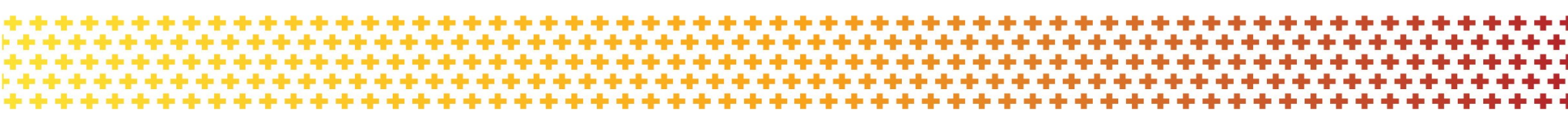




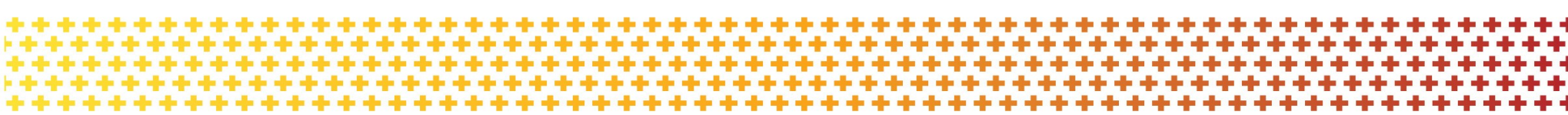
Final report – public

Organisation Name	Deafblind Victoria Inc.		
Program Name	Information Linkages and Capacity Building - Social and Community Participation 2023-24		
Activity Title	Deafblind Community Hub		
Activity ID	4-JGBOCWB	Total Grant Funding	\$933,918.00 (excl. GST)
Activity Period	1 May 2024 to 30 June 2026		
Activity Description	This project will build on the emerging Deafblind community in Victoria to establish and maintain a central hub that facilitates access to mainstream community activities for deafblind Victorians. The Deafblind Community Hub will support individuals to: - explore recreational, arts and cultural activities, out in the community and online - try new communication technologies and connect to digital services - share skills with others to foster community participation and contribution - raise awareness about deafblindness, changing attitudes and improving practices, and support mainstream community organisations and activities to: - improve engagement with deafblind people - access resources and advice on deafblindness - enhance accessibility and service delivery. The Hub will provide a unique model of a truly deafblind-led program with majority deafblind staff. Project activities have emerged directly from needs and wishes identified by the Deafblind community in Victoria.		
Activity / Service Focus	The primary disability cohort focus is deafblindness. Members of Deafblind Victoria consider themselves to be part of an emerging culture with a distinct language (tactile Auslan) and cultural norms, practices, and knowledge, thus constituting a CALD group.		



Activity Deliverables

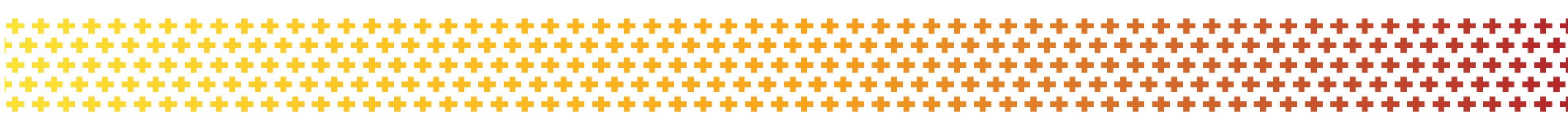
Objective	Deliverable	Time frames	Measures of success / Intended outcomes	AWP Final Report (for the entire activity period 1 May 2024 – 30 June 2026)	
				Status	Comments
<i>COLUMN 1</i> Define the benefits, outcomes, and performance improvements that are expected from the project.	<i>COLUMN 2</i> Include the Activity Deliverables stated in your initial funding application (see the section titled Activity Project Plan within your funding application)	<i>COLUMN 3</i> Please be specific with time frames for deliverables	<i>COLUMN 4</i> Demonstrate the impact of the action/s you will take.	<i>COLUMN 5</i> Insert status from the list below: - Not Started - On Track - Delayed - Complete	<i>COLUMN 6</i> In no more than 200 words, please briefly report on the progress of each deliverable for the reporting period.
Provide a model of a program that is successfully run by deafblind people that others can follow. Issue addressed: When attending the International Deafblind Conference in Canada in 2023, it became apparent that there are precious few examples around the world of deafblind people leading their own organisations, or services with significant numbers of deafblind staff. By ensuring deafblind individuals take the lead in all stages of the project, from design through to implementation, the project seeks to showcase the feasibility of such leadership. This message is intended for both the broader community and deafblind individuals themselves. Insights gained will be shared with other regions, particularly with Deafblind West Australia and similar state-based deafblind groups.	1. Model a deafblind-led program Maintain majority deafblind staff with deafblind leadership for the duration of the project, and demonstrate this on DBV website, social media and progress reports.	July 2024 – June 2026	Total number of people with disability employed Proportion of paid staff that are people with disability Website and social media posts Feedback from other state-based deafblind groups	Complete	DBV maintained a genuinely deafblind-led model, with an all-deafblind Committee of Management overseeing delivery and receiving regular project reports. Most project staff were people with disability: 15 out of 21 (71%). Deafblind people held leadership, coordination, project and training roles. Lived experience informed recruitment, workplace design, communication practices, technology use and program delivery. The project demonstrated influence beyond DBV. Deafblind workers from the Hunter Deafblind Project in NSW visited specifically to meet DBV's deafblind staff and receive peer mentoring about governance, employment and how a deafblind-led organisation operates. DBV also shared its model with other state-based deafblind groups and regularly showcased deafblind employment and workplace technology through its website (40k views) and social media (over 180k views). The project created employment pathways as well as direct jobs. Two deafblind staff subsequently gained employment with a disability service provider, supported by experience and references developed while working on DBV projects. New casual deafblind workers were recruited, expanding regional awareness-raising capacity and bringing additional expertise in braille and assistive technology. These outcomes demonstrated how deafblind people can successfully govern, manage, staff and deliver a complex community program, creating a model that others can learn from and adapt.
Deafblind Victorians have increased social and digital connections. Issue addressed: Deafblind Victorians face significant social isolation and barriers to digital connectivity. There is no other public space in Victoria where they can turn up without an appointment, knowing that the environment is accessible and there will be others who can communicate with	2. DBV Connect (weekly drop-in program & remote helpdesk) Maintain an accessible space in central Melbourne where	July 2024 – June 2026	Total number of participants with disability Hours open	Complete	DBV Connect succeeded by providing a reliable weekly drop-in space and remote helpdesk for deafblind people, their families, support workers and professionals. The service offered social connection, peer support, information, advice, referrals, technology exploration and practical assistance with everyday issues. DBV Connect delivered 90 weekly drop-in sessions. It recorded 1,134 attendances, including 656 attendances by people with disability. This averaged 12.6 participants and 7.3 participants with disability per day.



