



2017
ANNUAL REPORT





CONTENTS

Foreword from our Patron	2
President's report	3
Braille House success stories	4
The past to the present	6
From the Board	8
2018–2022 Strategic Plan: our vision, mission, values and key outcomes	10
General Manager's report	12
You, Braille House and the NDIS	13
The future with Braille	14
Contributors to Braille House in 2017	16
Abridged financial statements	18
Corporate governance	20
Braille: way more than just a code... it's a life choice!	22
How to get involved	24

Proudly supported by the Queensland
Government through the Department of
Education and Training





Foreword from our Patron

It gives me great pleasure, as Patron of the Queensland Braille Writing Association, to provide this foreword for the 2017 Annual Report.

Since 1897, when a group of seven women, including Lady Lamington, wife of the then Governor of Queensland, met in the Telegraph Chambers in Adelaide Street, the volunteer members of the Queensland Braille Writing Association (QBWA) have faithfully served the blind and vision impaired community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul de Jersey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC
Governor of Queensland

The QBWA's Braille House is the only place in Australia which creates twin-vision books with a sleeve – a unique and special resource which enables sighted people and those with no or low vision to share the same books. The ever-growing catalogue of books produced by Braille House is inspiring, covering a great diversity of genres, including children's books and novels for young adults. The library is a well-loved and treasured resource for blind and vision impaired Queenslanders.

I commend Braille House for its program of outreach to help all Queenslanders, including some of the youngest members of our community, to understand why "Braille is Brilliant", and for its embrace of e-Braille, with its tremendous potential to make books even more accessible for the blind and vision impaired. I thank everyone who has made a contribution to Braille House's fundraising efforts, and encourage all Queenslanders to contribute to this most important cause.



President's report

120 years of age is probably a good age to put on a new outfit, and step out with a new look – for the Annual Report as well as the view into the future.

Braille House's new outfit inevitably includes smart thinking and smart doing; teaching and producing Braille that suits individuals of every age and capability. For some people in 2018 Braille appears as a refreshable line of cells on a small

computer which also houses the six keys and "space bar" that facilitate the instant making of Braille characters under your fingers. And while this technology means there is no longer the need to carry bulky books with you to school, work or university, in order to have all your texts at your fingertips – and your emails of course – for some people it is out-of-reach technology and they are happy to continue to read

their Braille on paper.

At Braille House it is part of our philosophy to be multi-disciplined and to remain at the forefront of advocacy, teaching and production of Braille, so with 120 years behind us we go forward in our new outfit, marching confidently to the sound of Louis Braille's timeless drum.

Sue Wagner

President

Braille House success stories

Dickinson Memorial Literary Challenge attracted a record number of entries in 2017. It also attracted sponsorship for prize money from the Australian Communities Foundation – Clack Family Memorial Fund.



In 2017, 157 titles in e-Braille joined our library resources and our library catalogue went on line so everyone can now browse the catalogue over a coffee in a café, in a park or anywhere else that is comfortable and convenient.



Brisbane City Council provided a grant to produce 30 of our Braille Awareness Programs. All but five of the boxes of activities have found homes in early childhood centres, kindergartens and schools.

Kayt, a children’s entertainer, guided over 100 children in early learning centres, kindergartens and schools on a journey using their magic fingers and puppetry to become more aware of Braille and how to read and write using it.



OVER
100
CHILDREN
EDUCATED

157
EBRAILLE
TITLES

30
BRAILLE
AWARENESS
PROGRAMS



Our children's library saw a significant expansion in twin-vision picture books. At Braille House we make twin-vision books by taking an existing book and either overlaying clear tape which has been Brailled or, in the case of books where there are a greater number of words, we insert a see through sleeve which has been Brailled so that both children and adults who are sighted or have no or low vision can use the same resource.

77
LIBRARY
BOOKS

Our production team transcribed and produced 77 books for the Alternate Format Library and 34 special projects for private clients including Brailleing business cards, art work, menus and identification badges.

