

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

MISSINGSCHOOL INCORPORATED

INTRODUCTION

Across Australia, thousands of children with serious medical conditions are at home or in hospital, missing school. MissingSchool is dedicated to bridging the educational and social gaps experienced by these kids and, often, their siblings by advocating for continuing connection to their regular school.

As the first organisation in Australia with a primary focus on keeping seriously sick kids connected to their schools, MissingSchool:

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- *supports families with research, resources, strategies and helpful connections*
 - *raises awareness on the issue to inform the efforts of governments, educators, and health professionals*
 - *researches on embedding systems using best practice models and enabling technology*
 - *raises funds to achieve these objectives*
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MissingSchool takes the view that school is a kid's community. Connection to their community can alleviate the stress and anxiety of illness, promote resilience and optimism, and support seriously sick kids to remain positively engaged in learning and life. This important connection reminds seriously sick kids that there is more to who they are than being sick.

MissingSchool recognises non-negligible school absence for kids relating to, for example: Arthritis, Asthma, Blood Disorders, Brain Injury, Burns, Cancer, Crohn's Disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Diabetes, Eating Disorders, Epilepsy, Heart/Liver/Kidney Disease, Injury and Transplants. We know there other groups and so MissingSchool will continue to put effort into identifying the range of medical circumstances that lead to significant school absence.



Incorporated in the ACT, MissingSchool is a volunteer-led registered charity, and we are endorsed by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission as a Deductible Gift Recipient.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

ADVOCACY, RESOURCES, STRATEGIES AND HELPFUL CONNECTIONS

CREATING A PLACE FOR PERSONAL STORY

We are committed to telling the stories of sick kids and their families. MissingSchool upholds this commitment in both formal and informal discussions in our work. Across the period of this report, MissingSchool:

- Presented to staff of the Australian Capital Territory Education and Training Directorate (ACT-EDT) on the issues and challenges of missing school from the perspective of a kid diagnosed with cancer.
- Represented the family perspective on a panel discussion to launch the Victoria Institute report - Young Australians, Illness and Education (authored by Julie White and Karen Rosauer).

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

We continue to maintain the MissingSchool website as a vehicle for communicating our mission, objectives, information and resources.

General subscribers increased from 96 to 137 across the year, without a campaign. Subscribers are people who visit the MissingSchool website and elect to receive information and updates from us by email.

We support our advocacy and outreach efforts by maintaining a Facebook presence. At the end of the reporting period, MissingSchool's Facebook page had 130 likes.

MissingSchool produced one major content piece for families which ran on our website blog. The piece offered cautions, and a sample of questions for parents/carers to ask their kids' schools. It covered:

- What The School Is Required To Do For Your kid (According To The Law);
- What The School Is Not Required To Do For Your kid (According To The Law);
- What You Can Do To Help Your Kid And The School;



- What To Do If The School Refuses To Make What You Think Are “Reasonable Adjustments”;
- How To Make A Complaint; and
- What To Do If All That Doesn’t Work.

MissingSchool also sent out a subscriber broadcast that was opened by 51% of those who received it.

MONKEY IN MY CHAIR EVALUATION

MissingSchool's involvement in the Monkey-in-My-Chair project began in 2013 and grew from one student's desire to make a difference in the lives of all students dealing with significant illness.

We introduced the “Monkey” project to the ACT-ETD and collaborated to develop processes to support implementation in a select number of ACT primary schools. Interesting data emerged under the themes of communication, inclusivity, and benefits and was reported on the MissingSchool website. In the reporting period, MissingSchool fulfilled our plan of transitioning the Monkey In My Chair project to the ACT-ETD. The ACT-ETD continues to implement the program in ACT schools.

LISTEN HERE!

MissingSchool devised a “vignettes” project in early 2014, called Listen Here!. Listen Here! captured the feeling and thinking words (or pictures) that sick kids associate with missing school. The contribution from kids (via the collaborating organisations noted below) were collected, pooled, randomly collated and presented in a video storyboard with an accompanying soundtrack.

In this reporting year, the kids' contributions were designed into colourful posters for display on the premises of the collaborating organisations. MissingSchool printed 20 copies of the Listen Here! poster, and distributed 16 of these to participating organisations.