them.	Deafblind people can drop in, connect with others, get support and explore new technologies. 44 drop-in days per year Target average number of participants with disability per drop-in day: 4		Support received Peer connections made Technologies explored/shared		Support included help with MyGov, correspondence, housing, internet access, travel, health services, NDIS processes, employment documents and communication with service providers. Participants explored braille displays, magnifiers, screen readers, accessible phones and communication technologies. Loan devices and one-to-one training helped people remain digitally connected as their vision or hearing changed. DBV Connect also strengthened peer relationships. Deafblind people met others with similar experiences, practised different communication methods and shared practical knowledge. Enquiries from organisations and professionals extended the program’s impact by improving understanding of deafblind access and referral pathways. https://deafblindvictoria.com/2025/06/25/dbv-connect-keeps-growing/
i. Deafblind Victorians have increased access to recreational activities, mainstream community spaces and group socialising. ii. Deafblind access needs are made visible to providers of mainstream recreational activities, improving the capacity of the provider to accommodate deafblind visitors. iii. Volunteers develop skills in Auslan and deafblind communication and connection to the Deafblind community, opening a pathway to employment. Issue addressed: Mainstream community locations such as libraries, cafés, art galleries, and parks can feel inaccessible to Deafblind Victorians. Some DBV members even struggle to leave the house and get adequate exercise. When they attempt to access a mainstream facility, staff can be unsure how to provide access for Deafblind visitors. Auslan students struggle to find opportunities to practice, and the Deafblind community faces a chronic shortage of support workers and interpreters who are skilled in deafblind communication.	3. Recreation program Monthly mainstream community activities in Melbourne for a group of Deafblind people and supports. <u>10 recreation events per year</u> Target average number of participants with disability per event: 15	July 2024 – June 2026	Total number of participants with disability Number of activities Range of mainstream community locations visited Number of participants, supports and volunteers	<i>Complete</i>	Across the project period, the Recreation Program supported deafblind people to participate in social, cultural and recreational activities in mainstream community settings. DBV delivered 20 events, including visits to galleries, gardens, festivals, museums, libraries, cafés, Werribee Zoo, an escape room, boating facilities and an accessible beach. The program recorded 548 attendances, including 271 attendances by people with disability. This averaged 27.4 participants and 13.6 participants with disability per event. Overall participation was strong and some events attracted more than 20 participants with disability. There were 21 volunteers and 18 family/friend/informal support people. Activities increased social connection, confidence, mobility and physical activity. Deafblind access requirements were made visible to venues and service providers, giving staff practical experience in accommodating deafblind visitors. Volunteers, interpreters and communication guides developed skills in guiding, Auslan and deafblind communication in real community settings. Deafblind staff also strengthened their skills in coordinating accessible group outings, liaising with venues and responding to changing participant and access needs. https://deafblindvictoria.com/2025/10/02/sensas-escape-room-in-south-yarra/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2026/01/24/rec-day-at-frankstons-accessible-beach/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2025/05/21/a-look-back-at-recreation-events-in-2024/
i. Deafblind Victorians gain social connection in a supportive and relaxed setting. ii. Participants gaining self-esteem and confidence by	4. Craft Group Deafblind people and others meet once a	July 2024 – June 2026	Total number of participants with disability	<i>Complete</i>	Craft Group provided regular hands-on activities that supported social connection, creativity and peer skill-sharing for deafblind people throughout the project period. Sessions included ceramics, knitting, crochet, macrame, pom-poms, wearable art, decorations, tactile greeting cards and yarn-based works used in public