34
SPECIAL
PROJECTS



*Twin-Vision
Insert*



Twin-Vision Tape

17
BRAILLE
STUDENTS

Our tutoring team assisted 17 students to learn Braille.





The past to the present

Gwen Hay first became associated with Queensland Braille Writing Association (QBWA) since she began teaching at the School for Blind and Deaf Children in 1952. As a young teacher, she had the support of QBWA on many occasions. When her mentor, Braille teacher Mercy Dickinson was overseas and she was negotiating for blind students to do the scholarship exam to give entry into high school, long time QBWA Secretary Miss Madelaine Bird gave assurance that QBWA would assist by transcribing exam papers and texts. This made it possible for students from the Blind School to attend Cavendish Road High School, where Mr Jenks was Principal at the time (Mr Jenks had taught Mercy at State High many years before and had first-hand experience of support from QBWA).

Due to the extraordinary efforts of Mr R.F. Tunley and his huge band of supporters, QBWA was expanded to include the acquisition of 507 Ipswich Road, Annerley and the introduction of hand-made tactual maps and other teaching aids (made mostly by Mr Tunley). When Braille House opened in June 1954, Gwen was involved in the celebrations.

She stayed in touch with QBWA over the years, returning to Brisbane in 2007 to join the tutoring team and is still teaching Braille to blind students at Braille House.

During those 66 years there had been changes to the Braille code. The Australian Braille Authority had adopted Unified English Braille (UEB) as the official Braille code to be used and taught in Australia. It was apparent that a new teaching program was needed, using UEB and more modern methods of production. Along with Wendy Sara, the tutoring team and many others at Braille House

were involved in embossing, binding and administration, Gwen's challenge was to devise a suitable program as soon as possible. At this time it was seen that people identified with Braille House and it was decided to refer from then on to QBWA as Braille House.

The new program was called *I Can Read Braille* and consisted of a series of five modules which took a student from beginning Braille to becoming an independent reader of fully contracted Braille.

Stepping into uncharted territory, the team wrote a script for an interactive audio to accompany Module One. The audio was narrated by Keith Evans from Queensland Narrating Service. Every word was chosen carefully and the audio allowed Braille House to provide a service for distance students who could not receive face to face instruction at Braille House.

The *I Can Read Braille* program is still the most commonly used program for teaching touch reading but Braille House has developed a number of other programs to cater for a range of needs, such as refresher courses and transition between UEB and older codes. *Braille for Print Users* was developed in response to requests from members of the community interested in learning Braille. Suitable for teachers, teacher aides and relatives of blind persons, it has been offered as an intensive 10-week course at Braille House and also as a distance program.



FROM THE COUNCIL

The Queensland Braille Writing Association's 120th year is quite an achievement. We take this moment to think of and thank all the volunteers, donors, sponsors, clients and community who have been involved over this period of time to make this not-for-profit the great place that it is.

2017 brought more change and growth for Braille House amongst a changing environment so there was no resting on our laurels.

Having adopted the General Manager

role for the organisation, the Council worked throughout the year focusing on the strategic issues for the organisation leaving the day to day operational decisions to the General Manager. The Council (composed of the members below, including Louisa Young who joined 14 December 2017) reorganised itself forming subcommittees to address three major matters:

- Governance including the Constitution;
- Investments and Finances; and
- Strategic Planning.

Braille House's constitution has not been looked at for quite some time. With the advent of a General Manager whose role is to manage the operation of the organisation, the Council is now acting purely in an executive role of providing strategic direction and governance. With these changes now in place the Council thought it timely to look at our constitution to refresh it and ensure it is contemporary to take the organisation into the future. Work on this continues and it is hoped to have consultation



Sue Wagner

MBA
Braille House President since 2011

President



David Balwin

FCPA BCom BEcon
Director, Balanix Solutions

Treasurer



Scott Anderson

B.Com LLB
Partner, RiverLegal



Cinta Graves

Owner, MyDesigner Branding and
Communication, working with
not-for-profit sector for 12 years

and voting on it in the second half of 2018.

