



Annual Report

2024

“I love reading, and can’t imagine what it would be like not to have something to read for the sheer pleasure being able to do that”

In late 2012, when, unable to sleep and listening to the ABC, I heard then President, Sue Wagner, saying in an interview how much they needed volunteers to type books into a Word document and I thought that was something I could do.

I rang and spoke to Gwen Hay, who was instrumental in me doing a “Braille for Print Users Course” in 2013.

I typed books into Word documents for a while, then graduated to learning the Duxbury program, which is a bit more challenging, but very interesting.

I have always volunteered since retiring 27 years ago, but I just love the friendships that I have made while volunteering at Braille House. A truly lovely group of people, all with the same aim.

Jackie Sorensen, Braille House Volunteer



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GOVERNMENT HOUSE
QUEENSLAND

Message from the Governor of Queensland

As Patron of the Queensland Braille Writing Association, it is both a pleasure and privilege to reflect on the remarkable achievements of this organisation over the past year, during which it has remained steadfast in its mission to empower Queenslanders who are blind or have low vision.

For decades, Braille House has profoundly impacted the lives of thousands across Queensland, continuing to provide essential services such as braille transcription, library resources in braille, audio, and Moon, and advocating tirelessly for universal access to literacy. This vital work has been made possible by the dedication and generosity of those who contributed a remarkable 14,454 volunteer hours.

Braille House's commitment to progressive thinking is evident in a range of initiatives, from celebrating braille literacy through the engaging Braille Literacy Challenge to preserving its nationally significant collection of historic braille writing technology. These efforts not only highlight the importance of maintaining a rich cultural heritage but also ensure the continued advancement of accessibility and education for the blind and low vision community.

Other notable initiatives, such as the Accessible Tourism Enabler, supported by the Queensland State Government's Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant, have furthered Braille House's mission to promote independence and dignity for individuals with vision impairments in the tourism sector. The organisation's ongoing work in providing braille documents and reading materials for businesses, government bodies, educational institutions, and various organisations continues to expand access to essential information.

Looking ahead, I am confident that Braille House will continue to harness the strength of its community of supporters and dedicated staff to ensure Queenslanders with low vision and blindness have every opportunity to thrive. I remain committed to supporting their mission to empower individuals of all ages through alternative formats and to create a more inclusive society for all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeannette Young".

Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM
Governor of Queensland





Our Management Committee



Barry Oliver

Interim President and Treasurer

Barry is an Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Queensland Business School and serves as Managing Director and CEO of both Financial and Statistical Consultants and Unorthodox Hypnotherapy. With over 20 years of experience as a finance researcher and consultant, Barry has held senior academic roles including Discipline Head of Finance at UQ and Reader in Finance at ANU, and previously worked at the Commonwealth Department of Finance. His research, which blends finance and psychology, has been published in leading journals and cited in the Australian Financial Review. Barry brings both deep professional expertise and personal connection to Braille House as his mother was blind. He holds a B.Comm, Grad Dip Psych, M.Ec, and PhD.



Amanda Acutt

Secretary

Amanda is a seasoned policy practitioner and analyst in the Queensland Public Service, leading legislative, strategic, and policy initiatives to improve outcomes for young people and communities in the youth justice system. A braille reader since the age of four, Amanda brings both lived experience and academic expertise to her work. She holds a BA (Hons), LLB (Hons), and PhD.



Nigel Harris

Nigel is Managing Director of Nigel Harris & Associates, a consultancy specialising in philanthropy and fundraising leadership. With a career spanning 40 years, he has held executive and governance roles across the non-profit sector, including 24 years as CEO of Mater Foundation (Queensland). Nigel holds an MBA, is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE), and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD).



Vicki Anderson

Vicki brings over 20 years of experience working with people who are blind or have low vision. Her passion, dedication, and commitment to learning have taken her across three countries to support and empower the BVI (blindness and vision impairment) community. Vickie holds a BS in Orientation & Mobility and an MS in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy.

Our Management Committee



James Grant

James is a senior compliance professional, leading the compliance function at one of Australia's premier energy infrastructure organisations. With extensive executive-level experience, he has led large teams and business units across his career. James holds a Master of Financial Planning (MFP) and an Advanced Diploma in Financial Services.



Karen Prins

Karen brings over 20 years of experience in the financial services industry, having held executive roles leading new business development and client relationship teams. She has contributed extensively to management committees and previously served as Brisbane Chair of the Mother's Day Classic Foundation and Treasurer for the Queensland Women in Super Committee. Karen holds an Executive MBA, is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD), and a certified member of the Governance Institute of Australia (GIA Cert).



Meyrick Adams

Meyrick is Director of Orizan, a strategic marketing consultancy that helps brands uncover hidden revenue, streamline operations, and launch impactful campaigns across Australia. With extensive experience in marketing, sales strategy, and business development, Meyrick is committed to supporting Braille House's growth and reach. His passion for the organisation's mission is driven by a strong personal belief in the transformative power of reading for all.