being valued for their expertise as they share skills and knowledge. iii. Deafblind Victorians experience mainstream art/craft activities. Issue addressed: Deafblind social isolation, reduced self-esteem, and limited opportunities for personal growth and community engagement. Several DBV members are skilled in hands-on crafts. Through this program they can share their skills and knowledge, fostering a sense of purpose and belonging. The casual setting allows even unskilled deafblind people to have something to do with their hands while making social connections with each other, guests, and volunteers.	month for hands-on art and craft activities, with a focus on peer skill-sharing. 10 events per year Target average number of participants with disability per event: 15		Total number of participants (including volunteers, family members and others) Number of activities Range of arts/crafts		awareness activities. The project delivered 20 Craft Group sessions, recording 476 attendances, including 262 by people with disability. This averaged 23.8 participants and 13.1 participants with disability per session. Craft Group gave deafblind participants opportunities to learn new skills, teach others and contribute their own expertise in a relaxed and accessible setting. The project concluded with an exhibition attended by 62 people. It showcased the work made at Craft Group, alongside work donated by deafblind artists from the Hunter region. Craft activities also contributed to wider awareness through public displays, yarn bombing and Deafblind Awareness Week activities. These activities celebrated the creativity and skills of deafblind people while increasing their visibility in the wider community. https://deafblindvictoria.com/2026/04/18/crochet-at-dbv-craft-group/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2024/04/04/craft-group-titanic-exhibition/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2024/09/24/footy-creations-at-dbv-craft-group-11th-sep-2024/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2025/10/13/craft-group-ceramic-plates/
i. The wider community gains connection to the Deafblind community in Victoria and understanding of the experience of Deafblind individuals, resulting in change in attitudes and improvements in practices. ii. Deafblind Victorians gain skills and confidence through opportunities for paid employment and public speaking. Issue addressed: There is little awareness of deafblindness in the wider community. Many think about deaf access as visual, and blind access as auditory; these approaches can be ineffective for deafblind people, who constitute a distinct disability group with unique access needs. Few employment opportunities exist for Deafblind Victorians. Deafblind World workshops are designed and presented by Deafblind individuals. First person stories are combined with experiential activities for great impact on audiences/participants.	5. Deafblind World Awareness-raising workshops & presentations 10 events per year Target average number of participants per event: 20	July 2024 – June 2026	Total number of presenters/participants with disability Total number of participants Number of activities Organisations/sectors engaged Number of participants, supports and volunteers Feedback/evaluations from workshop participants	<i>Complete</i>	Over the two-year project, DBV delivered 23 Deafblind World workshops, presentations and awareness-raising activities. Activities reached schools, government departments, disability services, utilities, health and education professionals, Auslan students, churches, researchers and the wider community. Across the 22 activities where attendance was recorded, there were approximately 663 attendances, averaging 30 participants per activity. A month-long public window display in Flinders Lane generated an estimated 500 or more impressions. Activities combined deafblind presenters’ lived experience with practical learning about communication, guiding, technology, access barriers and inclusive practice. Feedback was consistently positive. Across the evaluations reviewed, every respondent said the information was useful. Participants described the workshops as powerful, immersive and eye-opening, and reported increased understanding of communication methods, technology, accessibility and the diversity of deafblind experiences. One participant wrote: “Deafblind people are very capable people and have their own perspective and experience to add to society.” Participants also identified practical applications, including clearer communication, accessible services and greater confidence offering assistance. Many requested longer workshops, more personal stories and further practical guidance. The program challenged assumptions about deafblind people’s skills and capacities while creating paid work,



					public-speaking and leadership opportunities for deafblind presenters. https://deafblindvictoria.com/2025/10/29/deaf-festival-october-2025/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2025/07/30/deafblind-world-workshop-at-melbourne-polytechnic/
i. Deafblind Victorians develop social connections and communication skills ii. Deafblind Victorians gain knowledge from guest presenters about issues that affect their lives iii. Guests learn from the Deafblind community and taking learnings back to their organisations iv. A Deafblind community is maintained and strengthened, providing crucial peer support. Issue addressed: Deafblind Victorians lack opportunities to socialise together. With great diversity in personal histories and experience of deafblindness, DBV members often cannot communicate directly with each other. Deafblind Café provides an opportunity to practise different forms of communication such as tactile Auslan. Participants whose eyesight or hearing is worsening can learn from those who have already lived through the experience and adapted to it. Deafblind Victorians face barriers to accessing information about issues that affect their lives, such as emergency services, COVID safety, or the NDIS. Likewise, mainstream services can be ignorant of the needs of deafblind people. Having a guest presenter at each event allows for an interface between the two worlds.	6. Deafblind Café Monthly peer-support event for the Deafblind community to socialise, with guest speakers who present information and learn from participants. 10 events per year Target average number of participants with disability per event: 15	July 2024 – June 2026	Total number of participants with disability Number of events Attendance (participants, supports and volunteers) Range of guest presenters	Complete	Over the two-year project, Deafblind Café provided a regular, accessible peer-support space where deafblind people could socialise, practise different forms of communication and learn about issues affecting their lives. DBV delivered 20 Café events, recording 913 attendances, including 416 attendances by people with disability. This averaged 45.7 participants and 20.8 participants with disability per event. Sessions included guest speakers and community-led discussions on technology, guide dogs, telecommunications, mental health, transport, the NDIS, communication independence and Deafblind community life. Participants did not simply receive information: they shared their own strategies and lived experience, learning practical ways to communicate, travel, use technology, maintain wellbeing and manage everyday barriers. DBV Café strengthened peer connection, reduced isolation and created opportunities for participants to build confidence and support one another. It also enabled mainstream organisations and technology suppliers to engage directly with deafblind people and better understand their access needs. Volunteers helped with welcoming participants, guiding, communication and practical event support. Volunteer interpreting students developed skills and understanding of deafblind culture, built relationships with the community and gained experience that can lead to work as commguides or disability workers. https://deafblindvictoria.com/2024/10/10/deafblind-cafe-communication-independence-discussion-september-2024/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2026/03/26/dbv-cafe-seeing-eye-dogs-australia/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2025/10/30/dbv-cafe-mental-health-discussion/ https://deafblindvictoria.com/2025/08/16/dbv-tech-expo-july-2025/
i. Improved skills and knowledge for Deafblind Victorians ii. Enhanced confidence, self-esteem and employment opportunities for Deafblind Victorians Issue addressed:	7. Skill-sharing program Deafblind individuals share skills and knowledge in art/craft,	July 2024 – June 2026	Total number of participants with disability Total number of skill-	Complete	Over the project period, Skill-Sharing sessions became a core part of DBV’s integrated Community Hub model. Deafblind people shared expertise in technology, communication, braille, Auslan, art and craft, everyday life skills, guiding, support practices and deafblind awareness. Sessions were delivered one-to-one, in small groups, through larger workshops and online. Skill-sharing was



