

THE FLAME NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 10



President's Report

Happy 50th Anniversary to Special Olympics Australia. What an accomplishment and how special that we are involved. We are looking forward to the next fifty!

The year has commenced on a high with an abundance happening and it is all very positive. We had a bumper final quarter in 2025, it is always our most busy time of the year.

LETR VIC attended multiple Special Olympics Christmas Parties, Carols at the Academy and Awards Nights towards the end of last year. We danced, had photos, enjoyed meals together, had many a conversation and got to celebrate with the athletes and their many supporters, which we love! Not to mention the City and Academy Torch Runs for International Day of People with a Disability along with the Chief's Challenge. Last year we raised in excess of \$450,000 for Special Olympics Victoria which is another record for LETR VIC. Thank you to all who contributed throughout the year.

During the break our business manager Elissa and I set out to complete a few key pieces of work which have now launched to add value in supporting athletes of Special Olympics. Please view the website for the following NEW initiatives:

LETR VIC Financial Hardship Scholarship- This scholarship is for two years and focuses on helping people in the community who do not have access to Special Olympics due to financial constraints.

LETR VIC Financial Hardship Policy & Procedure- This option is for incidental financial support for small items whereby financial hardship is hindering an athlete from participation.

These two initiatives should assist in bridging an economic gap and encourage further participation making Special Olympics programs more accessible and equitable for members of the community with intellectual disability and/or autism.

The last piece of work we have focused on is establishing the Community Advisory Group (CAG) within Victoria. Several highly skilled corporate professionals and people with lived experience have united to support LETR VIC in the development of the CAG. The CAG will provide an ad hoc service to support LETR VIC with advice, guidance, tasking support for major events and projects and will meet quarterly for a debrief. There is no restriction on participation numbers for the CAG so if you feel you could offer us assistance on an ad hoc basis, please reach out.

We have welcomed a couple of alumni members back as active volunteers which is exciting and have acquired a couple of new participants that we are very happy to welcome into the team.

We held a Thank You Lunch bringing together volunteers, athletes on our 2025 committees and sponsors. We shared a casual lunch together to celebrate the past year and recognise their contribution.

A huge congratulations to the 2025 Polar Plunge Committee for winning an award at this year's Victoria Police Amateur Sports & Welfare Society Awards Night. And thank you to all of our volunteers who contributed to a very successful 2025. Your effort is truly appreciated. As we look ahead to a bumper 2026, take care of one another, offer support where you can and enjoy what is to be a huge year of what we love most - community engagement.



Kate Lockyer

**LETR VIC (Torchrun)
President/Director**

Dates for the fridge

3 MAY

*Angela Taylor
Memorial
Run/Walk*

11 JULY

Melbourne Polar Plunge
*Get your team together
and start planning your
costumes!*

17 OCTOBER

2026 Gala Ball

AMAZING AWARDS

Celebrating Anna Mezger OAM

We are thrilled to share that Anna Mezger, Vice Chair of Special Olympics Australia, has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her incredible service to sports administration and her unwavering commitment to people with a disability. Anna is a phenomenal contributor to Special Olympics; she brings a level of dedication that inspires everyone around her, and we are incredibly proud to work alongside her at LETR VIC. This honour is so well deserved.



Proud to be a true Partner

We might be the bank for police, but we see ourselves as so much more.

If it matters to you, it matters to us.

Whether it's the Torch Run, Polar Plunge, Gala Ball or any of the police causes and events we support, we're proud to show up, and stand beside you whenever you need us.



Polar Plunge Wins!



The Victoria Police Amateur Sports & Welfare Society's 2025 Victoria Police Sports Awards night was held in February. LETR VIC team and some very special athlete friends were very proud to receive the Most Outstanding Police Recreation, Social or Welfare Achievement Award for the 2025 Polar Plunge.

2025 Polar Plunge Co-ordinator and Vice-President Chelsea, President Kate and super star athletes Kasey, Tim, Luca, Georgianna, Bill and Harry accepted the award together on the stage to a thunderous applause from our mutual sponsor, Bankvic.