By request, MissingSchool provided the Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide with five additional copies of the Listen Here! posters for display in that hospital.

Almost 100 kids participated in Listen Here! with the support of organisations through which they receive care. MissingSchool thanks:

- Hospital Education Services, South Australia
- Mater Hospital Special School, Queensland
- Paediatrics at the Canberra Hospital, Australian Capital Territory
- Ronald McDonald House Charities (NSW, SA and WA)
- Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute, Victoria



- School of Special Education Needs, Western Australia
- The Children's Hospital School, Westmead, New South Wales

We hope the thoughts and feelings of the kids will increase awareness of the issue with families, visitors to the hospital, hospital medical and general staff, and direct people MissingSchool's efforts in addressing the issue.

ETHICS

MissingSchool is committed to ethical approaches in giving seriously sick kids a voice in what matters most to them in their schooling. In practice this meant that MissingSchool published the ListenHere! project on our website, but did not use it to fundraise. We created a link for it between Facebook and our website but will not load the ListenHere! video to YouTube.

RAISING AWARENESS

INFORMING GOVERNMENTS, EDUCATORS, AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

REPRESENTATION ON THE DISABILITY EDUCATION REFERENCE GROUP

Since March 2015, MissingSchool has held a place on the ACT Disability Education Reference Group (DERG). We attended one quarterly meeting in the reporting period.

The Disability Education Reference Group (DERG) is a community consultative forum convened by the Director-General of the ACT Education and Training Directorate. The reference group provides an opportunity for the community to have an important role in formulating advice to the Directorate on the education of students with a disability in ACT public schools.

As a member of the DERG, MissingSchool participates in providing information and strategic advice to the Director-General of Education and Training Directorate in reference to the education of students who experience school absence because of significant illness or injury. We are involved in projects to support the development and the implementation of the Education and Training Directorate's Disability Education Strategic Plan.

KEEPING SERIOUSLY SICK KIDS CONNECTED EVENT (FORUM)

The "Keeping Seriously Sick Kids Connected Event" was not held in the reporting period, as planned. The Event was programmed to follow the release of the St George reports, which were delayed until the last quarter of 2015.



MissingSchool prepared and presented an Event framework and rationale to Bendigo Bank, whose donation is funding the Event, and we provided a status update. Bendigo Bank approved the framework and agreed to funds for the Event being held in trust by MissingSchool until the Event can be held.

FORMAL SUBMISSIONS

MissingSchool made two formal submissions during this reporting period:

- ACT Enquiry into Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours: Submitted on 31 July 2015.
- NSW Enquiry into Home Schooling: Submitted by email on 7 August 2014, noting exclusion of home-schooled students from hospital education programs. On 13 July 2015 we received a response to the enquiry advising that the Department's Disability, Learning and Support area "will lead a review to reaffirm procedures in department hospital schools to ensure that all compulsory school aged in-patient students have access to hospital school programs".

ORGANISATIONAL LINKAGES

MissingSchool maintained linkages or had interactions with a number of organisations including:

- ACT Parents and Citizens Council, Australian Capital Territory
- Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
- Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Consultative Body, Australian Capital Territory
- Behavioural Sciences Unit, Sydney Children's Hospital
- Children's Healthcare Australasia
- Cure Starts Now
- H.E.L.P. Alliance
- Home Parenting Australia
- Hospital Education Services, South Australia
- Kids' Cancer Centre Parent Advisory Council (Sydney Children's Hospital)
- Mater Hospital Special School, Queensland
- No Matter What
- Paediatrics at the Canberra Hospital, Australian Capital Territory



- Rare Voices
- Ronald McDonald House Charities
- Royal Children's Hospital Brisbane
- Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute, Victoria
- School of Special Education Needs, Western Australia
- Siblings Australia
- Victoria Institute, Melbourne
- Westmead Children's Hospital School, New South Wales

We continue to be contacted by parents, and health and education practitioners who are keen to tell their stories and who want to fill the gap in information and advice on how to keep kids in their care connected to their schools.

