

CleftPALS  
VICTORIA INC.

CleftPALS VICTORIA Inc.  
Annual General Meeting

Sunday 18 May 2025  
Virtual Event on Zoom



## AGENDA

2:00 pm

Welcome and Introductions

Jessica Beckman	President
Cheng Yeo	Vice President
Tracey Ruse	Treasurer
Melissa Creber	Secretary
Kirsty Pekusic	Feeding Coordinator
Bridie Roberts	Social Media Coordinator
Tammy Kane Radford	Newsletter Editor
Courtney Radford	Newsletter Editor
Mark Banks	General Member
Phillippa Morris	General Member
Leah McMahon	General Member
Beth Schultz (SA)	General Member
Katie Bellchambers (Tas)	General Member
Amy Miles	General Member
Sarah Hoskin	General Member
Megan McIntyre	General Member
Ania Kujawska	General Member (CleftStars)
Maddy Leijen	General Member (CleftStars)
Rina Bowden	General Member

2:10 pm

CleftPALS Victoria Inc. AGM 2025

1. Presentation of Annual Reports by Jess Beckman
2. Presentation of Treasurer's Report by Tracey Ruse
3. Feeding Report by Kirsty Pekusic
4. Social Media Report by Bridie Roberts
5. Advocacy Update by Cheng Yeo
6. Elections
7. Raffle Draw
8. Other general business
9. Close

CleftPALS Victoria Inc. acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of the land on which you are participating from today. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We commit to working respectfully to honour their ongoing culture and spiritual connections to this culture. We recognise the role and value of culture in our community.



**PRESIDENTS REPORT 2024-2025**

In 2024, CleftPALS Victoria celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Since our inception, CleftPALS Victoria has always had a focus on the welfare of cleft-affected children and their families. Today, CleftPALS Victoria is recognised as an integral part of the support and advice network, that complements the hospital care teams.

So, it was apt that we celebrated this special milestone with some very members of our community during Cleft Awareness Week in November 2024. We were so pleased to see Joel and Ruth Solomon, and many other founding committee members of CleftPALS Victoria at our celebration at Box Hill RSL.

I am pleased to summarise our achievements this year, which include:

1. Continued advocacy for better access to speech therapy services for cleft-affected people under Medicare. We started our advocacy work for improving affordability and access to speech therapy for cleft-affected people in 2022, in conjunction with CleftPALS NSW and Speech Pathology Australia (the governing body for speech pathology in Australia). The tireless hours put in by our volunteer committee was rewarded during the 2025 Federal Budget, where a cleft lip and/or palate was recognised as a complex neurodevelopmental condition (known as the M10 schedule under Medicare). A provision has been made within Medicare to support people with eligible M10 conditions with an additional 8 assessments and up to 20 therapeutic sessions of speech therapy, starting from March 2026. This is a fantastic win for our community to ensure that the services we need are affordable and accessible. As more information becomes available from the Department of Health, we will be communicating with our community via our Facebook group and newsletters. We extend our gratitude to Tim Devlin (President of CleftPALS NSW), Philippa Morris and Cheng Yeo, Phoebe Schroder, and Louise Riley for their contribution to this tremendous advocacy work.
2. Education and awareness of the ongoing speech needs of cleft-affected children and adults to grow the pipeline of speech pathology professionals who have cleft specialisation. We collaborated with the University of Melbourne and Fly2Health to run a pilot program for early intervention speech services with a combination of face-to-face and telehealth sessions. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful with grant funding to enable the pilot to progress. This year, we will be collaborating with the Faculty of Audiology and Speech Pathology at the University of Melbourne to determine academic research that would help our organisation in delivering improved services to the cleft community whilst we seek to understand how telehealth can help speech services become more accessible to regional Australian families.
3. Helping young people with a cleft to form connections. Through a re-invigorated committee, we have been running more frequent, small-format Cleftstars events that enable young people and their families to form meaningful connections to peers who share lived experiences of growing up with a cleft. In 2025, we will be running monthly events and coffee-catchups for families with younger children, in the hope that connections formed early in life become lifelong connections for the families involved.
4. Cleft Awareness Week. Our Cleft Awareness Week event was held on November 10 at Box Hill RSL. A group of 40 – 50 attendee – came together to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We were joined by our founding President, Joel Solomon, his wife Ruth and daughter Janette as well as a number of original founding committee members. We were able to formally recognise the achievements and contributions of past and present committee members. We are grateful for the support of our

partners, Craniofacial Australia, who had made their way all the way from South Australia to celebrate with our community. We are also immensely grateful to be joined at the celebration by Assistant Health Minister, Kate Thwaite, with whom we had worked closely with for our advocacy work.