Management Report

In 2024, Braille House achieved record growth in membership, library loans, and educational engagement. Backed by community support, state funding, and a strong volunteer base, the organisation expanded its reach, launched new projects, and laid the groundwork for a bold future.

Braille House was founded 127 years ago in Brisbane by seven pioneering women, including Lady Lamington, the wife of the then-Governor of Queensland. Each committed to transcribing twelve texts into braille, laying the foundation for what would become a lasting legacy of inclusion and literacy. Since then, every successive Governor of Queensland has served as Patron of the organisation, which continues to thrive thanks to the commitment of dedicated volunteers and a small but effective staff team.

From a modest beginning of 54 braille books in 1899, the Braille House Library collection has grown to 8,455 items. Today, members range in age from 5 months to 99 years and include individuals, schools, and community groups across every Australian state and territory – urban, rural, regional, and remote.

This 125th year milestone was marked with a special event at Government House in Brisbane, hosted by Patron Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM. The celebration not only honoured our past but also affirmed Braille House's commitment to inclusion, innovation, and community connection.

Significant gains have been made in library engagement and content development from 2021 to 2024:

- **Library Loans:** Increased by 128% overall across three years, with annual growth of 61% (2021–22), 57% (2022–23), and 23% (2023–24).
- **Picture Book Loans:** Recorded an average annual increase of 250% from 2022 to 2024, reflecting strong growth in young braille reader audience for Braille House.
- **Braille Page Production:** Increased from 57,237 pages in 2022 to 126,301 pages in 2024, a 120% rise.
- **New Titles Added:** Expanded from 198 in 2022 to 509 in 2023, and 603 in 2024. These include braille, and ebraille books, braille magazines and e-magazines, as well as Moon titles.
- **Library Membership:** Grew by 95.8% between January 2021 and December 2024, including a 300% increase in child members.

Braille House continues to enhance access to braille and alternative literacy formats for learners of all ages:

- The number of people who are blind or have low vision learning braille at Braille House continues to rise, as does participation by family members, support workers, and educators.
- In 2024, enrolments in braille and moon learning programs grew exponentially compared to 2023. This trend is expected to continue, with further expressions of interest for 2025.
- Braille Awareness Shows reached approximately 2,500 people across schools, public libraries, and workplaces in South East Queensland. These sessions have a powerful multiplier effect on awareness and inclusion and are now being adapted for delivery in more regional and remote communities.

A dedicated volunteer team remains central to delivering the Braille House mission. In 2024, volunteers contributed an estimated 14,454 hours, a contribution valued at \$638,000 annually, based on the Centre for Volunteering's Value of Volunteering Calculator. Their efforts span braille transcription, proofreading, book production, and community outreach, making a profound impact on service delivery.

Strategic government funding enabled further expansion of services and technology. Braille House received state government funding in both the 2023–24 and 2024–25 financial years, allowing for:

- Enhanced library services and production of accessible materials.
- Employment of essential staff.
- Investment in contemporary technology to improve user experience.

In 2024, Braille House was proud to receive:

- An Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant (2023–24) from the Queensland Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport, to support the Making Tourism Accessible for Blind and Low Vision Visitors initiative.
- The Rotary Pride of Workmanship Award, recognising outstanding service and community impact.

Additionally, demand has grown significantly for inclusive resources and services from businesses, organisations, and all levels of government over the past two to three years.

Braille House continues to advocate for long-term infrastructure investment. In the lead-up to the October 2024 state election, the Miles Labor Government committed \$2.7 million towards the development of new, fully accessible facilities, conditional on re-election. Braille House remains in active dialogue with all political parties and government levels to secure bipartisan support for this essential project.

Late in 2024, the organisation also began work on:

- A new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- A refreshed brand identity.
- A new website, all scheduled for launch in early 2025.

These developments will strengthen Braille House's capacity to serve an expanding community, and ensure continued relevance and reach in the digital age.

As Braille House moves into 2025, the organisation remains committed to empowering people of all ages who are blind or have low vision through braille and alternative formats, continuing a legacy of literacy, access, and inclusion that spans more than a century.



Barry Oliver

Interim Chairperson
and Treasurer

Richard Barker

General Manager



Braille House Values

Braille House staff and volunteers continue to embrace the values embedded in our 2022-25 Strategic Plan. Our agreed values guide our decisions and set the tone for how we conduct ourselves. In 2024, we continued to identify where in the day-to-day activities at Braille House we witnessed these values coming to the forefront. The values have also been highlighted visually through merchandise, including mouse pads and notebooks.



High

Expectations

We are committed to providing our clients, the community, and one another with high-quality service and resources.