Our finances and investments were a key priority area for the Council. An “Investment Statement and Policy” was developed with the help of an external facilitator which now gives the Council (and future Councils) clear guidance and boundaries for the management and investment of the Braille House assets. This can only be beneficial to our longevity and bottom line.

Also, in 2017, Braille House undertook its most extensive Strategic Planning process to date.

The process commenced with the Council discussing and articulating its proposed strategic direction for the organisation for the next five years (2018–2022). This information, including Vision, Mission, Values and Key Outcomes formed the basis of a survey which was sent to some 400 stakeholders in our community. We were happy to see a good response was received from all groups of

stakeholders to the survey. The Council thanks everyone who participated because it is your input that informs and validates our direction.

From this information Key Strategies were developed to support the Key Outcomes and so was finalised the Braille House Strategic Plan 2018–2022. You can find this plan on the next pages of this Annual Report. The General Manager will tell you about what happened next in the process and what this all means from an

operational point of view.

Thank you to everyone who has supported and continues to support Braille House in many different ways. We welcome all the new members, volunteers, clients, donors, sponsors and other stakeholders in our community over the past 12 months and look forward to our continued work for the vision impaired community as well as our organisational growth.

Braille House Council



Pam Raff

BA, Grad. Dip. Education & Grad. Dip. in Applied Linguistics
Donor and Volunteer for many years



Jenni Erbel

MFP, BCom, BBus, DipEd, Cert IV TAE
Director Paraplanning Professionals & Strategic Outsource Solutions



Sam Taylor

B.Mus, Cert IV Tae Musician
Products Specialist, Pacific Vision



Wendy Alexander

Retired Teacher, Special Education roles in Talented and Gifted, Remedial, Vision Impairment, Deaf and Deaf-Blind programs

2018–2022 Strategic Plan: our vision, mission, values and key outcomes



OUR VISION

THE WORLD AT YOUR
FINGERTIPS.



OUR MISSION

ACCESS TO BRAILLE
FOR EVERYONE, TO
EMPOWER PEOPLE OF
ALL AGES WHO ARE
VISION IMPAIRED.



OUR VALUES

EXCELLENCE
POSITIVE IMPACT
WARMTH
INCLUSIVENESS
RELEVANCE
INNOVATION



LEADERSHIP IN BRAILLE USERS
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

National statistical study into Braille use and its users in Australia
Centre of Excellence in relation to all things Braille

ADVOCACY FOR THE USE
OF BRAILLE

Growth and expansion of Braille Awareness Program
Advocacy/linkages to all levels of government, NDIA and the broader community
Engagement with Braille House spokesperson/advocates

ACCESS TO BRAILLE

Expansion of Braille tutoring and education; expansion of Brailled material
Technology

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Effective and sustainable fundraising campaigns
Effective and sustainable donor campaigns
Sound management of organisation – budgeting/cashflow/operational financial sustainability
Investment (including property)

BRANDING

Consistent branding across print, digital and signage
Marketing – organisation as a whole/fundraising and donor campaigns
Website and social media



General Manager's report

Braille House has exhibited innovation and the willingness to do what needs to be done to remain viable and contemporary throughout its 120 years. At the 1906 Braille House Annual Meeting (published in the Courier Mail, 30 May 1906, page 3), it was reported that, from receipts of just over £31 the association had a year end credit of just over £4. In response to increase revenue, everyone was invited to subscribe to the society for an annual subscription of 5s (shillings).

In the Queensland Parliamentary Debates (Hansard) of the Legislatively Assembly (Wednesday

25 November 1959), the Hon. H. W. Noble (Yeronga) rigorously defended the decision to give £5,000 from the Legacy Trust account of the Queensland Industrial Institution for the Blind (which was just under half the amount in the Trust) to Mr R. F. Tunley to remodel Braille House so the volunteers could better produce Braille and service the needs of its customers.

Fast forward to 2017, and Braille House is still responding to its environment to ensure it is meeting the needs of its customers and community.

