



AUSTRALIAN  
CAMPS ASSOCIATION®  
More people outdoors more often

Australian Camps Association

# Annual Report 2021 / 2022

Australian Camps Association is the national peak body for camps and associated providers.



The Australian Camps Association acknowledges that wherever our Members are situated across Australia, Indigenous Australians are the Traditional Custodians of country. They have lived, walked and cared for the lands, waters, environment and wildlife for over 60,000 years.

*This Annual Report was prepared by Maria Dunne and Jessica Hough with valuable contributions by the ACA Team.*

# Table of Contents

- |    |                        |    |                    |
|----|------------------------|----|--------------------|
| 04 | About Us               | 14 | Treasurer's Report |
| 05 | President's Report     | 17 | The ACA Board      |
| 06 | CEO's Report           | 18 | Acknowledgements   |
| 08 | Booking Enquiries      |    |                    |
| 09 | Advocacy               |    |                    |
| 10 | Positive Start in 2022 |    |                    |
| 12 | People Outdoors        |    |                    |
| 13 | Great Getaways         |    |                    |



AUSTRALIAN  
**CAMPS ASSOCIATION**<sup>®</sup>  
More people outdoors more often

# About Us

## 'National peak body for camps and associated providers'

The Australian Camps Association (ACA) welcomes all people, no matter their gender identification, age, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation to our services. We are the 'go-to' hub for groups of all kinds and interests looking for advice or information about all types of camps (school camps, holiday camps, sporting camps, family camps, faith-based camps, seniors camps, camps for people living with disability).

We also operate People Outdoors, outdoor experiences for people living with disability (suitable for children, teens and adults with or without an NDIS plan), and the Great Getaways, fun, active, comfortable and social camps specifically designed for people over 55 years of age.

## Are you operating an outdoor business?

**Become a member today!** We have excellent member benefits to help support you, but just as importantly we advocate for government and decision-makers on our member's behalf. The bigger our membership, the stronger this advocacy becomes. Membership is open to camp operators, outdoor activity providers, service providers, schools and individuals or organisations with an interest in the camps sector.

## Thank You

### To Our Partners



HYPERSONIC  
INDUSTRIES



ABPhillips  
When expert advice counts



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



It is a privilege to be presenting this report on the Australian Camps Association's progress. 2021-2022 saw the Australian Camps Association (ACA) be future-focused. ACA widened its advocacy networks and acted strongly as a leader in the Camps and Led Outdoor Activity sector. The ACA was actively involved with programs like the Positive Start in 2022 initiative. I remain proud of the ACA community's continued resilience and perseverance. Operating through the COVID-19 restrictions, the ACA has continued to forge ahead with several strategic aims, continuing the development of the Camps and Led Outdoor Activity sector across Australia.

Here are some highlights from the ACA's engagements:

**Positive Start in 2022** – This Victorian Government initiative has led to the ACA employing four dedicated staff members to administer the program. It has provided supported camps to eligible schools and school holiday camps to individual eligible students across Victoria. Providers (often ACA members) have provided lasting memories and experiences for many participants that may have not experienced a camp or holiday program before participating in this initiative.

**Financial sustainability** – I want to thank Angela Chandler (Treasurer) and the finance sub-committee who have continued to work through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living, ensuring ACA is well positioned financially to continue to support Members and the wider community.

**People Outdoors** – People Outdoors continue to deliver four-day, weekend and overnight camps. This year People Outdoors also held various successful Come & Try Days boosting the participants and interest in the camps. Well done to the staff and volunteers for continuing this amazing work and continuing to grow "Adventure for All" experiences.

**Sector Engagement** - ACA has strong and truly collaborative partnerships with many state peak bodies and is working alongside other sector bodies including the Christian Venues Association and Outdoor Council of Australia. The ACA has also expanded our relationships with Federal and State governments by joining Outdoor Advisory Committees and other regular governmental meetings.

Thank you to Rod Thomson (ACA CEO) for his outstanding leadership, strong advocacy and continued engagement with members during his last 12 months with ACA. Also, I would like to thank my fellow ACA Board Members for their contributions and time over the last 12 months and the team at ACA and People Outdoors for continuing their work for the Australian Camps Association.

