largely due to effective expense management, which saw a year-on-year reduction of \$43,894.

The tables below summarise our net profit (loss) and net equity position over the past four years. In the post-COVID period, the Board and Management focused on right-sizing our services and expenses. As a result, expenses have decreased from \$437,321 in 2020 to \$360,993 in 2024, a reduction of \$76,238. We are particularly pleased that, despite these cost reductions, we have been able to maintain all of our services.



Looking ahead to the coming year, we are projecting a modest profit, considering ongoing inflationary pressures and stable levels of donations, fundraising, and grant income.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to JPC over the past four years. Our major donors have shown unwavering support, and we are especially grateful to the Catholic Archdiocese, as well as the Ephpheta and Gorman Foundations. Without their generosity, our existence would not be possible.

In closing, the Board and I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Executive Manager Sophie Duncan and her team for their disciplined approach to spending while ensuring the continued delivery of our services. I also want to recognise my fellow board members and chair, Trevor Hughes, for their ongoing support. Thanks also to our auditor, Ryk Eksteen of Collins & Co, for their invaluable assistance in preparing and reviewing the JPC Financial Statements.

We look forward to seeing you all at the centre.

**Dean Sinclair**  
Treasurer

## JPC Staff



**Sophie Duncan**  
Executive Manager  
from May 2023



**Fr Wayne Edwards**  
Chaplain



**Katrina Mynard**  
Pastoral Team  
Coordinator



**Janette Murphy**  
Pastoral Team



**Diane Backholer**  
Community  
Activities  
Co-ordinator

## Executive Manager's Report

2024 has been a year of growth and transition for JPC, marked by exciting new opportunities and heartfelt goodbyes. I would also like to take a moment to thank all our staff for their incredible dedication and support during what has been a very difficult year for me and my family. Your hard work and commitment to JPC have not only helped the organisation continue to thrive but have also been a great source of comfort to me personally. I am deeply grateful for everything you've done, and I couldn't have navigated this challenging year without you.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Board for their unwavering support. Your guidance and understanding have been invaluable, and I truly appreciate your continued commitment to JPC during this time.

This year, we said goodbye to two highly valued members of our Board of Directors. Lucille Bennetto stepped down after four years of dedicated service, and Sonya Tissera-Isaacs retired after nine years of committed leadership. Their guidance and support have been instrumental in JPC's growth and success. We thank them sincerely for their contributions and wish them all the best for the future.

We also marked the retirement of Sister Janette Murphy sosj, whose unwavering dedication and outstanding service have left a lasting impact on JPC and our community. We are deeply grateful for her many years of leadership and spiritual guidance. Thankfully, Sister Janette remains part of our JPC family and continues to volunteer at Sunday Mass.

A special thank you to Kym Parker for her wonderful work with Signee Tots. Kym's dedication and care have made a meaningful difference to the families involved in the program. We wish her all the best as she returns to Queensland.

A heartfelt thank you to our program participants, volunteers, donors, funders, Board, and staff for your ongoing support and commitment to JPC's mission. Your dedication enables us to continue supporting the social and spiritual wellbeing of the Deaf community throughout Victoria.

**Sophie Duncan**  
**Executive Manager**  
**John Pierce Centre**

## Outgoing JPC Staff



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



**Tamara Dwyer**  
Operations Assistant



**Salomon Gerber**  
Operations Officer

## Supporters Acknowledgement

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

Our appreciation goes out to the

- ongoing and first-time donors to our annual fundraiser Ephpheta Appeal
- long term private benefactors
- many community volunteers who helped us deliver our social groups and activities
- philanthropic organisations who through their granting have made some of our core work and project initiatives possible including the Gorman Foundation, Ephpheta Foundation
- many partners that supported our work including Deaf Victoria, Expression Australia, Deaf Connect, Melbourne Polytechnic, Victorian College of the Deaf, Council on the Ageing Victoria.
- faith organisations including Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, St. Patrick's Cathedral East Melbourne, Josephite's Associates, St. Paul Apostle Catholic Community Endeavour Hills, Catholic Social Services Victoria, donors of various goods and services including Toorak Uniting Church, Endeavour Hills Uniting Church
- Auslan and Deaf Interpreters who have worked closely with us to help facilitate our programs, services, staff meetings and events
- members of the JPC Deaf Men's Group who have volunteered their time to help with maintenance and repairs of our courtyard and carpark areas



