

# THE FLAME NEWSLETTER ISSUE 8



## Vice President Report

Dear Torch Runners,

Over the past six months, the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) Victoria has experienced remarkable success. From bustling streets to glamorous events, we've celebrated achievements such as breaking record fundraising and participation on International Day of People with Disability and participating in an inaugural swimming fundraiser.

As Vice President of LETR, I've been deeply touched by the dedication of our Torch Run and Special Olympics communities. The support from Victoria Police members has been outstanding, fuelling the success of LETR activities. We're immensely grateful and look forward to continued collaboration, especially as we gear up for the Victoria State Games in July.

Our collective efforts have earned international recognition. At the LETR International conference in Chicago, Torch Run Victoria received the prestigious Sapphire Award for raising over \$250,000 for Special Olympics, the highest in Australia. We were also named "Champions of Inclusion" in Sydney. These accolades inspire us to do more.

The generosity of Victoria Police employees, supporting Special Olympics and the Torch Run, exemplifies their commitment to inclusion and development through sports. Every dollar donated through workplace giving directly benefits Special Olympics athletes.

We're excited to welcome Assistant Commissioner Lauren Callaway as an ambassador, enriching our endeavours. We're also introducing new initiatives this year, including international and regional scholarships for athletes and a Will/Bereavement bequest option on our website.

As Disability Liaison Officer Portfolios launch within Victoria Police, LETR will assist in the training of liaison officers to support inclusion and engagement.

Recent events like "SPLASH" corporate swim challenge and upcoming initiatives like the inaugural LETR Victoria Polar Plunge in August demonstrate our continued commitment to fundraising and inclusion.

Thank you for being part of the LETR family. Together, we'll continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of Special Olympics athletes and communities across Victoria.

Warm regards,



**Kate Lockyer**

**LETR (Torchrn)  
Vice President**

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# International Day of People with Disability



The 2023 International Day of People with Disability marked a significant milestone for LETR Victoria. Our team engaged in various activities, starting with a Torch Run through Melbourne's streets, followed by an eventful gathering at the Academy in Glen Waverley and a visit to the Spencer St headquarters of the Public Order Response Team (PORT).

Chief Commissioner Shane Patton, alongside athletes, LETR members, and Special Olympics Australia CEO Pierre Comis, led the run through the city, culminating at Southbank for the annual Victorian Disability Sport and Recreation Festival.

The morning reached new heights when the Chief Commissioner presented SOA with a fundraising cheque totalling a record-breaking \$272,350.

The Academy Torch Run surpassed all previous records, hosting the largest Torch Run in Victoria's history. Over 200 police recruits participated, immersing themselves in the LETR spirit as athletes led the charge around the academy's athletics track.

Assistant Commissioner Tim Hansen extended a warm welcome to the athletes, while Torch Run Ambassador Acting Deputy Commissioner Lauren Callaway ignited the Flame of Hope. The day featured 12 Chief Challenges, including a visit to PORT, offering athletes a glimpse into the command centre and friendly competitions like a push-up challenge.

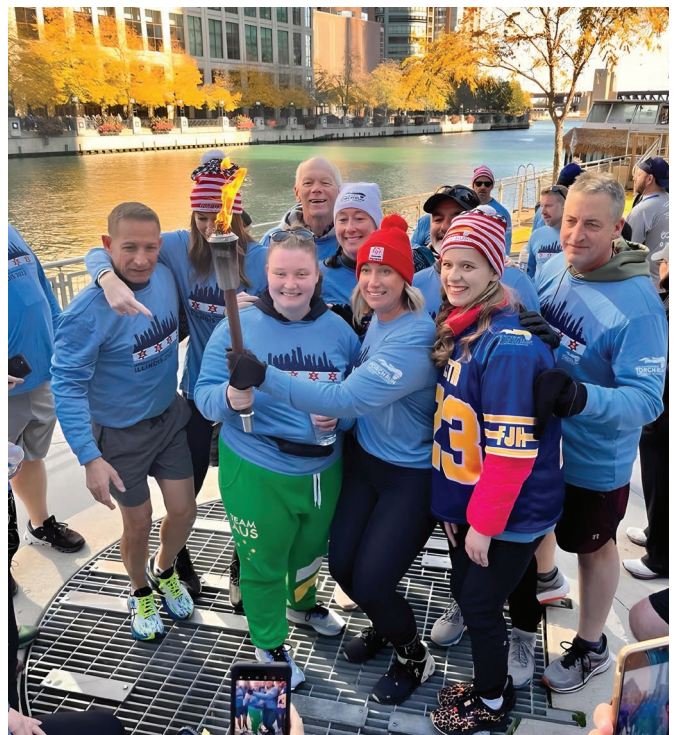




# LETR International Conference

In October last year, a record 13 LETR Australia members gathered in Chicago for the 11th annual Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics International Conference. Hosted by LETR Illinois, the conference recognized LETR Victoria for its outstanding fundraising efforts, with President Matt Volk expressing motivation to continue the momentum.