With the advent of the 2018–2022 Strategic Plan, our primary challenges are to keep our high, reliable and caring standard of customer service whilst reaching more people (throughout Australia) who want our services. We need to advocate for Braille whilst ensuring we are integrated with modern mechanisms that children and adults, who are blind or have low vision, utilize to navigate their life – technology being the major mechanism.

We need to continue to grow our professionalism and brand to ensure visibility, a voice and financial viability in the ever more

competitive not-for-profit sector. We need to have a strong presence in the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) as well as maintain and foster our strong admired culture for volunteers, donors, sponsors and everyone else in our community or entering our community.

I am excited for the future of Braille House and up for the challenge along with Braille House's wonderful staff and volunteers. I encourage you to find out more about Braille House and how you can be involved in this wonderful organization.

As the inaugural Braille House General Manager I look forward to reporting in future Annual Reports our successes and achievements.

Sally Balwin
General Manager

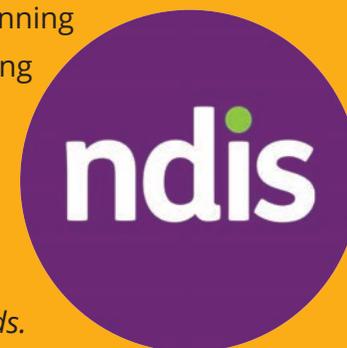
YOU, BRAILLE HOUSE AND THE NDIS

Braille House is a registered provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS is the way the Australian Government is providing reasonable and necessary support for Australians, under the age of 65 with a permanent and significant disability, their families and carers.

The choice and control the NDIS offers means you can work with your own carers or with registered external carers and supports. You and your family will have more control over choosing the services that work best for you and get the support you choose and need.

Braille House can support you to plan for your future. The best time to talk to us is at the beginning of your journey under the NDIS. Our people will work with you in establishing your short and long term goals and the supports you will need to achieve them in preparation for your NDIS planning meeting. This pre-planning will give you the confidence and understanding to work with the NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) in establishing your support to achieve your goals.

Keep in mind, you can nominate Braille House as your service provider for all your Braille needs.



SANTIAGO VELASQUEZ

The future with Braille

Santiago Velasquez has always been vision impaired and was introduced to Braille at about the age of three. In 2008, with limited opportunities for people with vision impairment available in their home country Colombia, his parents decided the family would move to Australia.

Santi started over learning a new language in Braille at Cavendish Road State High School, where his teachers encouraged him to enter the Braille House's Literacy Challenge. Initially he came for the experience and was amazed at how quickly the other students could read and write Braille. After a few years participating in the competition he happily took out first place.

With the belief instilled in him by his parents that he can do anything,

he would just do it without vision, Santi began studying a Bachelor of Engineering at Queensland University of Technology, setting precedents as the first vision impaired student in Australia to do electrical engineering.

For Santi, Braille has been an integral part of learning electrical engineering as he is able to interact with the content through touch, allowing him to learn the complexities of how some circuits are put together.

The challenge however, is not having Braille available at such a detailed and high level of learning. While Braille displays are available, they have limitations such as cost, weight and the amount of Braille they can display.

With that in mind, Santi founded a company called EyeSyght, which is developing technology that enables

graphical content from any screen to be rendered in a tactile way, in real time.

As well as assisting the vision impairment market, the technology may be used for virtual reality, the medical industry or eCommerce. The aim is to be affordable for people with vision impairment and to continually develop the technology to keep it relevant.

Santi believes Braille is critical in a lot of aspects; obviously for entertainment and education, but more so for basic things like getting about, signage and directions. He believes Braille needs to adapt to a medium that people are willing to carry and to utilise.

With entrepreneurs like Santi, Braille in the future will not only make more information more accessible, it will be indispensable for the vision impaired.