5. Continued funding for newborn care packs. We are pleased to report that with funding and support from Craniofacial Australia, we have been able to extend our newborn care pack program to Tasmania and South Australia. In 2024, we connected with the cleft unit at Women and Children's Hospital in South Australia, to distribute posters that can be put up for cleft clinics to make families aware of the support we provide. We acknowledge the contribution from Craniofacial Australia to make this a reality, and we thank them for their support

Lastly, we were presented with an opportunity for cleft families to participate in a Funflight Charity Event again in 2024. FunFlight is a charity that provides an aviation experience for children facing challenges. A handful of CleftPALS Victoria families enjoyed joy flights in a light aircraft on October 6 at Lilydale Airport with FunFlight pilots and crew, who are volunteers and experienced pilots. We thank Dr Tony Collett and FunFlight for the opportunity for our families to enjoy a day out.

To the committee, I want to thank every single one of the committee for their dedication and their support for me in the President role. I remain in awe of their hard work and dedication in our collective goal to be here to support and help the cleft community.

Jessica Beckman, President

Donating to CleftPALS Victoria Inc. is one click away!

Every dollar (\$2 and above is tax deductible) helps us reach our goals and supports our cleft community. As a non-for-profit Australian charity, with no government funding, we rely on donations and grants in order to continue to run our programs. Please visit our website [www.cleftpalsvic.com](http://www.cleftpalsvic.com) or scan our QR code.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT 2024-2025**

At the end of the 2024/2025 financial year, CleftPALS Victoria had total funds of \$70,869.06. This is \$2433.08 less than the previous financial year end for 2023/2024. This is the first time in seven years that we have made a loss.

New membership for this financial year totalled \$970, up by \$70 from the previous year. The lifetime membership amount shifted from \$90 to \$50 in January 2025. There were 8 memberships prior to the price change and 5 after the change.

The addition of the donation option to the Facebook pages and website has continued to allow for convenient and easy payment options via PayPal. The community generously granted us \$9,490.43. The celebration of 50 years of CleftPALS Victoria provided donation opportunities to support our campaign.



Feeding equipment income was \$4,252.40, an increase of \$797 from the year before. Feeding equipment costs were \$3,402.95, an expenditure increase from the previous year of \$890.

There was significant expenditure this year to ensure that we honoured CleftPALS Victoria 50th anniversary. The event at Box Hill RSL was a joyous occasion that saw the founding president and some of the original committee members gather with the current cleft community and celebrate what has been achieved over the last 50 years.

We continued to support many universities in their midwifery awards, with students receiving between \$250 and \$500 to be recognised for their studies and to support their nursing careers. We introduced a new university this year in Federation University.

Both our storage facilities and insurance costs both were slightly higher than the previous year, with an increase of storage costs of \$387 and insurance of \$91.00.

Since 20 January 2014, CleftPALS Vic has been managing CleftPALS Tasmania's funds, which is currently \$3,717.02, with no continued sign of this becoming active again in the near future.

## STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

<b>Income</b>		<b>\$</b>
	Clancy Books	5.50
	Donations	9,490.43
	Feeding Equipment	4,252.40
	Interest	1,423.50
	New Membership	970.00
	Oscar Bears	60.00
	Wonder Books	15.00
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>16,216.83</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
	Awards – Midwife	1,250.00
	Care Pack Expenses	31.38
	CleftStars	289.40
	Event Expenses	8,176.28
	Feeding Equipment Purchases	3,402.95
	Gifts and Donations	485.42

	Insurance	1,607.78
	Office Expenses	323.70
	PayPal Fees	81.50
	Postage and Delivery	706.50
	Printing and Stationery	74.50
	PayPal Refunds	441.00
	Storage	1,647.00
	Telephone	132.50
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>18,649.91</b>
<b>Net Loss</b>		<b>2,433.08</b>

## STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

<b>Income</b>		<b>\$</b>
	Clancy Books	5.00
	Donations	2,223.30
	Feeding Equipment	3,455.05
	Grants	8,560.00
	Interest	1,216.78
	New Membership	900.00
	Oscar Bears	40.00
	Wonder Books	30.00
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>16,430.13</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
	Awards – Midwife	1,250.00
	Event Expenses	1,549.43
	Feeding Equipment Purchases	2,512.53
	Gifts and Donations	241.50
	Grant Expenses	2,127.68
	Insurance	1,516.33

	Office Expenses	675.00
	PayPal Fees	83.61
	Postage and Delivery	350.49
	Printing and Stationery	26.19
	Refund	11.00
	Storage	1,260.00
	Telephone	100.00
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>11,703.76</b>
<b>Net Income</b>		<b>4,726.37</b>