Thank you to everyone who has generously given their time to assist with this event over the last two years, it is one of our favourites!

Ben Bodna Award

LETR VIC is incredibly proud to celebrate Laureina, who received multiple nominations for the 2026 Office of the Public Advocate Awards and was awarded the prestigious Ben Bodna Award for exceptional leadership supporting people with disability.

This recognition comes as no surprise to anyone who has worked alongside her. In her role as a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) with Victoria Police, Laureina is a tireless advocate for those in the disability community. In her own time, Laureina has devoted countless hours to strengthening LETR VIC. She has been the driving force behind our annual Polar Plunge, has mentored Special Olympics athletes, and has played a key role in organising Torch Runs and community events across the state.

Her leadership, generosity and unwavering dedication have made a profound impact on our movement. Thank you, Laureina, for everything you bring to LETR VIC. Your contribution is extraordinary, and we are so grateful.

And another BIG congratulations to Laureina and her family on the safe arrival of their newest family member, a baby girl, earlier in February!



Join us -

Your Support Makes All The Difference

We are always happy to welcome passionate, community-minded people to join our team. Whether you have time, ideas, or specialised skills to share, there is a place for you with us. We need volunteers who can:

- Attend local events and cheer on our athletes as they compete
- Join our committees to help shape ideas, strengthen our programs, and support our mission
- Share skills in areas like planning, communications, logistics, fundraising, or community engagement.

You can give as much or as little time as you like — whether that is a few hours a year, a couple of hours each month, or getting more involved when opportunities arise. Every bit of support helps us create meaningful experiences for our athletes and community.

If you believe in inclusion, empowerment, and creating opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, we would love to have you alongside us. Every contribution — big or small — helps build a stronger, more connected community.

Ready to get involved? Reach out and let us make an impact together. Contact Elissa at secretary@torchrun.org.au.

Meet the Team

Chelsea McKay

Joint Vice President

Rank: Leading Senior Constable

Work Location: Wyndham Prosecutions Unit

How long have you been with LETR: Since 2023

Favourite Event: I love going to as many swimming events as I can.

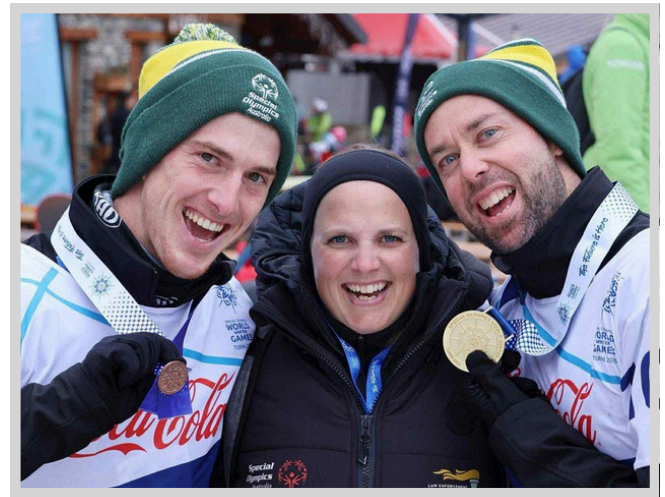
Favourite LETR memory: It was at State Games in 2025. I was at the swimming and assisting with handing out medals. I presented a first-place medal to an athlete who had been swimming for a number of years. He burst into tears of joy, it was the first time he had ever won a race and he was so stoked that he had won it at State Games.

My why: My favourite part of being part of the LETR team is attending events and interacting with the athletes. I enjoy seeing the athletes push themselves out of their comfort zones. Going to the Athlete Leadership Camp and watching the new leaders grow and develop is just wonderful. Then seeing them put what they have learnt into practice, like public speaking, attending sporting events other than their own and supporting their fellow athletes. When I'm having tough or dark days, I think of some of the challenges the athletes face daily and it very quickly brings back my can-do attitude.