The skill-sharing program positions deafblind project participants as valuable contributors, and not just as helpless or passive recipients of support. It enhances the programs above (Craft Group, DBV Connect, Deafblind World, etc.) by building in additional support and incentives for deafblind people to become presenters and trainers with paid employment.	technology, braille/Auslan, deafblind awareness, life skills, etc. 24 sessions per year		sharing sessions conducted Range of skills/knowledge shared (braille, craft, deafblind awareness, etc.)		embedded across DBV Connect, Craft Group, DBV Café, awareness-raising and deafblind leadership activities. This created frequent and varied opportunities for deafblind people to contribute their knowledge, which helped the program deliver 102 sessions. The program created a pathway from participation to leadership. Some people first attended as members or participants, then began sharing a skill, progressed into paid casual work, and later took on permanent staff or Committee of Management roles. This gradual approach allowed people to build confidence, communication skills, work experience and a public profile at a pace suited to them. Skill-sharing increased practical knowledge and independence for participants while recognising deafblind people as trainers and experts by experience. It also strengthened the other project streams, because skills developed in one setting could be applied and shared in another. This helped build a more capable, connected and deafblind-led community.
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Stakeholder Engagement

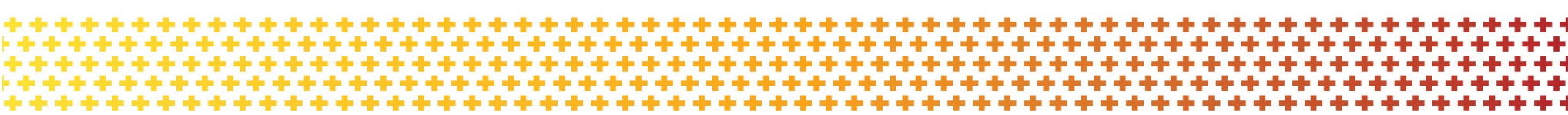
Stakeholder	Interest or Impact	Engagement Strategy	AWP Final Report (for the entire activity period 1 May 2024 – 30 June 2026)	
			Status	Comments
<i>COLUMN 1</i> Name the stakeholder	<i>COLUMN 2</i> Briefly describe how the stakeholder holds an interest in, or is affected by, the activity	<i>COLUMN 3</i> Briefly describe how you will engage or interact with the stakeholder	Insert relevant status: - Not Started - On Track - Delayed - Complete	In no more than 200 words, provide information on the progress and/or success of your engagement with the akeholder
Disability services: - Able Australia - Expression Australia - Deaf Connect - Vision Australia - HireUp - List Services - Signpedia 1Wave - Heartfelt Personalised Support	Disability services provide interpreters, support workers and resources. A tactile Auslan user may require 2 interpreters to participate in an event. For group activities such as Deafblind Café where 8 tactile Auslan users may attend, 16 interpreters are required. Given the chronic shortage of Auslan interpreters, a close relationship with individual interpreters and agencies is required. Deafblind project staff may engage a communication guide to support them at work, paid for by their NDIS package.	The project will work with service providers to ensure adequate and appropriate interpreting, resources and support for project participants. In turn, service provision staff will benefit from the professional development opportunities afforded during DBV workshops and events.	Complete	Engagement with disability services supported access, workforce development and improved service practice throughout the project. Expression Australia supplied Auslan interpreters for activities and meetings, including interpreters developing experience with tactile and deafblind communication. Able Australia provided commguides, promoted Recreation Program activities and supported residents to participate. DBV also delivered deafblind awareness and communication-guide training to Able Australia staff. Relationships with disability providers created referral pathways for deafblind people and enabled services to seek advice through DBV Connect. These partnerships also supported employment pathways: deafblind staff gained experience and references through DBV, and some later obtained work with another provider. Ongoing engagement helped providers better understand the communication,



- Independent contractors				interpreting and support arrangements required for meaningful deafblind participation.
Mainstream services & government: - City of Melbourne - Metro Trains - City Library	Mainstream services and public facilities such as the National Gallery, libraries, public transport, sporting arenas and parks provide access to the public. Many of these facilities, however, are often ill-prepared to accommodate deafblind visitors or customers. The project requires interaction with a range of such services and aims to bring about improvements in attitudes, practices and accessible service delivery.	The Recreation program will liaise with and visit public facilities and locations. Deafblind project staff will provide deafblind accessibility guidance. Deafblind Café will invite guest presenters from mainstream organisations. Guest speakers will hear from the Deafblind community and take their learnings back to their organisations.	Complete	DBV engaged with mainstream venues, public and government services through Recreation Program visits, Deafblind Café guest presentations, accessibility advice and Deafblind World training. Activities involved galleries, libraries, gardens, public transport, councils, utilities, schools and other community settings. Project staff provided practical advice about deafblind access before and during visits, while organisations heard directly from deafblind participants about communication and service barriers. Examples included workshops for Greater Western Water and Bass Coast Shire Council, awareness training through the City of Melbourne, and a Metro Tunnel presentation and consultation at Deafblind Café. DBV Connect also responded to enquiries from mainstream organisations seeking advice about individual clients, public exhibitions and accessible services. This engagement increased deafblind visibility and gave organisations practical experience that could inform future service delivery.
Self-advocacy groups and DPOs: - Deaf Australia - Blind Citizens Australia - SARU (Self Advocacy Resource Unit) - DRC (Disability Rights and Culture)	As a DPO and self-advocacy group, DBV finds natural allies and partners among other groups with similar values and overlapping demographics, especially those housed at Ross House. These groups may provide advice, networks and support for project activities.	Project activities are promoted through channels such as social media, the Ross House newsletter, and email announcements to other groups. Where needed, specific groups are contacted for support and advice.	Complete	DBV maintained strong relationships with self-advocacy groups and disability people's organisations. Collaboration with SARU and Deaf Victoria supported events, advocacy and peer-led approaches. Project staff attended self-advocacy activities, and one deafblind project worker received recognition for outstanding self-advocacy. Representatives from Deafblind West Australia and from the Hunter Deafblind Project visited to meet deafblind staff and exchange ideas about governance, employment and project delivery. DBV connected with SACID, Lived Experience Australia, Colourful Abilities and KYD-X, sharing the project's model of peer-led awareness raising. These relationships strengthened interstate and cross-disability networks and helped position DBV as a source of practical knowledge about deafblind leadership and employment. [Redacted from public version.]
Tech vendors: - Vision Australia - Quantum - Humanware	The technology used by deafblind people for digital connection varies greatly according to the specific vision and hearing impairment of the individual and can be quite specialised. Tech vendors may provide braille displays, proximity sensors, amplified listening devices and other	The project manager receives catalogues and announcements from vendors and maintains relationships with staff from	Complete	Relationships with technology vendors supported device purchasing, repair, loans and specialist advice. Braille displays and other assistive devices were sent to suppliers for repair, and loan equipment helped participants remain connected while waiting for repairs, replacement devices or funding decisions. DBV also contacted manufacturers and distributors for information about future products and troubleshooting.