Contributors to Braille House in 2017

GRANTS

Brisbane City Council – Seniors Celebration Donation 2017/18

Brisbane City Council – Community Development and Capacity Building Grant Program 2016/17

The Community Benefit Funds Unit – Gambling Community Benefit Fund

Department of Education and Training – Non Schools Organisations Program

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services – Quarterly Funding Disability Services

TRUSTS

Dr Ellice Dart Trust

Norma Benporath Charitable Trust

ASSOCIATIONS

Grill'd West End

Northside Low Vision Support Group Nundah

Queensland Blind Association

DONORS

Mr John Davenport
McCaul Family

The English Family Foundation

The Australian Communities Foundation – Clack Family Memorial Fund

Emma Boon

Dorothy Akers

Alice Arendt

Sally Balwin

David Balwin

Reginald Barrett

Paul Bell

Natalie Bemrose

Nicola Billing

Bonnie Boon

Anne-Maree Brady

Nicholas Brislane

Leslie Buchanan

Brooke Burford

Judy Burt

Margaret Byrne

Mary Byrne

Leslie Byrnes

Vera Cahill

Brian Carey

Christine Cemm

Jeanine Chialvo

Simon Christopher

John Colvin

Maureen Davey

Emily Davis

Angela Davoli

John Dingle

Judith Dingle

Catherine Donald

Amber Dunlop-Pajo

Glennys Fabbri

Fiona Fairlie

CW & JA Farmer

Laurie Ferguson

Susan Fitts

Shandy Fong

Robert Fraser

Liza Frazer

Terence Gimpel

Martin Grabert

Andy Graves

Anne Hampton

Penny Harland

Andrew Hopkins

James Howe

Jacqueline Jacob

Catherine Jeffcoate

Deb Jones

Vic Kandiah

Chris Kennedy

Gina Kerr

Kathy La Praik

John Langworthy

George Lawrence

Sunny Lee

Maya Lee-Nambiar
 David Leitch
 Kay Lockens
 Marian Lyons
 James Mackay
 Charles Manning
 Rebecca Maxwell
 Bruce McCaul
 Victoria McCaul
 Tor McCaul
 Case McCaul
 Burk McCaul
 Rohan McCaul
 Garry McDonald
 Mhairi McDonald
 Megan McKenzie
 Val Millican
 Claire Moore
 Allan Morley
 Kirsten Mulley
 Phil Norman
 Noela O'Donnell
 Barbara Oziganow
 Anna Pianta
 Fiona Poschelk
 Evan Pritchard
 Dell Purtill
 Pamela Raff

Ian Roberts
 Sue Schwartz
 Jackie Searle
 Helen Simon
 Ben Simons
 Gail Smith
 George Smith
 Jackie Sorensen
 Bluey Stamcombe
 Judith Stephenson
 Barbara Taylor-Borg
 Audrey Thiele
 Deb Tipper
 William Tranberg

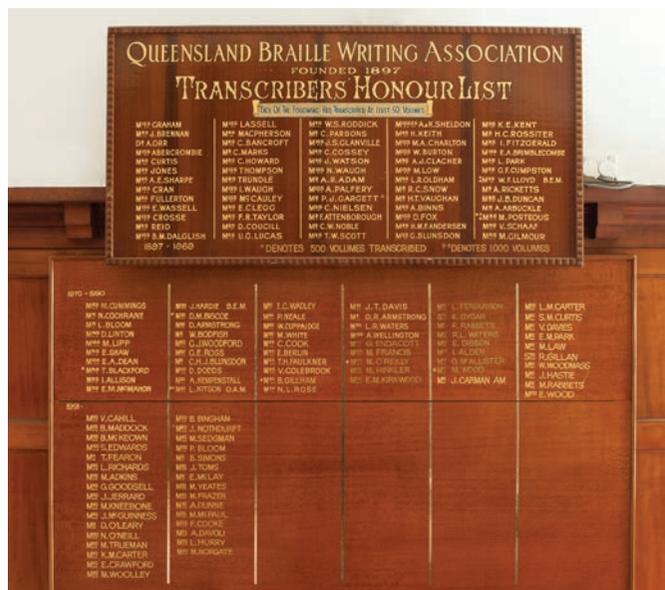
Suzanne Tranberg
 Dane Trethowan
 Elena Vasilevska
 Bernadette Vialle
 Sue Wagner
 Kaye Walton
 Karen Watson
 Jean Weaver
 Clyda Webb
 Wayne Weismann
 James Whitwell
 Ariane Wilkinson
 Brigit Workman