Finally; I would like to say a huge thank you to all of our ACA Members for your continued support and involvement in helping advance the sector and our great community.

# CEO'S REPORT

It has been a pleasure as CEO to work with the wonderful team at the Australian Camps Association and People Outdoors throughout 2021/22; and I thank them all for their dedicated efforts and valued contributions to support Members, stakeholders and program participants.

Throughout the pandemic and other challenges; the ACA has remained a strong voice and platform, strengthening the Camps and Led Outdoor Activity sector across Australia. The ACA team has been dedicated toward progressing the ACA Strategic Plan, promoting “*More People Outdoors More Often*”. This was evident and clearly expressed in the success working with government in ensuring the return to school camps in each state and territory during this time. We thank all involved for their contributions over the past year to help achieve these results for the sector.

It is important to note the challenges that the ACA and Members faced during this time. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to disrupt business within the sector. We advocated to National, State and Territory leaders to consider the physical and mental health benefits of Camps and Led Outdoor Activities and received commitment and raised awareness of the sector. Following I highlight some of the various different programs and funding the ACA helped to secure for Members this year;

In New South Wales, **The Music and Overnight Camp Provider Support program** invested \$14 million to support music and camp providers that were impacted by COVID-safety measures in NSW schools.



This support came as a direct result of the combined advocacy efforts of the Australian Camps Association, Christian Venues Association and Outdoors NSW and ACT working with the NSW Government.

In Victoria, the Victorian Department of Education and Training invested \$84.3 million in the **Positive Start in 2022** initiative to get an additional 81,200 Victorian students on camp. The program reflects an ongoing commitment by the state government to student’s mental health and wellbeing. The ACA is extremely pleased with the significant role secured for this program and the positive ongoing relationship established with the Victorian Government. The program continues into 2023 and is a welcomed initiative that benefits many. The ACA will continue to promote how to best support student’s mental health across Australia.

In Western Australia, the \$3 million **assistance package for school camp providers** directly impacted by schools postponing or cancelling camps due to the additional health measures in place showed a commitment from the WA Government towards the sector. This was further supported through the establishment of the Outdoor Education Advisory Group in Western Australia with the ACA invited to sit on the Advisory Group ongoing.

# GEO'S REPORT

The work of the ACA would not be possible without the great people who work here and I want to highlight the immeasurable efforts of the ACA staff. The ACA team grew to 15 throughout the year with the addition of a COVID Manager, Maria Dunne, and the Positive Start in 2022 team.

The **People Outdoors** team of Melissa Puccio, Sandra Murphy, Simon Milligan, Olivia Digiglio and Athena Warren worked tirelessly and were well supported by the team of Disability Support Workers, Program Leaders, placement students and volunteers to deliver this incredible program. Throughout Covid-19 and despite numerous disruptions, the People Outdoors team, was committed and successful in conducting regular camps occurring throughout the year. This was significantly beneficial for participants and families as they had the chance to receive respite services, try new things, meet like-minded people, social connectedness and build their strength, flexibility and endurance. Well done to all involved.

Stephen Hamilton, our Memberships Manager, continued to travel around the country and engage with and support Members when travel restrictions permitted. Despite the circumstances, Steve was amazingly able to attend over 80 Member sites across the country in approximately six months. The ACA welcomes the invitation to attend Members' sites and this time helps the ACA understand how to best support ACA Members.

The team in the office; comprised Jess Hough, Louise Johnston, Gosia Barcikowska and Jay Henderson. All have been wonderful bastions and at the heart of the ACA for many years and their energy, efforts and contributions throughout the year led to many great achievements and were greatly appreciated.

During this year in review, the ACA has strengthened its financial sustainability and adopted a 'digital first' approach with advancements in access, storage and functionality of systems and data. Thank you also to Angela Chandler (Treasurer) and Daniel Whykes through the finance sub-committee who have dedicated themselves to ensure that the ACA is financially sound and well positioned into the future. It is truly, a wonderful team at the ACA and it has been an honour to work with them and represent the Australian Camps Association this year.