Empowerment

We provide opportunity for all - clients, volunteers, and staff - to be involved and do their best.



Respect

All our interactions are constructive, collaborative, and considerate of others. Together we deliver our best.



Integrity

We do what's right and act with kindness, transparency, and honesty.



Sustainability

Building on our foundations, we look forward and adapt to change to ensure longevity.

Our Mission:
 To empower people of all ages who are blind or have low vision through alternative formats.

Our Future:

More people using braille more often	The default provider of Braille training	Widely used national library service	An effective advocate for the benefits of touch literacy
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Larger, well trained, and better equipped team organised in specialist roles, embracing a team-based culture, in new custom designed premises. Greater diversity and certainty of funding.

Values:

Integrity We do what’s right and act with kindness, transparency, and honesty.	Respect All our interactions are constructive, collaborative, and considerate of others. Together we deliver our best	Empowerment We provide opportunity for all – clients, volunteers, and staff – to be involved and do their best.	Sustainability Building on our foundations, we look forward and adapt to change to ensure longevity.	High Expectations We are committed to providing our clients, the community, and one another with high-quality service and resources.
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Strategies:

Develop a sustainable braille training business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Bed in’ the current system • Achieve consistent growth – NDIS • Increase Braille for Print Users • Increase no. trainers as required. 	Encourage widespread use of braille library services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase online presence • Maximise membership and usage • Enhance production and distribution workflows 	Pursue viable ‘fee for service’ braille business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage Accessible Tourism and Industry group opportunities • Pricing to ensure a contribution to overheads. 	Advocate for the benefits of touch literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to convey the compelling case for support • Collaborate with like-minded partners
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Enabled by:

A passionate, engaged and capable team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed new recruitment, induction, onboarding processes • A systemised approach to training staff and volunteers 	Upgraded, fit for purpose systems and facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued upgrade of equipment • Low-cost building improvements • Plan and develop new premises including capital raising project 	Financial sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek government and philanthropic funding • Encourage NDIS funded training • Ensure longer-term security 	Sound effective governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular progress reporting • Appropriate level of risk management • Legal and regulatory compliance
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Progress Measures:

Training graduates and \$ return	Library membership # and usage	\$ return from fee for service	Redevelopment project on track
Staff and volunteer engagement	\$ Funding - government & Philanthropy	Financial surplus	Increase in public use of braille
		Compliance	

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

Queensland Braille Writing Association

ABN 93 456 085 512

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

Revenue	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Grants	591,600	196,483
Donations	375,395	555,195
Braille production	35,227	89,185
Fundraising events and activities	-	70,896
Interest income	100,136	38,328
Investment distributions	12,945	-
Increase in fair value of investments	33,114	-
Tutoring courses	18,704	11,899
Rental income	839	1,129
Sponsorship	-	5,000
Other income	5,701	12,589
	<u>1,173,661</u>	<u>980,704</u>
Other Income		
Gain on disposal of assets	-	823,804
	<u>-</u>	<u>823,804</u>
Expenses		
Employee benefits expense	858,670	511,654
Consultancy fees	78,617	88,425
Depreciation	45,556	32,947
Repairs, maintenance and cleaning	36,158	27,459
Computer expenses	31,160	14,525
Recruitment fees	28,560	-
Insurance	18,327	17,987
Fundraising expenses	11,937	67,573
Advertising and promotion	4,050	11,161
Braille production costs	13,357	12,554
Postage and stationery	8,643	5,954
Electricity, gas and rates	9,852	8,749
Other expenses	88,726	60,550
	<u>1,233,613</u>	<u>859,538</u>
Operating result	<u>-59,952</u>	<u>944,970</u>
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	<u>-59,952</u>	<u>944,970</u>

Statement of Financial Position

Queensland Braille Writing Association

ABN 93 456 085 512

As at 31 December 2024

ASSETS	Note	2024	2023
		\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	2,233,983	3,054,502
Trade and other receivables	5	12,332	3,863
Investments	6	542,302	-
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		2,788,617	3,058,365
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	7	1,391,982	1,302,358
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		1,391,982	1,302,358
TOTAL ASSETS		4,180,599	4,360,723
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	8	30,017	23,154
Employee benefits	9	121,040	64,687
Deferred income	10	102,500	279,606
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		253,557	367,447
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Employee benefits	9	15,507	21,789
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		15,507	21,789
TOTAL LIABILITIES		269,064	389,236
NET ASSETS		3,911,535	3,971,487
EQUITY			
Retained earnings		2,839,563	2,899,515
Asset revaluation reserve	11	1,071,972	1,071,972
TOTAL EQUITY		3,911,535	3,971,487

Braille House Library

The aim of the Braille House Library in 2024 was to improve accessibility in a way that accurately reflects the contemporary needs of borrowers. This may seem like an odd choice as the provision of braille literature is an accessible service. However, the library wanted to question accessibility in a broader sense. For example:

- Can readers get advice/help in a suitable time frame and method?
- Can they search the online catalogue and find what they need?
- Are they getting the resources they need in a format they want?
- What barriers may be stopping people from joining and utilising the library?