Dorothy Akers
 Wendy Alexander
 Scott Anderson
 Annette Arndt
 David Balwin
 Sally Balwin
 Janelle Bellas
 Denise Blumke
 Ailsa Boyd
 Vera Cahill
 Frances Cooke
 John Davenport
 Angela Davoli
 Kalubuth Pushpa
 De Silva
 Elisa Di Trapani
 Shaye Dietrich
 Janet Douglas
 Kayt Duncan
 Marget Elson
 Jenni Erbel

Mumtaz-Ahmed Esat
 Bahareh Shahrabi
 Farahani
 Mary Frazer
 Jeannie Gamble
 Renee Gibbons
 Cinta Graves
 Edward Greenaway
 Lynne Grevell
 Julie Hammond
 Gwen Hay
 Margaret Hinkler
 Karen Ho
 Xinyan (Carolyn)
 Huang
 Joan Jerrard
 Karen Jones
 Julie Joyce
 Jeanette Kasper
 Renuka Kesavan
 Kerry Leask
 Tom Macmahon
 Mhairi McDonald
 Helene Merker
 Jan Moody
 Mala Nambiar

Betty Neels
 Bev Nevin
 Judith Nothdurft
 Barbara Oziganow
 Kathryn Pell
 Dell Purtill
 Pamela Raff
 Michael Ramos
 Margaret Rein
 Naomi Rutherford
 Wendy Sara
 Sue Schwartz
 Jackie Searle
 Gail Smith
 Jackie Sorensen
 Terri Stronge
 Graeme Tann
 Anne Tann
 Sam Taylor
 Bernadette Vialle
 Sue Wagner
 Bronwyn Watson
 May Wilson
 Rose Windley
 Louisa Young



Abridged financial statements

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	2017	2016
For the Financial Year ended 31 December 2017	\$	\$
Donations	319,501	22,366
Grants	95,382	59,463
Bequests	2,242	2,660
Braille House Market Income	3,695	2,154
Fee for Service Income	10,579	12,769
Investments Income	14,789	18,168
Membership Subscriptions	2,014	1,432
Other Income	1,989	4,189
Rental Income	17,333	8,667
Revenue from ordinary activities	467,524	131,867
TOTAL INCOME	467,524	131,867
Expenses		
Employee	80,193	83,831
Consultancy Fees	71,470	56,418
Computer Costs	9,531	10,918
Depreciation	35,318	30,111
Insurance	6,107	11,121
Other	73,772	68,784
Total Expenses	276,391	261,592
NET SURPLUS/LOSS FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	191,133	129,725

The figures contained in these statements are an extract from Braille House's audited Statutory Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2017.

The full Financial Statements and Auditor's Opinion are available on request.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION	2017	2016
For the Financial Year ended 31 December 2017	\$	\$
Current Assets		
Cash	178,103	152,002
Capital investment funds	550,000	500,000
Trade and Other Receivables	11,606	13,787
Total current Assets	739,709	665,789
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	2,717,199	2,606,796
Total non-current assets	2,717,199	2,620,749
Total Assets	3,456,908	3,272,585
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	9,642	10,369
Other	3,260	9,509
Total current liabilities	12,902	19,713
Total Liabilities	12,902	19,713
NET ASSETS	3,444,006	3,252,872
Equity		
Revaluation Reserve	2,211,639	2,211,639
Accumulated funds	1,232,367	1,041,234
Total Equity	3,444,006	3,252,873

The figures contained in these statements are an extract from Braille House's audited Statutory Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2017.

The full Financial Statements and Auditor's Opinion are available on request.