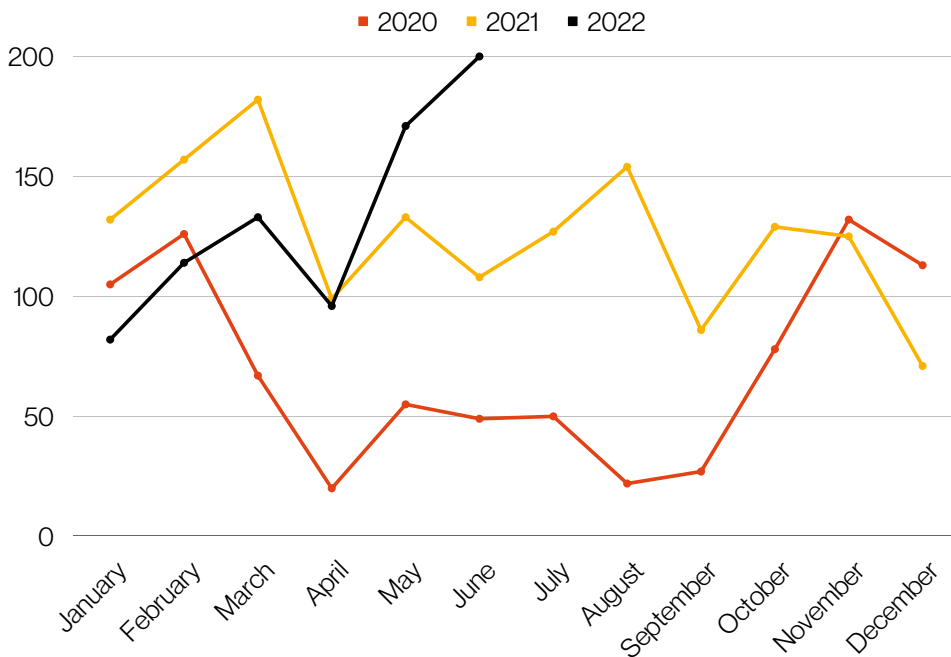
Finally, I wish to personally thank the ACA Board for their support and valued contribution over the time. In particular; I wish to thank the ACA President, Pam Kappelides, for her valued leadership and support. It has been a pleasure to work with Pam and the ACA is in a strong progressive position due to her tireless energy and efforts.

Despite the challenges of COVID, the future for the ACA as the national peak body looks robust and the enhancements developed this year and the team will assist the organisation progress forward positively into the future.

# BOOKING Enquiries

This chart shows a steady increase in enquiries through the ACA website after COVID restrictions and lockdowns in the previous two years.

Enquiries are trending on the increase with school holiday periods still reflecting a dip in enquiries during these periods (see April and September).



**557**

Enquiries via our Booking Enquiry Service for 2021/22

**244**

School enquiries via our Booking Enquiry Service for 2021/22

**313**

Community Enquiries via our Booking Enquiry Service for 2021/22

*“The Free Booking Service provided by ACA is by far the best booking service that we have used. That in itself provides great value for the annual membership fee. It provides more leads than any magazine advertising we have tried giving us more “bang for our buck”! Through the ACA Booking Service we have acquired many new group bookings, some of which have turned into regular bookings” - Grant Laidlaw, Log Cabin Camp*



# Advocacy

## FROM JULY 2021 - JUNE 2022



7

### Media Engagements

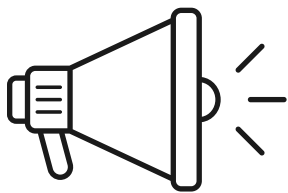
There were seven news stories involving ACA.\* This included a radio interview with our CEO on the NSW camps grant program The Music and Overnight Camp Provider Support program and an article by The West Australian on the suspension of camps in WA.



50

### Government Meetings

Conducted 50 meetings with state and territory departments to address concerns of ACA Members directly with Ministers and Department Heads.



58

### Letters to Government

58 Letters sent to Ministers, Education Leaders in NSW, ACT, QLD, WA, SA and VIC. These letters helped us to initiate meetings and address concerns for the sector.