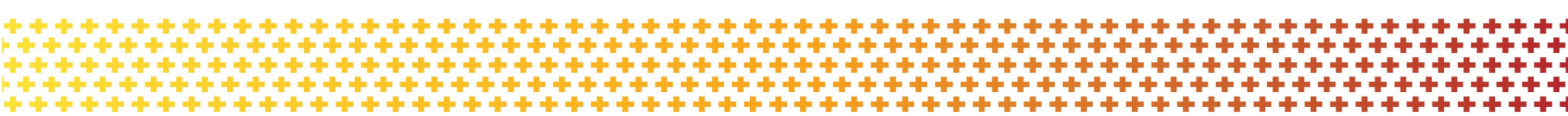


- Word of Mouth	innovative AT for project activities and deafblind project staff. These companies are also required for repairs and maintenance of equipment.	several technology companies, purchasing equipment and reaching out for advice when necessary.		Deafblind project workers stayed informed about new technology, trialled devices and shared practical knowledge with participants. Engagement with Pacific Vision led to specialist support for a participant’s braille display and created a new connection with a person with lived experience of combined hearing and vision impairment, who subsequently joined DBV activities. These relationships strengthened the practical technology support available through DBV Connect and Skill-Sharing.
Training providers: - Melbourne Polytechnic - Holmesglen TAFE - Charles LaTrobe College - LivCor - Monash University	Auslan students are the main source of volunteers for project activities. Many struggle to find places to practice Auslan, and are keen to offer their time to DBV in exchange for language exposure and communication practice. The Deafblind community faces a shortage of commguides (support workers) and interpreters skilled in deafblindness, and so has a keen interest in creating employment pathways towards these professions. This project may also provide deafblind awareness training to staff and students of these training providers.	Project activities will be promoted directly to the Melbourne Polytechnic Auslan department, seeking to offer student placement and volunteering opportunities. Deafblind awareness training will also be offered to Melbourne Polytechnic.	Complete	Engagement with training providers created pathways for volunteering, employment and improved professional practice. Melbourne Polytechnic, Holmesglen TAFE and Charles La Trobe College placed students with DBV, including Auslan students, a Deaf disability-services student and a deafblind secondary student. Several placements progressed into ongoing volunteering and employment at various providers. Deafblind project staff also advised and participated in Monash University’s deafblind Auslan interpreting training, contributing lived experience to practical training and assessment. DBV delivered awareness training to education providers and schools, while LivCor adapted first-aid training so deafblind staff could participate meaningfully and meet course requirements. These partnerships increased the skills of students and professionals while giving deafblind staff opportunities to train others, influence curricula and develop leadership.
Ross House	Ross House is the home of the Victorian Deafblind community and base for the project. Groups such as SARU (Self Advocacy Resource Unit), Disability Rights and Culture, Blind Citizens Australia and the Collective of Self-Help Groups are also located at Ross House. Meeting rooms are booked for project activities. As many project participants and staff are deafblind, Ross House must take account of deafblindness in things like evacuation protocols and use of shared facilities.	Project spaces at Ross House will be booked in advance. Ross House will promote project activities from time to time on their social media channels and in the newsletter. Project staff will liaise with Ross House building management to ensure safety and appropriate access for project staff and participants.	Complete	Ross House remained the central base for the Community Hub, with most project activities delivered there. Rooms and shared spaces were regularly booked, and project activities were promoted through Ross House newsletters and publications. Craft Group displays in the Flinders Lane window increased public awareness of deafblindness and showcased work by deafblind artists. DBV staff engaged with building management about bookings, shared facilities, security and emergency evacuation. Staff attended evacuation training and worked with Ross House to improve procedures for deafblind people, although this remained an area of ongoing development. Increased day-to-day contact with Ross House staff also built the confidence and operational skills of deafblind employees. DBV’s close engagement and contribution to the Ross House community supported a successful application for the renewal of its lease.