Corporate governance

Braille House's commitment to excellence in corporate governance, transparency and accountability is evident through the organisation's culture and behaviour, underpinned by a quality system to ISO 9000. This quality system is continuously reviewed both internally and by external parties. Our policies and procedures ensure we meet the Australian Standards – AS 8000-2003 Good Governance Principles.

QBWA COUNCIL PACKAGE AND COMPOSITION

The Braille House Council Package exists to ensure sound governance of the organisation starting from the top. The document sets out the Council's roles, responsibilities and Code of Conduct. The package also includes the Council's competency matrix to ensure a competent and

diverse set of skills, experience and knowledge exists amongst the Council members.

The names of the Council members including qualifications and experience are contained on pages 8–9. More details can also be obtained from the Braille House website.

ROLE AND CONDUCT OF THE COUNCIL

The Council held 11 monthly meetings in 2017, as well as the Annual General Meeting. The Council has organised itself to include the following sub-committees: Finance and Investment, Governance and Strategic Planning .

In 2017, the Council led an extensive strategic planning process which

included a workshop attended by Council, a survey sent out to our community and a workshop for interested parties. From this, the 2018–2022 Strategic Plan was developed (refer pages 10–11).

The Council also undertook a facilitated process to develop its Investment Policy to ensure surplus monies are appropriately invested to maximise returns at an appropriate risk whilst ensuring funds are available to meet day to day expenditure. This policy includes, amongst other things, the risk profile of the Council in relation to investments and what investments it will and will not consider.

The Council conducts itself inline with the Braille House Council Package. The Council works closely

with the General Manager to whom it has delegated day-to-day responsibilities and activities whilst still ensuring appropriate governance and quality checks. The Council receives a report from the General Manager at each of its meetings which includes, among other things, key performance measures.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct, Council members are required to:

- avoid real or apparent conflicts of Interest;
- not give preference to any person, organisation or other interest group as a result of any private association with that person, organisation or interest group;
- not solicit or receive any benefit in return for services performed as a Council member;
- immediately on becoming aware

of any conflict between private interests and official duty, whether real or apparent, disclose details to the Council; and

- immediately disclose any connection whereby relatives, close friends or business partners are connected in any way with the functions of the organisation.

On receipt of a disclosure from a Council member the Council will determine the extent of any conflict of interest and direct any action required to resolve the conflict.

ETHICAL STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE

In addition to the Council's Code of Conduct and the quality system, there exists an organisational Code of Conduct which applies to all staff, contractors and volunteers. Braille House prides itself on the professionalism and ability of its employees and volunteers, including Council members, to meet community needs. We strive to be

a leading service provider and to provide a safe, healthy and happy workplace for all.

This Code of Conduct is designed to ensure that all Braille House personnel and community members are treated in a manner that reflects the mission, culture and legal obligations of the organisation. To this end, the Code of Conduct addresses, among other things, workplace health and safety, human rights, privacy/confidentiality and behavioural matters that must be adhered to.

AUDITORS

The Council has retained external auditors to audit the organisation's finances annually. All auditor reports are presented to the Council for consideration and action if required. Further, Braille House's quality system's formal internal review is conducted at least every three years and outcomes provided to various external organisations for scrutiny in line with funding arrangements.

SAM TAYLOR

Braille: way more than just a code... it's a life choice!

Growing up as a blind child in Sydney in the 80s, parents, teachers and governments leant towards integration and hence, I went to my local school, just like everybody else. And just like everybody else, I played games, made friends with half the school and got into plenty of trouble... But I wasn't like everybody else, because I had something they didn't. I could read in the dark!

I had Braille.

In many ways, I've been very fortunate with my education. I was lucky to have a kick-start to Braille from a particularly dedicated visiting teacher before school even commenced, so it wasn't long until I was writing very short stories in the Braille code... with eye-watering spelling! I was a voracious reader of books both in Braille and audio, but always

preferred the former. It meant I could see how words were spelt, and what names of places looked like when they were written. And, I could read under the covers... even after "lights out"!

I started piano when I was very young, and it wasn't long until I was introduced to Braille music. This was life-changing. From then on, I encouraged any blind students who had a vague interest in music to also learn the code.