38

### ACA Bulletin Updates

Featured the latest news on back to school plans and advocacy for ACA Members.

\*Excludes Positive Start in 2022\*

# Positive Start IN 2022

Positive Start in 2022 is a Victorian Government initiative to re-engage primary and secondary-aged students from government and low-fee non-government schools whose learning has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been made available through schools directly, and holiday programs for eligible students. The aim of the program is to get 81,200 students to experience camps and led outdoor programs.

Early March 2022, marked the first week of the Victorian Government's Positive Start Initiative in which the ACA was selected by the Victorian Government to administer the Positive Start Camp program and support our providers through the process.

Positive Start is providing \$84.3 million through the initiative for the delivery of free camps and experiences during 2022 targeting those students who wouldn't normally have the chance to attend. It is a monumental achievement having the program launch and we look forward to giving updates over the coming months. This initiative provides the ACA with the opportunity to continue to build awareness of the sector and the benefits of camp for individuals across the country.



**81,200  
STUDENTS**

**\$84.3  
MILLION  
INVESTED**

**THROUGH THE  
POSITIVE START  
IN 2022  
INITIATIVE**



## Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP  
Premier



Sunday, 5 December 2021

### SETTING VICTORIAN KIDS UP FOR THE BEST START TO 2022

The Andrews Labor Government will help Victorian kids enjoy the best camps, sporting programs and cultural experiences Victoria has to offer, re-engaging them in the extracurricular activities they loved before the pandemic.

Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Education James Merlino today announced the \$112.9 million *Positive Start in 2022* initiative, which will help make up for the disruption the global pandemic has caused for primary and secondary school students, and give Victorian kids the best possible start to 2022.

Victorians did an incredible job of looking after each other during the pandemic, staying home to slow the spread of coronavirus. But that also meant schools had to cancel sports, camps and all of the other extra activities kids love.

*Positive Start in 2022* will help get students back out and about around the state, and support their physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

An investment of \$84.3 million will deliver additional camps to benefit 81,200 students during school holidays and 2022 school terms – making sure students don't miss out on vital outdoor education and socialising.

The program will focus on students from government and low-fee non-government schools who have been most affected by COVID-19 school closures – as well as students and schools that might otherwise be unable to participate in an outdoor education or camp program.

A further \$12.4 million will provide access to a broad range of arts, sporting and cultural experiences for students at every government and low-fee non-government school in Victoria.

From Sovereign Hill to the NGV, Melbourne Zoo and sporting workshops with the AFL, the program will provide more than 325,000 fully subsidised places for students across the various programs – boosting kids' motivation and helping them rebuild their connections with friends, teachers and communities.

An investment of \$16.3 million will deliver more than 690,000 swimming and water safety lessons for students at government and Catholic primary schools – making sure students aren't left behind without the vital skills they need to stay safe around water.

This funding will supplement the \$55.2 million in support the Labor Government has already provided for school swimming from 2022-24, providing extra lessons to make sure students can catch up on the practical skills they may have missed during the pandemic.

#### Quote attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

*"Victorian students and school communities did an amazing job helping our state slow the spread of coronavirus – and now we're giving back, making sure 2022 is full of adventure and fun for every child across the state."*

#### Quote attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

*"We know the pandemic has been challenging for many kids, missing out on the things that make our Education State so great – and this program makes up for lost time with exciting experiences for everyone."*

**Media contact:** Jamila Fontana 0409 741 279 | [jamila.fontana@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:jamila.fontana@minstaff.vic.gov.au)

# PEOPLE OUTDOORS



Since 1989, People Outdoors has provided outdoor experiences for people living with disability. This year we have provided 24 programs in ACA Member accredited Camp and Activity Providers. People Outdoors are the experts in providing outdoor experiences for people living with a disability.

People Outdoors is a registered NDIS service provider and accredited with the Quality Tourism Framework. We offer overnight programs through to four day camps, providing campers with opportunities to experience the outdoors, make friends and develop new skills. People Outdoors camps are hallmarked by a high level of communication with parents/guardians and campers, including a personal pre-camp intake meeting and post program evaluation. Campers are joined by Disability Support Workers and Volunteers to provide ongoing support to campers.