A reader's survey was conducted early in 2024. This data shaped the library's focus areas.

Reading the way they want

Survey feedback indicated borrowers valued the library's personalised service, willingness to listen, and flexibility with preferences. Quality of service guided library decisions made throughout the year. For example, for borrowers who had their loans affected due to changes in Australia Post delivery, the library adjusted their lending practices to ensure they still had easy and quick access to braille resources.

Magazines are the highest circulated items in the library, with Braille House's own 'Dr Ellice Dart, In Touch' being the most popular. Borrowers appreciated that the magazine shares organisation news with borrowers, including new additions to the library. With a 40% increase in child borrowers since 2023, the library recognised the need to provide an equivalent, age-appropriate resource. In response, Touch Base was launched in September 2024, for readers aged 7-16, the contents which shared library news and general interest articles.

Libraries worldwide have adapted their collections to accommodate the diverse ways readers now engage with literature. To meet the evolving needs of society, Braille House Library has also expanded its offerings. The library has been testing audiobooks, tactile games, and activities, while exploring further ways to diversify the collection, ensuring borrowers have access to a broader range of resources.



Digital accessibility

One of the key challenges borrowers faced was navigating the online catalogue. The library's previous Library Management System (LMS), though innovative at the time of its introduction, was developed before the widespread adoption of digital assistive technologies. As a result, searches often yielded poor or confusing results.

With funding from the State Library of Queensland, the library has now implemented a new LMS. Its key features include:

- A flexible search engine with optional filters
- AA-level web accessibility compliance
- Personal borrowing tracking
- Flexible cataloguing to accommodate the unique aspects of braille resources

Migrating existing records proved complex due to technical incompatibilities, which resulted in missing or illogical data. Extensive manual revisions were required to ensure catalogue information was accurate and searchable. Data cleaning became a major focus in 2024 and continues into 2025. Sincere thanks go to the dedicated staff and volunteers who have contributed more than 1,250 hours to this essential work.

Faster access to braille

Braille House finalised its membership with the Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) in early 2024. Managed by the World Intellectual Property Organization, the ABC is a global database that enables member organisations to share and access books in alternative formats. This collaboration helps reduce duplication of transcription efforts and improves access to accessible reading materials worldwide. Braille House has begun contributing braille files and has already downloaded requested titles to add to the library collection.

Braille House Library

Library in numbers 2024

		No. of new added	No. of Loans
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Adult's Library

Braille books	77 (426 vol)	441 (2,363 vol)
eBraille	57	5
Moon format	13	19

Magazine Library

Braille magazines	230	765
eBraille	53	177
In Touch	4	334
Touch base	3	95

Children's Library

Twin Vision (Picture Books)	92	834
Junior Fiction	44 (139 vol)	150 (419 vol)
Young adult	5 (21 vol)	9 (47 vol)
eBraille	39	6

Total number of new books

Physical Books	Physical Magazines	eBraille
248	237	149

Overall new additions was up 9.3% from 2023
Included in the total is 17 books that were donated (80 volumes)

Total library loans

Physical Books	Physical Magazines	eBraille
1,453	1,197	188

Overall loans **2,838**
Up **38.2%** from 2023 including in house magazines

Accessible Tourism Initiative

Empowering Inclusive Tourism

Promoting equity, dignity, and independence for people who are blind or have low vision in tourism settings is central to the Braille House mission. In 2024, we advanced this goal through the support of a Queensland Government Accessible Tourism Enabler Grant (2023-24).

Following extensive research and stakeholder collaboration, the project was officially launched in June 2024 at the Murrumba Downs Tavern. The initiative recognises that while many venues and destinations want to improve accessibility, they often lack the knowledge or confidence to begin.

Our project addresses this gap with a comprehensive, free suite of practical resources available on the Braille House website.

These tools are designed to build knowledge, boost confidence, and reduce the burden on individual businesses by offering a clear starting point for their accessibility journey and include things such as:

- **The Business Case** for making tourism accessible, highlighting social, economic, legal, and competitive advantages.
- **Self-Assessment Access Audit Checklists** to guide venues in identifying accessibility improvements.
- **Case Studies** of real-life examples.
- **Business Planning Tools** including sample processes and templates.
- **Communication & Marketing** guidance on promoting accessible offerings.
- **Resources & References** including downloadable templates and supporting documentation.

As a result of this initiative, Braille House was invited to present at the Destination Q forum in Brisbane in November 2024. The event brought together tourism professionals from across Queensland and provided an excellent platform to showcase the resources and explore opportunities for ongoing fee-for-service support.