RESEARCHING

BEST PRACTICE MODELS AND ENABLING TECHNOLOGY

ST GEORGE FUNDED RESEARCH WITH ARACY

MissingSchool continued to work with ARACY to finalise the St George Research on school connection for seriously sick kids. Progress across the period included:

- developing and editing the three reports (metrics, models and legislation) and updating and checking data for publication,
- finalising unifying definitions,
- preparing acknowledgments and agreeing on branding,
- arranging peer review by Tony Barnett from Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute, Jenny Lavoipierre and Megan Jackson, and
- preparing to launch the three reports at a media event by appointing Maggie Lanham PR, choosing a date, preparing an invitation list, deciding venue and sponsorship, and using personal stories.

WORKING WITH RESEARCHERS

MissingSchool has formed excellent relationships with researchers working in the area of education connection for seriously sick kids. Across the year we worked with



researchers at the University of Canberra, Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute, and the Victoria Institute, Victoria University.

RAISING FUNDS

ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES SUSTAINABLY AND BY MOBILISING PUBLIC SUPPORT

GRANTS AND DONATIONS

MissingSchool received donations of \$744.00 during the year despite not actively seeking those.

100 COMMUNITY HEROES GRANT

In July, 2013, the Calwell, Curtin, Jerrabomberra, and Wanniasa Community Bank® branches (Bendigo Bank) advised that Missing School was successfully nominated to receive a 100 Community Heroes Grant. The grant, worth \$1000, is targeted to running a "Keeping Seriously Sick Kids Connected Event" in the ACT to raise awareness of the issue. We continue to hold this grant money in trust until the Event can be held.

ST GEORGE FOUNDATION

In August, 2013, the Governors of St George Bank Foundation announced the approval of a grant of \$20,000 to MissingSchool and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY). The grant is funding research on metrics, models and legislation in the context of non-negligible school absence for seriously sick kids. We worked with ARACY across the year to finalise and launch this research.

FUNDING STRATEGY

We will review MissingSchool's Funding strategy in 2016 and align it with plans for MissingSchool's future work.

PEOPLE

We continue to be staffed on a fully volunteer basis. For the 2015 year, volunteer staffing contributions to MissingSchool approximated .75 of a full time equivalent.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

In 2015, MissingSchool operated with a team of four part-time volunteers. Our management committee maintained a focus on completing ongoing activities, in particular the St George research with ARACY.



Our management committee draws an understanding of MissingSchool's objectives from personal experience, and backs that up with evidence from relevant research.

MEGAN GILMOUR – CHAIR



GINA MEYERS – SECRETARY



CATHY NELL – PUBLIC OFFICER



HUGH DIXON – TREASURER



Our imagined future is that today's "radical notion" of continuous school connection for seriously sick kids is something that will someday be taken for granted. A time when all kids with serious health conditions receive full support from their schools as a matter of course and MissingSchool is a thing of the past.

MEMBERSHIP

MissingSchool retains six formally enrolled members. Increasing our membership was not a strategic priority in the 2015 year as all available time was focussed on completing ongoing activities. MissingSchool's membership continues to be open to parents and carers of seriously sick kids and anyone else interested in achieving our objective of sustained school connection for seriously sick kids and their school-aged siblings.

OPERATIONS

STATUTORY REPORTING

MissingSchool maintained our statutory reporting obligations with the Office of Regulatory Services in the ACT, and the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