The conference also celebrated LETR's global impact, surpassing \$1 billion in fundraising since 1981. Aussies braved freezing temperatures for a Torch Run around Chicago's harbor and toured the Michigan Unified Sports and Inclusion Centre. The event bid farewell to Victoria's athlete representative Chelsea and Chair of the LETR IEC, former NSW detective Scott Whyte, recognizing their contributions.



# Awards

LETR's dedication received national and local recognition. LETR Oceania (Australia/New Zealand) - LETR's national umbrella body - received the "Champions of Inclusion" award at the Special Olympics Australia Gala, with LETR Victoria's Nicole Beale representing with pride.

While we do what we do for our fabulous athletes, it was a thrill and incredibly moving to be recognised and acknowledged for that work especially on the national stage.

At the state level, Kate Lockyer and Rachael Kelly were honoured by the Office of Public Advocate for their exceptional service to athletes with intellectual disabilities. Kate received the Outstanding Service Excellence to People with a Disability Award, while Rachael received a commendation for her dedication and mentoring.



# Club Events

LETR remained active in Special Olympics sports events. President Matt Volk joined local police and 80 bowlers for a Ten Pin bowling tournament in November, while September saw basketballers from across Victoria compete in an inter-club tournament hosted by Melbourne Eastern Ranges. Laureina and Rachael led Victorian Special Olympics golfers to the Gold Coast, achieving a commendable fourth place.





# Xmas New Year Celebrations

The members of LETR love a party and they particularly look forward to the busy Christmas period when they get to celebrate year's end with athletes and their families.

As per usual, Melbourne Inner East served up an enormous dining and dancing Christmas affair with athletes dominating the dance floor from the get-go.

LETR's Kate and Laureina were quick to join the dancers but soon realised they were no match for the athlete's stamina and Taylor Swift dance moves. However, Kate and Laureina appeared to have the edge when it came to the Macarena .... and the Nutbush.



Meanwhile, LETR's Mick, Mary and Dean joined the gang at Melbourne West to welcome in 2024 with its annual family day at the gorgeous – albeit sweltering - Brimbank Park.

It was the first Special Olympics Victoria club to launch into 2024 and included the presentation of well-deserved awards to long-standing volunteers.

It was a brilliant day, and our team enjoyed catching up with the athletes and families that they haven't seen for a while and, of course, the sausage sizzle on offer.

# Making a Splash!

Melbourne's inaugural 2024 SPLASH Challenge lived up to its name on Friday 1st March when our LETR "Water Rats" joined the superfish of Special Olympics in a fundraising challenge with corporate Victoria.

Held at Melbourne Sports & Aquatic Centre, the teams were lucky enough to be assigned a Special Olympics Victoria swimmer to help battle it out in the pool to raise funds for Special Olympics Australia. Exciting race calling was provided by the golden tonsils of LETR President Matt Volk.

Our "Water Rats" kept their head above water coming a respectable fifth out of eight on the corporate ladder but unable to top McGrathNicol who took out the Champions trophy.



**We won where it counts raising \$10k with a pledge of another \$5k before donations close on March 8.**



While the swimming prowess of the LETR "Water Rats" meant we missed out on the Champion's trophy, we won where it counts raising \$10k with a pledge of another \$5k before donations close on March 8.

It was a sensation, hilarious night finished off with a beer and a BBQ and we can't wait for SPLASH 2025.



# Polar Plunge

LETR members will be “Freezin’ for a reason” later this year as Torch Run Victoria brings the famed Polar Plunge challenge to the icy waters of Port Phillip Bay.

After the enormous success of last year’s LETR Polar Plunge in WA, we’re bringing the event home to our shores to give all our colleagues, friends and family a chance to “freeze” in support of the athletes of Special Olympics Victoria.



It’s going to be held in early August – only Melbourne’s second coldest month of the year – so standby for the final date and be ready to plunge into Victoria’s chilly and choppy ocean.





# Gala Ball Event

Meantime, the Torch Run Gala Ball which only started two years ago, has become a fixture in the annual social diary.

The second ever Gala Ball held in December last year was a sell-out with guests – including Chief Commissioner Shane Patton, Assistant Commissioner Lauren Callaway and Deputy Commissioners Wendy Steendam and Ross Guenther – hitting the dance floor and joining athletes on the hilarious 360 photo booth.

We're bringing this year's event forward to October 12 to help avoid the crazy December festive season so put it in your diary and keep an eye on socials for when the tickets go on sale. It'll be held at the same venue, Zinc at Fed Square, and with only a 350-person limit you'll have to be quick. It is a fantastic night, the food and wine are excellent and the dancing non-stop.



**Stay tuned for updates on these exciting events!**



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