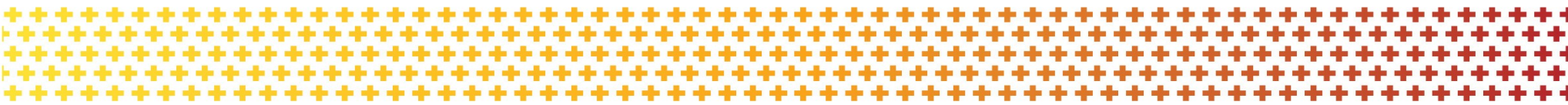


Risk Management

Risk	How the Risk will be managed	Risk Rating	AWP Final Report (for the entire activity period 1 May 2024 – 30 June 2026)
			Comments In no more than 200 words, please briefly report on how the risk has been managed during the reporting period and whether this has been successful.
1: Key project workers become unavailable This project requires staff with a highly specialised skill set. It's a strength of the proposal that a skilled team is already established, but should any one become unavailable, they are not easily replaced. In particular, the deafblind project workers have benefitted from years of skill development as volunteers and through previous projects, and it would take significant time to train new deafblind staff to perform the duties required in this project. The project manager is a qualified interpreter and trainer, skilled in deafblind communication and technology, and experienced at managing projects of this scale - a rare combination.	- skills needed for each role are explicit in Position Descriptions - possible back-up staff are identified for each role - deafblind project participants who may be capable of a paid role on the project are identified through skill-sharing sessions and volunteer recruitment - staff responsibilities are rotated, increasing capacity for project staff to cover other roles if needed - should key staff become unavailable, existing staff cover the gap and/or new staff are engaged - where no suitable deafblind replacement can be found, roles for deafblind staff can be filled by deaf/sighted, hearing/blind and hearing/sighted staff - should the project manager become unavailable, the role can be split into two or more smaller roles, increasing the chance of finding workers with appropriate skills.	Moderate	Staff availability remained a significant risk because many roles required specialised deafblind communication, technology and community knowledge. During the project, several staff required extended leave due to illness or injury. Duties were redistributed among existing staff, workers returned gradually where possible, and peer support helped some deafblind staff reduce reliance on externally funded supports and increase their working hours. Position descriptions, backup arrangements, student placements, volunteering and skill-sharing helped broaden the pool of capable workers. An Employee Assistance Program was also established. These controls allowed delivery to continue, although the small pool of suitably skilled deafblind workers remained a continuing organisational risk.
2: Cost overrun Each budget item and amount is informed by previous projects, but unforeseen events can lead to unforeseen costs.	- regular review of budget vs actual expenditure - bookkeeper and project manager both have oversight of budget and meet regularly - consider contingencies in the budget - adjust or scale down project activities if needed	Moderate	Budgets were reviewed regularly by the accountant and project manager, with forecasts provided to support decision-making. The main unanticipated cost was implementation of Data Exchange reporting, including CRM configuration, specialist support, staff time, accessible data collection and interpreting. These costs required budget reallocation and some reduction in service delivery. DBV raised the issue formally with the Department and was first granted a partial exemption and later a full exemption from DEX reporting. Despite these pressures, expenditure remained controlled and the project was delivered within the available grant funding.
3: Timeline disruption	- project timelines are flexible to accommodate changing circumstances - monthly project reports to DBV Committee of Management and regular	Low	Project timelines remained flexible so activities could be adjusted when staff, interpreters, commguides or venues were unavailable. Monthly reports to the



The six arms of the project are all based on discrete or repeating events, so timelines are inherently flexible. However, given the chronic shortage of interpreters and support workers skilled in deafblindness (see below), events and meetings may need to be postponed when supports are not available. This and other disruptions can affect project timelines. Deafblind participants require significant time to complete tasks, due to communication and other barriers	progress reports to DSS help foresee timeline issues and offer advice and intervention where needed - key project tasks like progress reports and acquittals are prepared ahead of time where possible - realistic timelines are built into the project, based on knowledge of the Deafblind culture and experience with projects in the Deafblind community.		Committee of Management and regular departmental reporting helped identify issues early. Existing staff covered gaps, events were rescheduled where necessary, and work was prepared ahead of deadlines where possible. [Redacted] DEX implementation, staff illness and injury created additional workload and occasional disruption. The final six months also overlapped with a new grant covering several continuing activities, creating risks of staff overload, duplicated effort and under-reporting if outcomes were divided too rigidly. DBV developed a clear allocation method so each activity, cost and outcome was attributed to one project only. Because several activity streams were already performing above target, DBV was able to meet the agreed outputs for both projects while maintaining continuity of delivery. Flexible planning across the integrated Community Hub model allowed effort to shift in response to changing circumstances and participant demand. Even so, the overlap increased administrative and coordination pressure, and workload and staff fatigue remained ongoing risks.
4: Shortage of interpreters and/or support workers hampers project activities Group events and meetings with multiple deafblind people require a large number of interpreters. For each tactile communicator, two interpreters are used when over one hour of continuous interpreting is required, due to considerations of overuse injury and mental fatigue. A typical Deafblind Café event might need 12 Auslan interpreters. There is a chronic shortage of Auslan interpreters in Victoria, and few in the existing workforce have the skills or interest to work with deafblind signers. The problem is compounded by a lack of support workers skilled in deafblindness ("commguides"). Project activities are hampered when interpreters or commguides can't be sourced, or call in sick and can't be replaced.	- project staff includes two qualified interpreters who can step in when casual interpreter availability is insufficient - other communication channels are used (live text messaging, email, etc.) - meetings and activities can be restructured with 5-min breaks every 15 minutes if needed, so one interpreter per tactile communicator is sufficient, but meetings are slower - redundancies are built in to project goals and timelines, in anticipation of the likelihood of this risk (see above)	Moderate	The chronic shortage of Auslan interpreters and commguides continued to affect staff and participant access. Some deafblind people could not attend activities or work their full contracted hours because suitable support was unavailable. Group meetings and Café events sometimes operated with fewer interpreters than requested. DBV used experienced staff and volunteers to cover gaps, adjusted meeting structures, used alternative communication methods and monitored interpreter fatigue. Training was delivered to commguides and interpreting students, and DBV contributed to specialist deafblind interpreting education. The project also helped develop a dual-role co-navigation model combining communication and practical support. These strategies reduced disruption but did not remove the broader workforce shortage.
5: Fraud or mismanagement Project staff may misuse funds, fail to adapt to changing circumstances, or misrepresent project activities, undermining the project's intended goals and community benefits.	- monthly reports to steering committee from each program coordinator and the Project Manager - 6-monthly progress reports to DSS/DHDA - accountant and project manager who both have financial oversight - indemnity insurance	Low	Financial and project oversight remained in place throughout the activity. Program coordinators and the project manager provided regular reports to the all-deafblind Committee of Management, and required progress reports were submitted to the Department. The accountant and project manager reviewed budgets and expenditure regularly, while grant funds were tracked through the organisation's