Braille Literacy Challenge

Braille House was alive with energy and anticipation during this year's Annual Braille Literacy Challenge on 6 September, a beloved event that brings together blind and low vision students from across Queensland. Some travelled to Brisbane to take part in person, while others joined remotely from their schools.

Students competed in a range of reading and writing challenges tailored to their individual braille proficiency levels – from beginners taking their first steps to advanced readers, showcasing their impressive skills. But this event is about so much more than competition—it's a powerful celebration of inclusion, resilience, and the role braille plays in building confidence, independence, and connection.

The challenge has been running since 1964 and continues to grow each year. In 2024, 40 students participated, including six who connected virtually. It was a heartwarming reminder of how technology can bring our community closer, ensuring that distance is never a barrier to opportunity or belonging.

Throughout the day, students, families, and guests were treated to a lineup of inspiring speakers. The Hon. Mark Bailey MP, a long-standing supporter of Braille House, opened the event with a passionate speech about the critical role braille plays in education and daily life. He encouraged students to embrace their journey with pride and determination.

Associate Professor Melissa Fanshawe from the University of Southern Queensland and proud mum of a blind son Ollie spoke about the “superpowers” of braille readers, from crafting words out of a single dot to reading with their fingertips long after the lights are out.

Margaret Hughes, sister of the late Veronica Maguire (for whom a special award is named), also took to the stage. She shared the story of Veronica's determination after losing her sight in a car accident and reminded everyone of Veronica's powerful motto: “never, never give up.”

The day's highlight was undoubtedly the awards ceremony. Cheers filled the room as students celebrated each other's achievements, with a strong sense of camaraderie and good sportsmanship. Special congratulations went to Tenika and Lachlan, recipients of the Braille House Encouragement Award, and to Stanley, who was honoured with the Veronica Maguire Remembrance Award for embodying the same spirit of perseverance and positivity that Veronica championed.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the students, families, volunteers, and supporters who made the 2024 Braille Literacy Challenge such a memorable and meaningful event. Your enthusiasm and dedication are what make this event so special each year.

At Braille House, we remain committed to fostering braille literacy and creating opportunities for blind and low vision individuals to thrive. The challenge is just one way we empower the next generation of braille readers, equipping them with the tools, confidence, and community to reach their full potential in a world of possibilities.



Braille House Services

In addition to producing books for our own library, we regularly produce braille documents and reading materials for businesses, government offices, educational institutions and other organisations.

Our transcribers are Australian Braille Authority (ABA) certified, and we adhere to the International Council on English Braille (ICEB) and Unified English Braille (UEB) standards. There are several elements that must be taken into consideration when producing braille resources. The team guide customers and make suggestions based on your individual needs.

Braille House products and services include:

- Tactile QR code indicators
- Australian braille calendars
- Emergency resources for people with vision impairment
- Custom braille transcription
- Custom tactile maps and braille wayfinding solutions
- Restaurant menu transcription
- Professional braille transcription
- Braille courses
- Consultation on all things braille

Production in Numbers

Print Pages Transcribed	Braille Library	32,902	54,904
	Magazine Library Moon	5,492	
	Library	172	
	Alternate Format Library	16338	

Braille Pages Embossed	Braille Library	78,401	126,301
	Alternate Format Library	6,436	
	Fee for Service	5,246	
	In-House Production	36,218	

Moon Pages Embossed	Moon Library	1,319	1,811
	In-House Production	492	

Braille Awareness Presentations



In 2024, Braille House continued its vital mission of promoting inclusion by expanding our community engagement through Braille Awareness Presentations. These interactive and informative sessions were held at a variety of locations, including Brisbane City Council Libraries, schools, and community venues. Our goal was to raise awareness about braille and the crucial role it plays in the lives of individuals who are blind or have low vision. Offering hands-on, immersive experiences, the presentations encouraged understanding and fostered a sense of inclusion. For many attendees, this was their first encounter with braille.

A significant highlight in 2024 was the addition of Barbara O'Connor to our team as a volunteer, who assisted with the presentations. Barbara's expertise in braille and her engaging demonstrations, such as using the Perkins machine to create braille bookmarks, helped bring the experience to life. Her ability to answer questions and provide practical examples made the presentations even more impactful and memorable for attendees of all ages.

In collaboration with Brisbane City Council Libraries, we broadened our reach to new locations and strengthened our relationship in these communities. Braille Awareness Presentations were conducted at libraries across Brisbane, including Ashgrove, Fairfield Gardens, Inala, Mt Ommaney, Stones Corner, West End, Mitchelton and Sandgate.

The year also saw an extension of the outreach to schools, helping shape the perspectives of young students on issues of access and inclusion. A notable example was our partnership with St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace, where students actively participated in the presentation and engaged with tactile resources. The Year 5 and Year 11 students from Windsor House were asking thoughtful questions and demonstrating a strong interest in learning more about braille and its significance.