## Community Groups, Spiritual Care & Pastoral Care

Community activities have continued to support individuals experiencing isolation. JPC serves as an inclusive space designed specifically for D/deaf and hard of hearing individuals, creating a sense of safety and empowerment. Through a variety of activities, JPC helps build community connections, improve well-being, and promote skill development. The centre provides a Deaf-friendly environment that accommodates the unique perspectives and communication preferences of its visitors, ensuring smooth interactions. JPC recognises the dedication of its pastoral care team and group coordinators, who organise a wide range of enriching activities and offer essential support to vulnerable community members. The year 2024 was a vibrant period marked by increased engagement and stronger community ties.

**102** group sessions delivered  
in 2024

Pankina Social Group

Ladies Get Together

Men's Group

Signee Tots Playgroup

Arts and Crafts

**15** church services in 2024

including special services

**405** people attended the **monthly**  
**and special Mass services** over the  
year

**Live streaming** of services with  
regular watchers

**330** Deaf Community

**members supported**

**With over 500** hours

**of pastoral support**

# Projects

## Seniors Strengthening, Balance and Fitness Classes

JPC continued offering a seniors' exercise program designed to support the strength, balance, and fitness of older community members. The classes took place weekly over several weeks. Regular exercise helps seniors improve their physical health by strengthening muscles and bones, boosting cardiovascular health, and enhancing flexibility and balance, which in turn reduces the risk of falls and fractures.

These classes also provide valuable opportunities for social interaction and connection, which are crucial for emotional well-being within the Deaf community. They help combat feelings of loneliness and isolation, which are often experienced by older Deaf individuals.

## Religious Liturgy Video Library

JPC collaborated with Teachers as Co-Learners—Catholic Education and Language—to produce a series of Auslan videos covering regular Mass liturgy and common prayers and scripture. The primary goal of this project was to create a valuable resource that can be accessed by families, children, schools, the Deaf community, interpreters, and the wider public. These videos provide Auslan translations of the regular Mass liturgy, helping to enhance understanding and foster a deeper connection to catholic faith for those who rely on Auslan for communication. By making the Mass more accessible, this initiative strives to promote inclusivity and strengthen spiritual engagement within the community.





### Information Sessions for Senior Deaf

After receiving a grant in 2023, JPC was able to offer a series of workshops to the community in the first half of 2024. Seniors Rights Victoria led informative sessions on key topics to support the independence and financial security of older Deaf individuals. Delivering these sessions in Auslan is essential for promoting a better understanding of important issues such as financial safety, relationships with grandchildren, and adult children living at home. The sessions were extremely successful with high engagement by the Deaf community.

### Community Feedback

*“These types of workshops are so important for all Deaf people”*

*“It would be too hard if I went to a workshop with hearing people. It’s much better in a group of Deaf people and in Auslan”*

*“It can be difficult to access this information, it is great that JPC offer these events”*

## Partnerships

- Deaf Connect who are leaders in service provision in the Deaf sector, attended the community centre throughout the year to provide information sessions about services available to the community and guidance to accessing eligible services.
- Expression Australia who are leaders in service provision in the Deaf sector, attended the community centre throughout the year to provide information sessions and support individual Deaf community members on a regular basis.
- JPC worked with Tobin Brothers Funerals to support community members in the planning and organising of funerals throughout 2024. We are grateful for the continued partnership with Tobin Brothers for all their support of our community.
- JPC worked in partnership with JoCare to provide in home volunteers to Deaf people experiencing isolation. JoCare has provided key training to JPC volunteers that are then able to go out and visit Deaf people to provide stimulating conversation in Auslan and connection to community, language and culture.
- Victoria Police partnered with JPC to deliver a 'Coffee with a Cop' session where the Deaf community could come along and chat to police in a relaxed environment about any topic they wished.