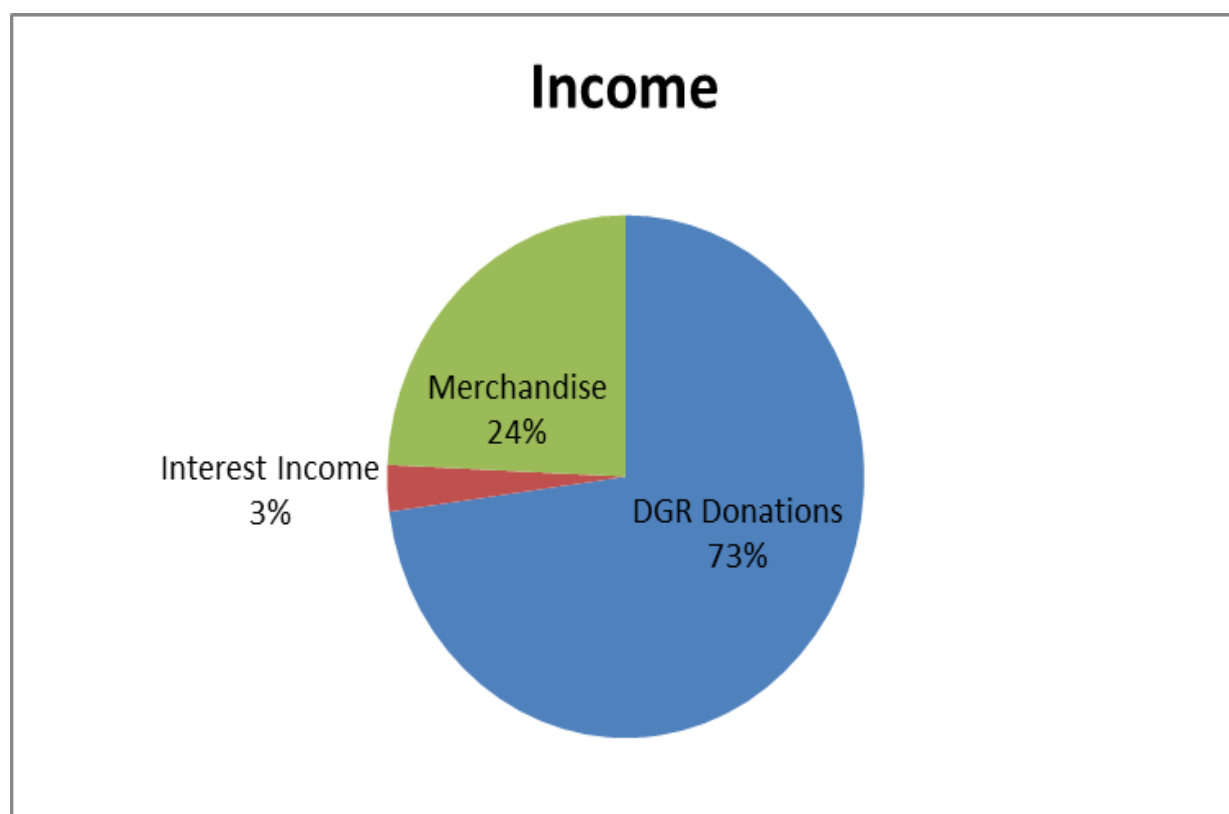
In October 2014, prior to developing MissingSchool's new strategy, we decided to focus our modest resources on completing outstanding commitments. These commitments included the St George reports with ARACY, and other activities that were endorsed in the 2013/14 strategy and scheduled for completion in late 2015. We will reassess MissingSchool's direction and staffing in early 2016.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

At the end of June 2015, MissingSchool held assets totalling \$14,292.14.