Favourite sport: Rowing, I am a retired rower, and a distance swimmer before I started rowing. I'd love to run a learn to row session for some Special Olympics Athletes.

Favourite food: Pad Thai or Vietnamese Food

Did you know: Before joining Victoria Police I worked in event management, organising conferences and small community festivals, so I enjoy being a part of the major events organising committees such as the Gala Ball and the Polar Plunge to utilise my previous skill set.



Trelawney (Tiny) Dewe

Joint Vice President

Rank: Senior Sergeant

Work Location: Transit Divisional Tasking & Coordination

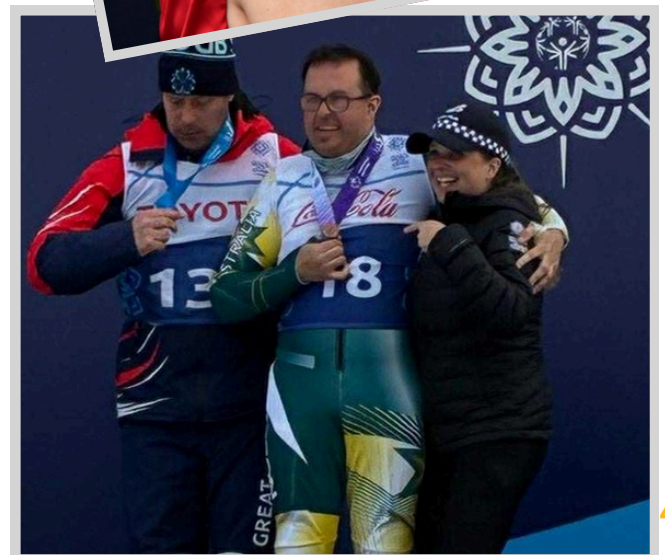
How long have you been with LETR: Since 2018

Favourite LETR memory or event: Attending the 2025 World Winter Games in Turin and cheering on our amazing Aussie athletes as they tore down the mountain. Those grins!

Favourite sport: 100% snow sports

Favourite food: Not vegetables!

Did you know: I'm an Active Army Reservist and am looking forward to how we can link LETR in with the Australian Defence Force effectively.





Splash!

We have been busy at LETR VIC! Our LETR VIC team proudly secured third place at the 2025 Special Olympics Victoria fundraiser in November. Our superfish squad — Tegan, Bear, James, Jimmy, Jonathon, Matt and athlete representative Chelsea — enjoyed a fantastic afternoon poolside, representing LETR VIC with energy and enthusiasm.

A heartfelt thank-you to our corporate teams, supporters, and generous donors for helping make the event such a success.

Basketball World Cup



LETR VIC legends Chelsea and Rory, the lovely Serene and John from Special Olympics Victoria and supportive Athlete Leaders Andrew and Lachie spent a late night in early December, waving goodbye and good luck to the 3x3 Unified Basketball squad as they were bound for Puerto Rico to compete in the World Cup.



NZ Summer Games

In December, LETR VIC team members Tegan, Darren, Mick and Mary travelled to New Zealand to celebrate the Summer Games with Special Olympics New Zealand.

LETR VIC and LETR NSW joined more than 1,200 athletes from 42 clubs in Christchurch, proudly taking part in the festivities and supporting the athletes alongside their families and friends throughout the Games. Our team also participated in a Torch Run at Christchurch's Wolfbrook Arena, sharing in the spirit, energy and unity that define the LETR movement.



Hoopsfest

Hoopsfest brought a vibrant celebration of basketball to Perth this January, and four Victorian Special Olympics athletes were right in the heart of it.

Our superstar competitors took part in a 3x3 competition during the event — proudly refereed by our very own Matt Volk.

A highlight of the day was watching basketball champion Bill Hallam light the cauldron to officially launch the Games, a moment that captured the spirit and excitement of the event.