			financial systems. Insurance remained current. No fraud or material financial mismanagement was identified during the project.
6: Equipment unavailable, lost, damaged or stolen. Braille displays are particularly prone to wear and tear. Devices may be loaned for long periods while participants wait for their own devices to be repaired, replaced or funding approved.	- purchase spare equipment, including loan devices for project participants when their device is being repaired - store equipment securely in locked cupboards - purchase extended warranties - insurance - create and maintain an asset register	Low	Braille displays and other assistive devices required regular repair and replacement. Early in the project, demand occasionally exceeded the number of available loan devices, causing minor delays. DBV purchased and maintained spare equipment, arranged supplier repairs, stored devices securely and developed an asset register and loan-recording system. By the later reporting period, staff were routinely recording loans and the system was operating effectively. Loan equipment allowed staff and participants to continue working, communicating and accessing services while their own devices were being repaired or replaced.
7: Infectious diseases Deafblind people are often in close proximity with others. Some use touch as a primary sense. When communicating in tactile Auslan, a person's hands are placed on another's. Shared braille displays and tactile gadgets are potential sources of transmission of pathogens. With a small pool of support workers, illnesses can spread around the community quickly, and loss of workers in an already squeezed workforce can have wide consequences. DBV members tend to be older (due to progressive deafblindness) and are thus more susceptible to infections.	- daily disinfecting of surfaces - an air purifier in the project space - health information and education for project staff and participants - a culture of hand sanitising and masks (where they don't interfere with communication) - signage reminding participants of safe practices	Low	Infection control requirements reflected the close physical contact involved in tactile communication and the sharing of braille displays and other equipment. An air purifier operated in the project space, staff promoted hand hygiene and masks where compatible with communication, and cleaning arrangements were strengthened when building cleaners stopped servicing the internal office. One staff member contracted COVID-19 and quarantined, preventing further transmission. No project-related outbreak was reported. These measures were successful while allowing tactile communication and in-person participation to continue.
8: [Redacted from public version.]			
9: DEX reporting requirements compromise project delivery and data quality Mandatory DEX reporting creates substantial unforeseen costs and barriers for the deafblind cohort. Complex data collection processes require specialist interpreters and one-on-one interviews, diverting resources from service delivery. The abstract nature of SCORE assessments is poorly suited to deafblind participants, resulting in poor quality data while causing participant anxiety and eroding trust in the safe	- Request exemption from DSS based on barriers specific to deafblind cohort - Implement accessible CRM system (Salesforce) and bulk upload service (DevApp) - Provide additional staff training and interpreter services for data collection - Modify service delivery to accommodate mandatory intake processes - Reduce service hours and activities to absorb additional costs	High	DEX reporting created substantial unplanned cost, workload and access barriers. Collecting informed consent and SCORE data from deafblind participants required accessible explanations, one-to-one staff time and often interpreters. Some participants found the questions invasive or difficult to understand and completing assessments could mean missing the activity they had attended.



community space that is central to project success.	- Advocate with DSS policy team for accommodation		DBV purchased and configured a CRM, engaged specialist support, trained staff and modified forms and processes. The additional work diverted staff time and interpreting resources from service delivery, contributing to fewer activities, reduced staff hours and increased pressure on the team. DBV raised these concerns with the Department in December 2024 and July 2025. A partial exemption was initially granted, followed by full exemption from DEX reporting. The exemption removed an ongoing risk to participant trust, accessibility and project delivery. DBV continued to maintain detailed quantitative and qualitative records through Salesforce, attendance data, progress reports and participant feedback.
10. Accidents and injuries to project participants and staff Deafblind people are at increased risk of accident and injury, and emergency protocols and first aid procedures are often inaccessible.	- Ensure at least one staff member with current first-aid certificate is present at all times in the office and at project activities. - Provide first-aid training to project staff and participants - Maintain incident reporting system and report incidents and near misses to HR - Maintain insurance - Liaise with Ross House to ensure emergency evacuation procedures are deafblind-friendly, with consideration given to deafblind wheelchair-users and others with mobility impairments - Announce evacuation procedure (location of exits etc) at each project event	Moderate	Deafblind participants and staff faced increased risks associated with travel, unfamiliar environments, tactile communication and inaccessible emergency procedures. Activities used venue risk assessments, incident reporting, first-aid arrangements and liaison with Ross House and external venues. No serious project-related accident was reported. Psychological injury and burnout were also significant risks. Deafblind staff often work with substantial communication, travel and access barriers, while the wider team manages intensive interpreting, support and administrative requirements. Strong community demand, [redacted], DEX implementation and a tendency to take on additional opportunities increased workload pressure. DBV used flexible hours, workload adjustments, peer support, supervision, regular wellbeing check-ins and an Employee Assistance Program. Activities were rescheduled or scaled where necessary. Despite these controls, staff fatigue remained an ongoing concern, and the project reinforced the need to balance community demand and ambitious delivery with sustainable workloads and staff wellbeing.