<b>Opening Accounts</b>		
<b>Balance as of 31 March 2023</b>		<b>\$</b>
	PayPal Account	462.68
	Westpac Cash Reserve	10,513.76
	Westpac Community Solutions Cheque Account	24,139.43
	Westpac Term Deposit	33,455.93
	<b>Total</b>	<b>68,572.10</b>
<b>Closing Accounts</b>		
<b>Balance as at 31 March 2024</b>		
	PayPal Account	289.98
	Westpac Cash Reserve	11,166.85
	Westpac Community Solutions Cheque Account	27,321.72
	Westpac Term Deposit	34,519.92
	<b>Total</b>	<b>73,298.47</b>

## 2024-2025 PHOTO GALLERY



### 2024 AGM – May 2024

We held our 2024 AGM online, where members got the opportunity to get an update on the support and advocacy work we undertook for our community.

### CleftSTARS Burger Night at Grill'd Fairfield – June 2024

Courtesy of our wonderful CleftSTAR, Amelia, who put in a Local Matters nomination at her workplace, we raised \$300 for our charity. A big thank you to Amelia for her nomination!



### Funflight - November 2025

Our families got to enjoy the joy of flying with Funflight. We are grateful to all the pilots and organisers, who generously volunteer their time and fuel to bring joy to families.

### CleftSTARS Burger Afternoon – November 2025

After Funflight, we made the most of the afternoon and enjoyed a burger or two with our CleftSTARS.





**Cleft Awareness Week 2024, where we celebrated CleftPALS Victoria's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday – November 2024.**

**A big thank you to the Monash Children's Hospital cleft team for celebrating with our community .**

**We are grateful to the former Assistant Minister of Health, Kate Thwaite, for her support of our advocacy work for more affordable and accessible speech services for the cleft-affected community within Medicare.**



**We were honoured to host our grant funders, Craniofacial Australia, for their generous contribution. We expect the funding to allow CleftPALS Victoria to broaden the reach of the newborn care packs to South Australia and Tasmania, in addition to Victoria.**

**A big thank you to Craniofacial Australia for their support.**

We extended our appreciation to many past and present committee members, who joined us at the celebration. Thank you for making the time – we were honoured to have you there!

Our talented and musical CleftSTARS gave a wonderful musical performance to celebrate our birthday, and we were overjoyed to see so many families old and new. Onwards to the next 50 years!



### CleftSTARS Bowling – January 2025

A huge shout-out goes to Jack, his dad Brent and family friend Michael for raising \$7134 for CleftPALS Victoria in their shave for #cleftAwareness during 2024 Cup weekend. At Jack's request, some of the funds raised went to the first CleftSTARS event in January 2025.

We had a wonderful time at Zone Bowling in Frankston.



### CleftSTARS Mini Golf – March 2025

Our CleftSTARS had a wonderful time at Holey Moley at Crown Casino for a round or two at mini golf.

### CleftSTARS Burger Night at Grill'd Chadstone Village – April 2025.

We hope the young people and their families got a chance to reconnect with some familiar faces and meet some new ones at the burger nights we hope we can host on a regular basis.



## **FEEDING AND EQUIPMENT REPORT 2024-2025**

The CleftPALS Victoria Facebook page continues to grow with new members, and this page is a popular platform whereby many members seek feeding and equipment advice from each other and share their stories and photos.

Our website: [www.cleftpalsvic.com](http://www.cleftpalsvic.com) is the best place to purchase any bottles or parts needed. We continue to stock the Medela Special Needs Feeder, Pigeon bottles and The Dr Brown's Speciality Feeding System We also have our mascot, Oscar Cleft Bear available for sale and some books which cleft affected children love! Please do not hesitate to reach out to the hotline if you have any questions.

CleftPALS partnered with Sepal to offer a trial of a new bottle for cleft affected babies; the trial was successful and these products are now available for purchase on the Sepal website.

[Kirsty Pekusic, Feeding and Equipment](#)

## **SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT 2024-2025**

During 2020 it was decided to have a Social Media Coordinator to promote CleftPALS Victoria and further support members. Instagram and Facebook are integral in promoting CleftPALS Victoria and supporting families that are cleft affected. During 2024/2025 the Facebook support group steadily increased from 1.4K to 1.5K members. This Facebook group can only be accessed privately, with members needing to answer membership questions in order to be accepted. Our Facebook group allows members to connect with other members, asking questions and sharing personal experiences such as; feeding advice, cleft lip and palate repair advice and most importantly sharing their beautiful cleft smiles!