An example of a typical camp would be a Weekend Adventure located in areas such as Anglesea, Bacchus Marsh and Phillip Island where day activities could include Dancing, Arts and Crafts, Low Ropes and Giant Swings.

This year we were excited to have more experiences by attending in-person events such as The Melbourne Disability Expo, Yarrabah School Expo, Federation University Volunteer Expo and Source Kids Expo. Attending these events provided great access to various other organisations working within the Disability sector, meeting potential campers and families as well as volunteers. People Outdoors looks forward to assisting families to link into other community activities and networks.

At the heart of People Outdoors is our values. We remain committed to creating “Adventure for All”. We achieve this through programs designed to meet each participant’s goals, such as increasing social interactions, experiencing and learning from outdoor adventure activities and more.

We look forward to increasing the opportunities for a wide range of ages to be involved with camps and led outdoor activities for next year!

# GREAT GETAWAYS

Like virtually every activity and program in Victoria in 2021, it has been a challenging 12 months for the Great Getaway older adults' programs, with the postponement of camp programs due to COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

Whilst lockdowns persisted, the opportunity was taken to conduct a Great Getaways activities survey to ascertain previous and possible interests in camp activities, locations, duration and timing, which culminated with 41 responses that has provided worthwhile data for future program planning. One of the enduring challenges has been with the pricing practice of Great Getaways, where initial grant funding has suppressed the true cost of the programs. It was always going to be a challenge to increase costs by a third, with an established clientele, already COVID cautious.

The UC Norval-Grampians 4-day program (the longest ever) took place in December 2021 with twenty-three participants in total enjoying a mixture of camp-based and regional tours, especially the spectacular bushwalking, high ropes and abseiling.

The YMCA Lake Dewar weekend camp took place with 22 participants, 18 of whom had been to the Norval camp. Many activities were new to Great Getaways, such as Kick Biking, Geocaching and the Dual Zip Line, and the whole experience was highly rated by participants and worthy of repeating.



The marketing collateral of the ACA Great Getaways was greatly enhanced through the involvement of Carol O'Halloran, presenter of 'Over 50 So What!'; a popular community television program, who attended the YMCA Lake Dewar camp with a cameraman to capture a lot of footage of a Great Getaway camp in full swing. Campers embraced the opportunity to be filmed, including vox pops spruiking the value of the programs. Three segments have been screened, each approximately 10 minutes, with a further two planned, and these will serve as tremendous marketing value for future programs.

In May 2022, a change of pace away from largely adventure activities to a more nature-based weekend retreat at Kinglake Forest Adventures Camp was well received. An indigenous session around the campfire on the first afternoon really engaged participants and led nicely into bush meditation sessions, and bushwalks.

Of the three recent camps, the youngest participant was 58, the oldest 84, and the average 71 years, and five were first-time participants.

Jay Henderson  
Manager, Great Getaways

# TREASURER'S REPORT

**I have pleasure in presenting the audited General Purpose Financial Accounts for the Australian Camps Association (ACA) and controlled entity, ACA Camp Operations Pty Ltd, for the year ended 30th June 2022. This year the ACA reports a surplus of \$244,708, a positive outcome given the significant financial and operational uncertainties associated with COVID that continued to cloud the start of the financial year.**



It has been a pleasure to work alongside CEO Rodney Thomson in his first year as CEO, as well as Louise and team, as they worked to deliver on the ACA's Strategic Plan.

The ACA started the financial year in a relatively solid equity position, and with a close to neutral budget projection. With the Victorian Government announcement of the Positive Start Program in 2022, the ACA successfully bid to administer some elements of this program in relation to residential and holiday camps, and established a subsidiary company, ACA Camp Operations Pty Ltd, to independently track associated 'budget neutral' revenue and expenditure. The ACA's budget surplus for this financial year is almost entirely the result of a \$250K program management fee for their work in administering the Positive Start funding.

The People Outdoors (PO) team continued to adapt and respond to the evolving business environment as we emerged from COVID. Revenue from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funded camps hosted through PO was \$843K, only just under forecast. PO programs show promise of further growth for 2022-23 and we are in a position where there is good demand for services. We are still seeing positive profit margins on these programs, although note this margin has dropped slightly as the costs of running these programs continue to increase.