10. Case Study

Do I need to complete this Section?			
Activity Work Plan negotiation (AWP)	Activity Work Plan Progress Report (AWPR)	Activity Work Plan Final Report (AWPF)	Your activity, service delivery or circumstances have changed?
NO	YES	YES	NO

Case Study	Deafblind people lead DBV's AGM and community celebration In the lead-up to DBV's 2025 Annual General Meeting, unforeseen circumstances meant that both lead managers became unavailable. As these two hearing and sighted employees had responsibilities in organising and running the AGM, there was a real possibility that the meeting would be cancelled. The Deafblind members of DBV's Committee of Management and staff decided to take on the responsibilities themselves and proceed with the event. They drew on skills developed through employment, skill-sharing, community activities and ongoing participation in DBV. Deafblind staff and Committee members presented reports, managed the meeting, organised the voting and confirmed an independent returning officer. Accessible communication included braille and large print documents. The team also delivered the Christmas celebration planned for the same day, including catering, room preparation, games, entertainment and coordination with visitors and partner organisations. The event was well attended and successfully delivered without the usual management support.
Participant Demographics	Participants included deafblind DBV members, deafblind staff and Committee members, volunteers, interpreters, commguides, family members and representatives from organisations including Able Australia and Deaf Victoria.
Key Themes	Deafblind leadership; self-determination; accessible governance; teamwork; confidence; community connection; applying skills in a real setting.
Systemic Issues	Deafblind people are rarely given genuine authority to govern organisations, manage formal processes and make decisions. Accessible voting, reports



	and meeting communication can also require significant preparation and specialist support. The unexpected absence of key managers tested whether DBV's deafblind leadership was embedded in practice or remained dependent on non-deafblind support.
Outcome summary	The AGM, voting process and Christmas celebration were successfully delivered by deafblind staff and Committee members. They remained calm, shared responsibilities and responded to problems as they arose. The event demonstrated that the project had supported more than social attendance. Deafblind people had developed the skills, confidence and relationships needed to govern their organisation and lead a significant community event. DBV's President reflected: "It shows the strength of deafblind people to lead an organisation." The case study demonstrates active participation, community belonging and Deafblind leadership.
Lessons learnt	Leadership develops through repeated opportunities to participate, contribute and take responsibility. Accessible communication and long-term skill development allowed deafblind people to step into leadership when usual supports were unavailable. The experience also showed the value of sharing knowledge and responsibility across the organisation rather than relying too heavily on a small number of managers.

11. Further Comments

This section is optional.



12. Activity Work Plan Final Report (AWPF)

Were the objectives of the grant achieved?	Yes. The project established and maintained a genuinely deafblind-led Community Hub that increased social connection, community participation, digital access, contribution and leadership for deafblind Victorians. Across the activity period, DBV delivered 90 DBV Connect drop-in sessions, 20 Recreation events, 20 Craft Group sessions, 20 Deafblind Café events, 23 Deafblind World activities and 102 Skill-Sharing sessions. Participation was strong across all streams, and most project staff were people with disability. Deafblind people held governance, coordination, training and project-delivery roles. The project created an accessible central place where deafblind people could meet without an appointment, seek advice, explore technology, learn from peers and contribute their own expertise. It also supported participation in mainstream community settings and increased the capacity of venues, services, students and professionals to communicate with and support deafblind people. The project demonstrated that deafblind people can successfully govern, manage and deliver a complex community program. It also created pathways from participation and volunteering into training, paid employment and organisational leadership.
Key themes and issues	- Deafblind leadership: lived experience informed governance, employment, program design and delivery. Participants were not treated only as service recipients; they shared skills, trained others, organised activities and moved into paid and leadership roles. - Peer connection: Deafblind Café, DBV Connect, Craft Group and Recreation activities reduced isolation and provided opportunities to practise communication, share strategies and build a stronger Deafblind identity and community. - Accessibility: Deafblind participation requires substantial interpreting, communication-guide support, accessible technology and additional time. Chronic



	shortages of appropriately skilled workers sometimes limited participation and increased pressure on staff. - Other issues included inaccessible DEX requirements, staff illness and fatigue, [redacted], and the administrative complexity of overlapping grants. Regional access remained limited, although the project developed interstate and regional relationships. - The project showed that individual capacity is closely connected to accessible environments, peer relationships and opportunities to contribute. It also highlighted the importance of sustainable workloads and long-term investment in Deafblind leadership and workforce development.
Successes and challenges	- What worked best was the integrated Community Hub model. Activities reinforced one another: people could first attend socially, receive practical support, learn a skill, share their expertise, volunteer and progress into paid work or governance. This flexibility helped DBV respond to different communication styles, support needs and levels of confidence. - Regular, accessible activities produced strong participation. DBV Connect became a reliable point of contact; Café and Craft Group strengthened peer connection; Recreation increased access to mainstream settings; and Deafblind World improved community understanding while creating paid leadership opportunities. The all-deafblind Committee of Management provided strong oversight and ensured lived experience remained central. - Challenges included shortages of interpreters and commguides, high access costs, staff illness, burnout and [redacted]. DEX reporting was particularly unsuitable for the cohort and diverted resources from delivery before a full exemption was granted. - The project could have benefited from earlier resolution of DEX requirements, stronger emergency-access arrangements, more regional delivery and a larger pool of trained workers. Future programs should retain the integrated model while setting sustainable workloads and investing further in workforce development and regional leadership.
Conclusion	The Deafblind Community Hub achieved its objectives and demonstrated the value of a Deafblind-led, integrated approach to social and community participation. Over two years, the project created a reliable community base, delivered a broad range of social, recreational, creative, digital and awareness-raising activities, and supported strong participation by deafblind people. It reduced isolation, increased practical skills and confidence, strengthened peer relationships and improved access to mainstream community settings and services.



	Deafblind people governed the project, coordinated programs, trained others, spoke publicly and progressed through pathways from participant to volunteer, trainer, employee and Committee member. The project also influenced disability services, mainstream organisations, education providers and interstate Deafblind groups. Delivery took place in a difficult environment that included workforce shortages, inaccessible reporting requirements, staff illness, [redacted] and high access needs. Despite this, DBV completed all major deliverables and maintained continuity for participants. The project leaves a stronger, more visible and more capable Deafblind community, together with a practical model of Deafblind-led service delivery that can inform future programs in Victoria and elsewhere.
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**Signed for and on
behalf of:**

Deafblind Victoria Incorporated

Signature

Name

____Ntennis Davi_____

Position

____CEO_____

30 / 07 / 2026