Braille House continued to engage with corporate and community groups. View Club of Kenmore invited us to present to their club. The presentation sparked genuine interest, and heartfelt thanks was received for the session. We were also honoured to be invited to two Lions Club dinners in July. These events were well received, with attendees gaining a new understanding of the challenges faced by those with low vision. As a result, both the Holland Park Lions Club and Calamvale Lions Club made generous donations to support the ongoing work of Braille House.

“From all the ladies of the Kenmore VIEW Club we would like to thank you for your informative talk on how Braille House makes a huge difference in people's lives. The work that you do in expanding the library offer is second to none. Your presentation was exceptional, we all learnt so much from your talk.”

Payton's Story



Why is it, that I have one shelf with books on it and my younger sister has three shelves full of books?

Payton, 10

Payton is 10 years old and began reading braille before she started school. "I am really good at spelling because of braille. My little sister, Ivy, is always asking me how to spell words," Payton let us know. She is obviously an excellent big sister and particularly mature for her young age.

Ivy loved it when Payton would receive books about animal characters from the Braille House Library. Payton would share the experience with her sister. Growing up Payton's favourite book was *The Hungry Caterpillar* and Ivy's was *The Hungry Hippo*.

Borrowing books, attending events and being connected to Braille House is important to Payton and her family. "I made so many great friends and learned so much about braille at Braille House."

Payton taught her sighted friend at school to read and write in braille and they would write letters to each other. It was a fantastic way to practice braille and lots of fun for the girls, as it was like their own secret code.

Knowing braille has been essential for Payton's education, and she feels she can depend on it more than digital and audio devices.

"Sometimes the digital stuff does not work, but I always know that I can use braille for my learning," Payton expressed. "I am going to be a Doctor when I grow up, because I want to help people. So, I need to learn as much as I can, right now."

Payton first came to Braille House when she was 5 years old to compete in the Literacy Challenge, which brings students from across Queensland together. "That was where I met my best friend ever, Rose. We go to different schools but get the chance to meet up at Braille House. Oh, I can tell you, we laugh, tell each other so many jokes and play snakes & ladders before we get down to the serious competition."

Payton tells how, in their group, Rose always comes first in the Literacy Challenge, and she comes second. "I am going to have to practice more," she says with a big grin. "But I need to get my hands on more braille books to read."



Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition

103rd Year of Competition

The Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition, celebrating its 103rd Birthday in 2024, received a record number of entries across all categories.

The competition provides a unique opportunity for people with low or no vision to tell their stories and to share their amazing talents with others.

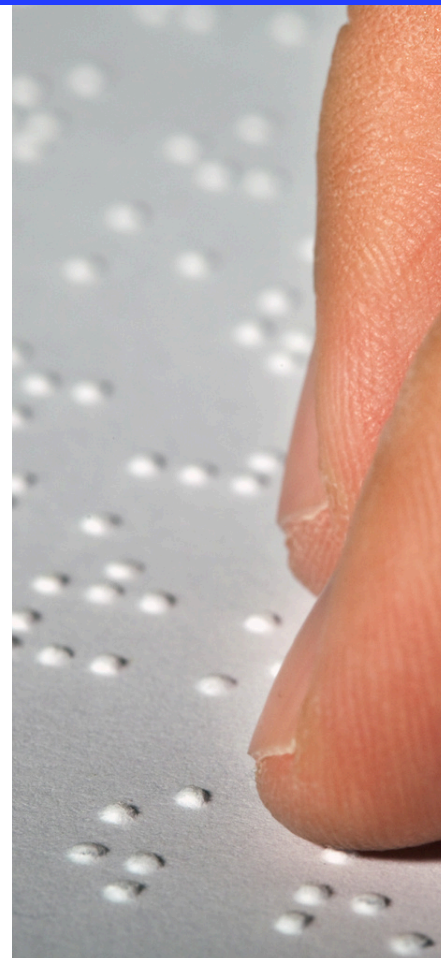
The theme of the 2024 competition was 'Empowerment' and cash prizes were awarded in the following categories: Adult Short Story, Adult Poetry, Adult Article/Opinion, Senior Student Creative, Junior Student Creative and People's Choice.

The entries, from heartfelt reflections to inspiring stories, showcased the remarkable talents of the blind and low vision community.

The winning entries and second place holders were published by Braille House in a special Braille Anthology which is available to borrow from the Braille House Library.

Special thanks goes to Heather Jacobs, our dedicated judge, who volunteers her time and expertise to adjudicate the many captivating entries. We appreciate Heather's significant contribution to Braille House over many years.

The 103rd Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition was proudly supported by the Brisbane City Council. Thank you to Councillor Vicki Howard and her team for their continued support of Braille House. We very much appreciate their support and could not do it without them.



The Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition, a significant cultural and literary tradition, has a rich history that stretches back over a century. The competition, originally launched in 1921 by the Queensland Musical, Literary and Self Aid Society for the Blind (QMLSAS), was designed to encourage and support the literary talents of blind and low vision individuals.

History of the Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition

Two notable figures associated with the competition in early years were brothers Harold and Edwin Dickinson. Both were active members of QMLSAS and deeply involved in the literary and musical world.

In 1966, the QMLSAS changed its name to the Queensland Society of Blind Citizens, the beginning of a series of transformations. In 1986, the organisation received royal assent and became known as the Royal Queensland Society for Blind Citizens. The next few decades saw several mergers and name changes, ultimately resulting in the formation of Vision Australia in 2006, when the Royal Blind Foundation of Queensland and Vision Queensland joined forces.

Despite these changes, the essay competition, a cornerstone of the QMLSAS's legacy, continued to thrive. Since 2014, the competition has been proudly managed exclusively by Braille House, ensuring its continued support for writers of all ages in the blind and low vision community.

The competition's name was eventually changed to the Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition in honour of the Dickinson family's contributions to the blind community, particularly the work of Dr Mercy Dickinson, a trailblazing figure in the field of blindness education and advocacy.

Grants Support



Specialist Disability Support in Schools (SDSS) Program Grant. The SDSS Program provided \$74,607 in funding to Braille House to transcribe and produce braille literature for schools across Queensland. The grant aims to improve curriculum access, boost participation, and enhance educational outcomes for eligible school-aged students who are blind or have low vision.



National Library for Australia (NLA) for Community Heritage Grant. Following Braille House's commissioning of a Preservation Needs Assessment Report, the NLA has further funded collection management activities to the value of \$7,900. The grant comprises allocations towards an assortment of storage boxes and archival material, staff and volunteer training in preventative conservation, and professional assistance with the development of the organisation's disaster preparedness plan.

Lord Mayor's Charitable Trust.

This trust provided Braille House with a grant of \$2,000 to contribute towards the cost of hosting the annual Christmas lunch which was enjoyed by volunteers, staff and members.



Queensland Government

State Government of Queensland. For the second consecutive year, through the 2024-25 State Budget, the Queensland Government allocated funds to support the valuable services for the Braille House Library. The \$255,000 contributes towards a variety of library running costs, including production of titles, staffing costs, the new integrated library collection and cataloguing platform, training, and technology.

Anonymous Foundation.

Subsequent to media publicity focusing on the important work of Braille House, an anonymous philanthropic foundation made a \$180,000 donation to Braille House.

Brisbane City Council Festivals and Cultural Events Sponsorship Program.

Through its support for festival and cultural events, the Brisbane City Council supported the Annual Braille House Dickinson Memorial Literary Competition. \$2,200 was provided to assist with the provision of prize money for winning entrants and for the cost of producing an anthology of the winning entries.



How You Can Make a Difference

There are many ways you can support Braille House and bring the joy of reading to those who need it most. In 2024, Braille House received valuable support in a variety of ways.

Workplace Giving

Also known as payroll giving. This is a simple and tax-effective way to show support. Some companies match employees' donations, doubling their impact.

Corporate Experiences

Corporate opportunities and volunteering can also help Braille House create reading materials that directly support blind and low vision individuals. It's a hands-on, rewarding experience that will inspire your whole team.

Volunteer

Come and help us empower lives through literacy. We have a number of roles that all make a difference.



Gift in Will

Leave a lasting legacy. Your gift in a will empowers blind and low vision Australians with vital literacy resources for generations to come.

Sponsorship

Sponsor a Braille House event and help empower vision impaired students while connecting with the blind and low vision community.

Community Fundraising

Got a creative fundraising idea? From bake sales to trivia nights, we'll help you turn it into vital support for Braille House.



Braille House Community

Volunteers 2024

Amanda Acutt	Sue Greenall	Jacqueline Parker
Meyrick Adams	James Grant	Kathryn Pell
Wendy Alexander	Lynne Grevell	Kerstin Reimers
Vicki Anderson	Julie Hammond	Karen Prins
Jennifer Baker	Nigel Harris	Margaret Rein
Denise Blumke	Lisa Harper	Cathy Roseman
George Brennan	Matthew Hicks	Sue Schwartz
Linda Brookbank	Margaret Hinkler	Jackie Searle
Angela Callins	Karen Ho	Linda Slemint
Margo Carwardine	Shirley Horton	Gail Smith
Frances Cooke	Mary Kentish	Jackie Sorensen
Vicki Couzens	Jan Lorimer	Max Stephens
John Davenport	Jodie Matire	Anne Tann
Angela Davoli	Helene Merker	Graeme Tann
Marget Elson	Barbara O'Connor	Malcolm Thomas
Jeannie Gamble	Barry Oliver	Sue Wagner