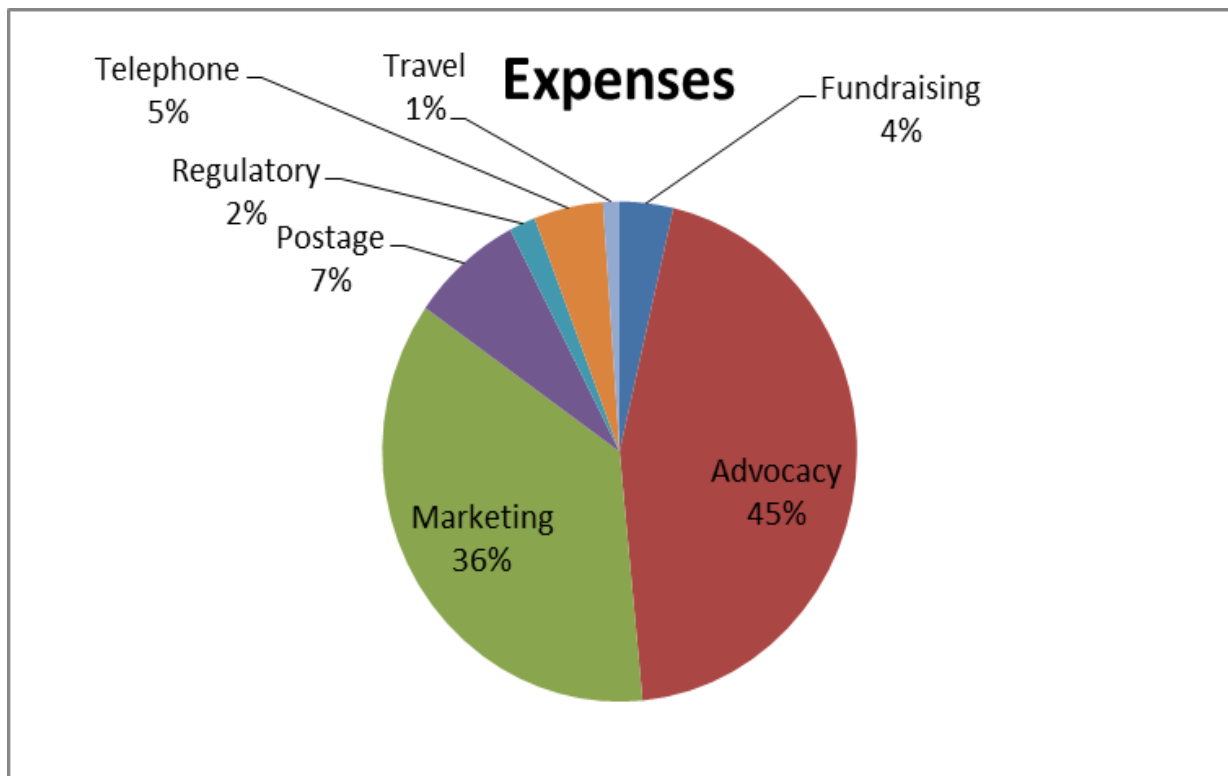
INCOME

Total income for the year amounted to \$1,021.16, comprising tax deductible donations of \$744.00, and bank interest of \$29.26. Merchandise income of \$247.90 was received, but this was equal to the cost of providing the products (additional ListenHere! Posters purchased by Women's and Children's Hospital in Adelaide).



EXPENDITURE

MissingSchool's expenses for the year totalled \$2,121.39. The largest component of expenditure was for advocacy (45%), primarily for work on the Listen Here! project. Marketing costs represented just over 36% of expenditure (and were split between hosting our website, costs associated with collecting and communicating with subscribers, Facebook advertising to boost outreach and purchase of an audio track for promoting ListenHere!). Postage costs accounted for 7% of expenditure, and telephone costs for implementing Monkey in My Chair sat at around 5%. Other operating costs were negligible.



BALANCE SHEET 2015

MissingSchool: Balance Sheet - As of 30/06/2015	
As of 30/06/2015 (in Australian Dollars) (Cash Basis)	
Account	30/06/2015 Balance
ASSETS	
Cash and Bank Accounts	
Society Cheque Account	14,292.14
TOTAL Cash and Bank Accounts	14,292.14
TOTAL ASSETS	14,292.14
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
LIABILITIES	
Other Liabilities	
Tax Control	-24.59
MC Contribution	0.00
TOTAL Other Liabilities	-24.59
TOTAL LIABILITIES	-24.59
EQUITY	14,316.73
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	14,292.14

PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT 2015

MissingSchool: Profit & Loss Statement - Last year	
1/07/2014 through 30/06/2015 (in Australian Dollars) (Cash Basis)	
Category Description	1/07/2014- 30/06/2015
INCOME	
Charitable Income	
DGR Donations	744.00
Merchandise	247.90
TOTAL Charitable Income	991.90
Interest Income	29.26
TOTAL INCOME	1,021.16
EXPENSES	
Operating Exp.	
Fundraising	
Other Operating Exp.:Fundraising	77.27
TOTAL Fundraising	77.27
Initiatives	
Advocacy	950.68
TOTAL Initiatives	950.68
Marketing	769.72
Postage	161.91
Regulatory Fees	38.00
Telephone	100.00
Travel	23.81
TOTAL Operating Exp.	2,121.39
TOTAL EXPENSES	2,121.39
OVERALL TOTAL	-1,100.23