The CleftPALS Victoria committee moderate this content strenuously to ensure it stays as a supportive and safe sharing space.

In April 2022, a public Facebook Page was created, in-line with our public Instagram account. This page enables followers to share posts on their social media account, which is integral to sharing much needed information and donation links.

CleftPALS Victoria's Instagram account has grown from 665 to just over 740 followers this past year and is able to be viewed publicly. Instagram promotes CleftPALS Victoria; personal stories are shared and general cleft information is posted.

Social media played an integral part in raising much need awareness during our #cleftwordsmatter campaign in April 2022 and during Cleft Awareness Week which is held annually 8th-14th November.

During Cleft Awareness Week, the online campaigns via Facebook and Instagram, raise a substantial amount of money purely virtually. These donations have ensured CleftPALS Victoria can continue to run viable and continue to hold events to support our cleft community. We urge our members to share our posts during Cleft Awareness Week and continue to raise much needed cleft awareness and donations to our organisation.

With the social media platforms, it has become apparent that it is difficult to have financial member exclusive information, this is an ongoing issue which the committee is further investigating.

Please reach out to us and tell us what you would like to see more of on our social platforms, your contributions are always appreciated and welcomed!

If you wish to join any of our social platforms, please see the links below.

Instagram: @cleftpalsvic

<https://www.instagram.com/cleftpalsvictoria/>

Facebook CleftPALS Victoria Support Group:

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/26750563559/?ref=share\\_group\\_link](https://www.facebook.com/groups/26750563559/?ref=share_group_link)

Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/cleftpalsvictoria?mibextid=LQQJ4d>

Twitter: @CleftpalsV

[Bridie Roberts, Social Media - Committee Member.](#)

## ADVOCACY UPDATE

2024 was a big year for the advocacy work the committee does to support the cleft community. The points below provide an overview of some of the progress that we have been making in this area:

- Since 2022, we have been pursuing the inclusion of speech therapy under the Medicare scheme for cleft-affected people. We have been in discussions with the Department of Health and various Federal MPs with an interest in health issues. Some that have shown support and have allowed us to meet with them include: Ged Kearney, Mike Freeland, Mark Butler, Kate Thwaite, Jordon Steele-John, Aaron Violi, Monique Ryan, Chris Bowen and Carina Garland.
- Concurrently, we have been working with Speech Pathology Australia on building awareness of the therapeutic speech needs of cleft-affected people along with the government relevant decision-makers. During 2025, Speech Pathology Australia supported our advocacy work as they were also working with the Department of Health to inform decisions about speech therapy support for people with complex neurodevelopment disorders and disabilities.
- During the 2025-26 Federal Budget, the Federal Government announced \$74.9 million over four years (and \$29.1 million per year ongoing) to expand Medicare access to speech pathology care for children and young people with severe speech and language disorders. This funding will allow individuals with conditions like stuttering, speech sound disorders, and cleft lip/palate to receive more accessible and subsidized speech pathology services. This initiative is a fantastic outcome for our community, as it is intended improve access to speech pathology services by providing Medicare rebates for up to 8 assessments and 20 treatment sessions, starting around March 2026.
- As we learn more from the Department of Health in coming months, we will share with our community through the newsletter, our website and the Facebook support page. The committee feels the next logical step in our advocacy work is to help our community understand what support is available to our families through Medicare and NDIS, before pursuing further advocacy work in 2025 for cleft-affected adults. Note that the new Federal funding is in addition to any support already being provided via state-based community health programs and won't affect any community health programs.

- Our other focus in advocacy is growing awareness of the speech needs of the cleft community with higher education speech pathology students. We have been working closely with the Faculty of Audiology and Speech Pathology at the University of Melbourne to understand how we can assist with student placements – with the goal of increasing interest to continue with further specialisation in cleft lip and palate in graduating students.
- We are looking at all possible avenues to support better access to much needed services. Grants are one avenue that we can access funds if we are successful with our applications. To better support our grant applications and advocacy work with government, we are exploring is how higher education research can help us target our capacity to meet the needs of the cleft community. We feel independent research and evidence is helpful with the advocacy work and we welcome the opportunity to work with graduate students from the University of Melbourne.

Looking forward, 2025 will see further collaborations with higher education, and increasing awareness amongst the cleft communities about the support they can access through Medicare and NDIS for their speech needs.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Tim Devlin, President of CleftPALS NSW for the collaboration and support during our advocacy journey these past few years with the Department of Health. The same gratitude extends to Jessica Beckman and Phillipa Morris, for the tireless and often unseen work that goes on with advocacy. We are very proud of the efforts of our outstanding volunteer committee and the work we do to support our community.

Cheng Yeo, Vice President