Not only did it mean that I could independently sing in a choir with sighted people who read their music from print, but I could write music myself as well.

After school, I studied a Bachelor of Music at the University of New South Wales, as well as some psychology and linguistics and German. Again Braille

was paramount not only for remaining on the same level as my sighted peers, but to be able to read scores and write foreign language materials.

By this stage, technology containing refreshable Braille displays had become popular. We were able to carry literally hundreds of books (literary, mathematical or musical) on one small device. I knew at once that I wanted to share this type of technology with students and teachers everywhere.

I am among a large group of blind people who uses Braille every day. For everything from labelling spices and canned foods, to reading to children, playing games and delivering speeches. Musicians have equal participation in musical activities because they can independently learn to play a piece without hearing it first.

Churchgoers can read the Bible and follow along in their songbooks with others in the congregation. Parents can follow a recipe to prepare nourishing food for their families, and children can succeed at school on their own merit in the same way as their peers, without constant help or supervision from support staff.

I'm one of the fortunate ones – I now get to work with students and adults on a daily basis, ensuring they have the best Braille devices that they can have to carry out their work or leisure activities. Braille has kept me in meaningful employment since I left school, and even though I may not always choose to use it in every situation, I know I have the ability to independently read and write whenever and wherever I choose.



'Learning Braille has opened up my world...

As an adult having to learn to live a completely new life it can be challenging. With Braille I can send and receive email... read the news and events happening in the world, read books and I am learning to take my own affairs back.

Braille gives me the ability to live an independent life again.'

(Quoted from a letter of appreciation from a Braille House student who lost both her sight and her hearing due to a sudden severe illness.)

How to get involved

VOLUNTEER

Volunteer and benefit from developing new skills or updating existing skills whilst making new friends and feeling a sense of community and personal satisfaction.

Approximately 70% of our funding comes from donations and fundraising.

We greatly appreciate any one-off or ongoing donations you can give to keep Braille House going. Please go to www.braillehouse.org.au and click on the "Donate" button to conveniently and simply give.

DONATE

FUNDRAISE FOR US

Our "Dotty Program" enables everyone to fundraise for us. Whether it be a morning tea, sponsored team in a walk/run, an a-thon of sorts or an event like a wine tasting, fundraising is fun and satisfying. Don't want to organise a fundraiser – then volunteer at Braille House to help out with the fundraising event organised by us.

Become a member of our community for the small annual cost of \$25 (individual) or \$40 per family. Membership provides our quarterly newsletter, a vote at the AGM, attendance at our Member's Christmas morning tea, as well as VIP communication on all the other events and activities happening in our community.

BECOME A MEMBER



Braille House works with all types and sized organisations to create mutually beneficial partnerships to communicate

key Corporate Involvement and Sponsorship opportunities based on common values and shared objectives. Many of the involvement opportunities may provide a tax deduction/benefit. Please contact Braille House on 07 3848 5257 and ask to speak with our General Manager to discuss opportunities further.

Braille House has made choosing dinner or lunch easy. We've created a delicious Dominos Pizza Menu for all the family. Every Braille House pizza purchased from Dominos provides money to us.



Order your 2018 | 2019 Entertainment Book or Digital Membership through Braille House and help us in the process. Get access to

hundreds of valuable offers, from regions of Australia and New Zealand, of 50% off and 2-for-1 offers for restaurants, cafés, attractions, hotels, shopping, groceries, travel and much more. For just \$60-\$70 per membership, Braille House will receive 20% to enable us to continue to support access to Braille for everyone, to empower children and people of all ages who are vision impaired. Go to www.entertainmentbook.com.au/orderbooks/91c2962 to get yours.

Commemorate your life and/or the life of a loved one by requesting donations be made to Braille House at the passing.



Your bequest to Braille House, no matter how small, will be greatly appreciated to support us and our community to continue our vital work.

Visit our website for more information on how you can get involved or call us on 07 3848 5257 to learn more.





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