We received \$121K in grant funding (Community Hub Grant, Together More Active Project, and Working for Victoria Grant) for which the majority of funds have been spent this financial year. We have met our grant reporting obligations in relation to this funding. We also received \$20K in Business Support Funding for COVID -19.

Membership revenue grew by 30% to \$196,000; this was significantly higher than budget, although not quite back at 2019-20 levels, an ongoing reflection of impact of reduced camp operations at the start of the financial year, but also of strong recovery in the sector.

Revenue from Preferred Suppliers also rose to \$140,000 mirroring interrupted member operations but demonstrating strong growth in the last quarter of the financial year. A strong and consistent membership base will help us remain a viable organisation and again thank you to Membership Manager Steve Hamilton for his ongoing work in this area.

# TREASURER'S REPORT

Our current Board position is to maintain a reserves position equivalent to 6 months of payroll and associated expenses. As of 30 June 2022, our Balance Sheet showed a positive consolidated Members Equity position of \$561,980 and I am comfortable the ACA currently has sufficient cash reserves to meet all recognised financial liabilities and to fulfil this requirement.

We are in a strong financial position going forward to 2022-23 with sound reserves, a solid membership base, a viable People Outdoors business case, and the ongoing administration of the Positive Start program in Victoria, making us well placed to work towards many of the ACA's strategic objectives. I wish the new ACA Treasurer all the best in their role, and have thoroughly enjoyed my 6 years working with the ACA CEO, team and Board, particularly Daniel Whykes on the Finance Sub Committee, towards the betterment of the sector.

I move that members receive and note the financial statements of the Australian Camps Association for the year ended 30th June 2022.

Angela Chandler

Treasurer

*A full set of the audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2022 accompany this annual report.*





# The ACA BOARD

The Australian Camps Association has a voluntary Board of Directors made up of both elected and appointed members. Our Board has representatives from Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory. It includes representatives from independent commercial and NFP camp operators, activity providers, government and academia.



**PAM KAPPELIDES**  
**PRESIDENT**  
**(VIC)**



**ANGELA CHANDLER**  
**TREASURER**  
**(VIC)**



**CAMPBELL MESSAGE**  
**(VIC)**



**GRAHAME SHARPE**  
**(WA)**



**GEMIMA WEILER**  
**(VIC)**



**SHAWN WILKEY**  
**(ACT)**



**DANIEL WHYKES**  
**(VIC)**



**GENEVIEVE COLAGIURI**  
**(NSW)**



**ROB CUMMINS**  
**(VIC)**



**LUKE JANSONS**  
**(SA)**



**HELEN WILLIAMS**  
**(VIC)**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## OUR PARTNERS



Food Services



Insurance & Finance



Bunk Beds



Gas Services



Outdoor Equipment

## OUR PREFERRED SUPPLIERS



Waste Management



Renewable Energy Solutions



First Aid & Training Supplies



Business Coaching



[rhsports.com.au](http://rhsports.com.au)

Sporting Goods & Apparel

## THE WORK OF THE ACA IS SUPPORTED BY

The Australian Camps Association gratefully acknowledges funding support from the Victorian State Government.



AUSTRALIAN CAMPS ASSOCIATION

# GUIDE TO Camps

& OUTDOOR  
ACTIVITY PROVIDERS



AUSTRALIAN  
CAMPS ASSOCIATION®  
More people outdoors more often

*experience  
new  
adventures*

**MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES.**

**BRILLIANT LOCATIONS...**

**2022**

FREE BOOKING SERVICE | Phone 03 9863 6822 | [www.auscamps.asn.au](http://www.auscamps.asn.au)



AUSTRALIAN  
**CAMPS ASSOCIATION**<sup>®</sup>

More people outdoors more often

*The national peak body for camps and associated providers*

Corporate One  
84 Hotham St, Preston VIC 3072

[www.auscamps.asn.au](http://www.auscamps.asn.au)  
[info@auscamps.asn.au](mailto:info@auscamps.asn.au)  
03 9863 6822