**1,050** followers on Facebook

**3%** increase of followers

**newsletter subscribers 574**

In 2024 the John Pierce Centre provided a range of activities, events and supports. Communication is provided to community members and stakeholders via our newsletters. Information is also distributed via our Facebook page and website.

Events like the monthly Mass is livestreamed on Facebook and many information videos are provided in Auslan on our Facebook page.

Expanding our network and contacts is a key element of the work at JPC to ensure successful outcomes for Deaf community.

Regular annual events at JPC were once again well attended, including the AGM. The Thankyou party was held to give thanks to all of the volunteers that give up their time to support the vital work of the JPC. We could not operate without volunteers and we are truly thankful for their time and energy.

The annual Christmas Rally is the biggest event of the calendar for the community where people come together to give thanks for the year and the community that share a deep and special connection through language, history and culture.

### 25 Years of Signee Tots Special Event

The main event for 2024 was the Signee Tots playgroup 25 Year Celebration. It was a celebration of connection, community and the countless lives we've touched along the way.

Access to early programs in Auslan like our playgroup, help in establishing strong foundations of sign language and Deaf identity in our young Deaf children as well as supporting CODAs (Children Of Deaf Adults) and families that use Auslan. It has consistently been a place of welcome, a safe and comfortable place where families are able to meet with other families, connect, and share in their journey of parenthood.

Over the years we have been blessed with many volunteers and staff who give their time and commitment for the program; creating fun activities and events to bring joy and laughter to children. It was wonderful to host a day where families from over the past 25 years, could come together as a community.

A huge thank you to Deaf Connect for providing a grant to ensure this event was successful and fun for all of our families!



## Community Impact



### Volunteer—Philip Tucker

Phil Tucker started attending JPC in 2021 when groups were allowed to return after Covid-19. Phil started with the Pankina group and was happy to lend a hand with activities and things happening in the centre. In 2022 he joined the Pankina committee as a volunteer and later became the Vice President and then Treasurer.

***“I love helping out at JPC. Everyone here is Deaf and we enjoy the shared space and life.”***

Even though Phil lives quite a distance from the centre, he travels in regularly to attend activities. Phil also assisted with the re-establishment of the Deaf Men’s Group who catch up monthly for different activities in the centre or on outings around the city.

On top of all this Phil also loves being a part of other Deaf groups like the Deaf Darts Club, Casey Deaf Club, and previously the Deaf Fishing Club. What a busy life!

***“Being active and busy makes me happy. I have a sense of pride that I am contributing to the Deaf community.”***

### Volunteer – Rachel McNamara

*“I started volunteering at the John Pierce Centre 3 years ago with Signee Tots.*

*I am a hearing Auslan student. I learned about the importance of being involved in the Deaf community in my first year of TAFE but unfortunately, I didn’t know anyone who was Deaf so I decided to volunteer to become involved that way.*



*Many years earlier, I used to volunteer at my sons’ primary school and I enjoyed supporting the children in their learning and through play, so when I heard they were looking for volunteers for the Signee Tots group, I let them know that I was keen.”*

What do I get from volunteering?

*“The privilege of supporting the Deaf organisers of an outstanding Deaf program for young families. I have gotten to know some wonderful people from the Deaf community and I love seeing the joy of the young children being immersed in as Auslan-rich Deaf-friendly play space.*

*Also, of course, the opportunity for me to learn more about Deaf culture and use Auslan in an authentic and fun environment. It helps to support my study. I’m in my final year of part-time study (Diploma of Auslan) but I intend to continue to volunteer for the program as long as I am needed.”*

## *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. Scan the QR code to donate



### 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. or email us at [admin@jpc.org.au](mailto:admin@jpc.org.au)

### 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.

For more information about volunteering, visit [www.jpc.org.au/volunteering/](http://www.jpc.org.au/volunteering/)

### KEEP UP TO DATE

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

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

And follow us on Facebook:

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

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# **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. 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.**



**Created by**  
**Deaf Arts & Crafts Group**



**JOHN PIERCE CENTRE**  
*Spirit of the Deaf Community*