



# 2022-23 Report

2023 is our 10th birthday!

Lolly Jar Circus is celebrating ten years of circus classes inclusive of children and young people with disabilities or at social risk. We are the only circus school in SA where young people with disabilities are included in all activities, where siblings with and without disabilities can attend the same class, where the mission is firmly fixed on the social benefits to participants.

When we first contacted our insurance broker about cover for young people with disabilities to walk on stilts and hang from a trapeze, there was a moment of silence at the other end of the phone. But we put in place every safety policy and procedure necessary and his eventual response was that he had never seen such a well-prepared submission. And it works. Young people become fitter, stronger and more flexible, but more importantly have fun and make friends.

The board began meeting in June 2013 and the first classes were held in October. We started with two classes a week in the hall of the All Souls Anglican Church in St Peters, with second-hand mats, equipment borrowed from Judy's children and juggling balls hand-made from balloons filled with rice. We have come a long way since then, with grants from Department of Human Services funding all the amazing equipment you can see at our many classes.

We have moved a few times. At one stage we had 4 venues on the go but for a few years have been settled at the Estonian Hall in North Adelaide and the Spruance Hall in Elizabeth East.



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We also go on outreach which is booming. While regular class numbers are still recovering from Covid..

Our greatest assets are our trainers who are all exceptional young people. They are talented, thoughtful and kind. They keep our participants safe.

Our safety record is exceptional. Since the last AGM we have completed a trainer training grant from Carclew that resulted in a comprehensive manual containing our training methods, our policies and links to information about various disabilities and health conditions held by our participants. It is a reference for current trainers and a great training tool for new ones.

Sadly for us, one trainer has recently left us to take on a full-time position elsewhere. We wish all the best to Kelly Thomas, who was our lead trainer at Elizabeth for several years. Kelly was great fun as a trainer and very reliable as an employee. She always went the extra mile and we will all miss her.

Other grants we have had during the year include one from the Port Adelaide and Enfield Council to run a series of classes aimed at participants from different cultures, to get the children playing together, the parents and carers talking together and break down barriers.

Over the past few years, we have had a large grant from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services that has enabled us to take outreach far and wide across the State. We have made firm friends through this grant, including various regional councils, ParaQuad SA and the Lotus Group.

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And of course last October we received a large grant from Impact 100. While we did not win one of the two grants for projects of \$100,000, we won \$45,000 that was untied to a project and has made a huge difference to us. The project pitch related to outreach and part of the funds have gone towards that, but we have also been able to buy new trainer tops, performance t-shirts for our participants, to attend webinars to improve the way we run, to join Philanthropy Australia and to buy some exciting new equipment for the participants.

And in the gift that keeps on giving, a member of Impact 100 paid for two of our board members to attend governance training, Young Impact have picked us up as one of their charities to support this year and a group from the Governor's Leadership Foundation has taken us on as its project.

Following hard on the heels of this grant came a donation of over \$12,000 from MGA Whittles, raised at a charity golf day held in howling wind and rain, a devoted effort. Other support this year has come from DJ JoSH who ran a 6-hour set to raise funds for us.

Times are tough. Families are struggling, Lolly Jar Circus families included. The stories you read in the paper about parents and carers needing to make difficult choices about how to spend their money are true. Food, housing or therapy will always be higher priorities than circus classes, of course. By giving Lolly Jar Circus grants and donations, these wonderful people and organisations are recognising that health and joy are crucial to young people's development. They are making a real difference and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

The best part of Lolly Jar Circus is the classes – watching the participants' achievements and smiles under the careful guidance of the trainers and talking to the parents and carers. The hardest part over the past ten years has of course been achieving sustainability. We are proud and excited that we have recently won a substantial grant from DHS to work on this, with attention to be given to governance, strategic planning, indigenous participation and a volunteering scheme, amongst other things. Our project is titled "Lolly Jar Circus – The Next Decade" and it is a huge opportunity and will be a turning point for our organisation.



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The organisation is guided by the board, which meets about 10 times a year. It is a big commitment. We thank those who have nominated to continue – treasurer Peter Featherston and parent representatives Ian Craig and Toni Gray.

This year and this meeting see a lot of changes to the board. During the year we farewelled CJ Chetwynd who was a very efficient secretary and Rebecca Kutcher whose skills are in fundraising. Our AGM was the last for Chelsea Mount who has devoted a lot of time to strategic planning and trainer representative Flick Lannan. We thank all of them. It was also the last meeting for the Chair Bec Young. Bec has always understood our mission. She has been on the board for 7 years and its Chair for about half of that time and has overseen the organisation's survival through the Covid period and its recent growth towards sustainability. That is a lot of hours and devotion and we thank her very much. For Bec the most exciting and rewarding thing will always be the growth and learning of our participants as they hit milestone after milestone.

She will be watching from the sidelines as new and old board members continue to grow our impact to more and more children and young people in need of fun, joy, community and somewhere safe to be themselves.

## **Deb Dawson Award for Outstanding Service 2023**

This year's Deb Dawson Award for Outstanding Service goes to Flick Lannan. She has put her heart and soul into her work for Lolly Jar Circus. She has taught, written the curriculum, mentored both participants and younger staff, been a stage-manager and a board member. Thank you and congratulations to Flick and chookas for your new position in Melbourne.

Rebecca Young, Chair  
Judy Bowden, CEO