Members 2024

Amanda Acutt	Eva Lo	Life Members
Meyrick Adams	Heidi Monsour	Wendy Alexander
Vickie Anderson	Barbara O'Connor	John Davenport
Joy Ashe	Barry Oliver	Penny Harland
Richard Barker	Jacqueline Parker	Margaret Hinkler
Bonnie Boon	Karen Prins	Mhairi McDonald
Alisa Boyd	Wendy Sara	Jan Moody
Leslie Buchanan	Jackie Sorensen	Dell Purtill
Margo Carwardine	Malcolm Thomas	Gail Smith
Benji Celf	Sandra Vinson	Sue Wagner
Eileen Davis	Catherine Williams	
Angela Davoli		
Janet Douglas		
Nigel Harris		
Gina Kerr		
Kay Kieu		
	Family Membership	
	James Grant and Family	
	Graeme and Anne Tann	

Braille House Community

Donors and Supporters 2024

Grants

Arts Queensland
Festivals and Cultural Events
Sponsorship Program
Gambling Community
Benefit Fund
Lord Mayor Better
Suburbs Grant
National Library of Australia
Specialist Disability Support in
Schools

Foundations and Trusts, Individuals

Burleigh Heads Lions
Cairns Marlin Coast Lions
Clontarf Branch of QLD
Country Women
Dr K.P.Mahoney
George Brennan
Holland Park Lions Club
John Davenport
Lions Club of Calamvale
Maroochy North Shore Lions
Nambour and Districts Lions
Club

Narellan Lions
QLD Country Women's
Association
The Lord Mayor's
Charitable Trust
The McCaul Family
The Honourable Warren Entsch
MP Member for Leichhardt

Not-for-profits

Guide Dogs Queensland
Hand Heart Pocket

Corporate Partners 2024

Armidale CAE
Billykart Kitchen
Brisbane Airport
Corporation
Caxton Hotel
Civic Solutions

Clairvaux Mackillop
College
Good to Give
Grill'd Fairfield and
Wintergarden
Mode Design
Mt Cotton State School

Mullins Lawyers
Normanby Hotel
Paddington Tavern
Queensland Hotel
Association
Unity Alliance

All donations are sincerely appreciated, due to the number of donors and for privacy, not all donations are recognised in this publication.

“Some years ago I was asked by Gwen Hay to come and see if my teaching knowledge and skills would be helpful to some Braille House clients and their tutors. After a short time curiosity led me to look at other aspects of Braille House’s work. I became hooked...

Volunteering was an enjoyable extension of my career... I learned new skills and met new friends, magnificent mentors, and wonderful clients. They have had a profound effect on me and I so value their connection. My family dare to ask if I can do anything else on the days I go to ‘The House of Dots’.
Thank you Braille House Community”.

Wendy Alexander, Braille House Volunteer



Braille House looks forward with much positivity.

Customer Relationship Management

As a result of the work undertaken in 2024 with regard to Braille House moving to a new and enhanced Customer Relationship Management system (CRM), numerous benefits will unfold. Some of the many anticipated advantages include improved client, customer and donor relationships, increased sales and revenue, enhanced efficiency, and better customer service. By centralising data, automating tasks, and providing valuable insights, our new CRM will support Braille House to become more client, customer, and donor-centric and data-informed.

Purpose-Built Facility

Braille House remains focused on progressing the construction of a new, fit-for-purpose building. This requires funding; a three-way partnership with the Commonwealth and State Governments is being pursued. In 2024, the organisation secured a \$2.7 million pre-election commitment from Queensland Labor. Although the party was not re-elected, discussions with both levels of government continue. A Capital Campaign Committee will be established in 2025 as part of the funding plan. Alternative building options are also being assessed for cost-effectiveness. The goal remains the same: to create a purpose-built facility that meets the current and future needs of clients, volunteers, and staff.

Branding

Moving into the new year involves launching our new branding. This offers the opportunity to enhance brand recognition, foster customer loyalty, and increase revenue through enhanced customer engagement. It will also allow for differentiation from our competitors, a stronger digital presence, and the ability to align Braille House brand vision and values.

New Website

Over time, many dedicated individuals at Braille House have contributed to the development of a new website, which is planned for launch in early 2025. This project holds significant potential, aiming to improve visibility, communication, and brand reputation, while creating new opportunities for digital marketing and fundraising. From a charity perspective, the website is expected to expand our reach, strengthen engagement with supporters, enhance credibility and trust, and improve efficiency through better resource management and data insights. On the business side, the website is anticipated to generate more leads and sales, enhance customer service, support greater digital marketing and SEO efforts, reduce costs, and boost productivity and customer loyalty.



How wonderful it is that nobody
need wait a single moment before
starting to improve the world

Anne Frank



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