Special Operations Group Training Exercise

In January, LETR VIC team members Kate and Darren were joined by Athlete Leaders Corey, Lachie, Sophie and Jeremy and the wonderful Athlete Leadership Coordinator from Special Olympics Victoria, Fiona at the Anzac Train Station for a training exercise held by Victoria Police's Special Operations Group.

The Athlete Leaders were observers in this training exercise, and despite the heat and noise, thoroughly enjoyed their experience.



Australian Open All Abilities Day

Our organised group attendance at the Australian Open All Abilities Day may have been cancelled this year due to heat but that did not stop athletes and LETR VIC team members catching up!

Rachael ran into Jordan while she was working. And our excellent volunteer Andrea, who also supports the AO, ran into athletes Kylie and Jordan too. Well done to all athletes that worked at the 2026 Australian Open.





International Day of People With A Disability

We kicked off our celebrations for the 2025 International Day of People with a Disability with a very hot Torch Run at the Victoria Police Academy on 3 December.

Our incredible Athlete Leaders — Bonnie, Kylie, Georgianna, Harry, Andrew, Lachie, Luca and Tim — were joined by an enthusiastic group of police recruits who listened to their Special Olympics journeys and took part in a thoughtful Q&A session.

Then it was time to hit the pavement, with our Athlete Leaders showing the recruits exactly what a Torch Run is all about!

A heartfelt thank-you to Acting Assistant Commissioner Karen Nyholm for her warm welcome. We loved bringing athletes and recruits together and showcasing the power of connection and respect.





Melbourne Shines for the Annual City Torch Run

Melbourne delivered a stunning day for our annual City Torch Run, held in recognition of the International Day of People with a Disability. Representatives from LETR VIC, Victoria Police, Special Olympics Victoria, Special Olympics Australia, and — most importantly — the athletes of Special Olympics Victoria, marched together in a strong display of unity and inclusion. Led by LETR VIC Patron and Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Mike Bush and members of the Victoria Police Executive, the Torch Run was a standout event. Our athletes from Special Olympics brought exceptional enthusiasm and spirit, ensuring the atmosphere was vibrant and memorable. Their energy resonated throughout the city, making it clear that Special Olympics and LETR were the main event of the day.



The group made its way to the Disability Sports & Recreation Festival at Crown Promenade, where Athlete Leader Gail proudly lit the cauldron alongside the Chief — a moment marked by genuine joy and celebration.

LETR VIC President Kate Lockyer and BankVic's Anthony De Fazio then presented the official fundraising cheque, announcing an outstanding result of more than \$468,000 raised for 2025. This achievement reflects the dedication of the LETR VIC Committee, the generosity of our valued sponsors including BankVic, and the ongoing support of Victoria Police employees who generously contribute through Workplace Giving.

Together, we continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the athletes of Special Olympics, whose determination and positivity inspire us every day. We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of this year's event.



Chief's Challenge

The Chief's Challenge is a Torch Run initiative designed to raise awareness for Special Olympics Victoria, supporting people living with an intellectual disability and/or autism. Held in the lead-up to and in December each year, the Challenge aligns with International Day of People With a Disability and encourages all areas of Victoria Police to host an activity or event that strengthens relationships with those living with an intellectual disability and/or autism.

Together, these efforts build trust, deepen meaningful connections, and contribute to safer, more inclusive communities across Victoria. Participating in a Chief's Challenge guarantees lots of fun and enjoyment for all involved.



Members from Footscray Police Station attended the Yarra Special Development School and taught the students what the police do, how they help people and played some ball games.



Wellington PSA members attended at the Sale Specialist School to celebrate IDOPWD, with a marked police car to conduct the ever-popular Radar Speed Detector test. They had some very fast runners!



The Wodonga Police Station was a stop on a mystery bus tour for the Omnia Inclusive Employment Solutions team and they enjoyed a BBQ and some birthday cake together with local members.



Zarah and Kate invited 20 special guests from Special Olympics, Melbourne Eastern Ranges Club to the Police Academy Christmas Carols and they had a ball!

Chief's Challenge



Colac Community Engagement supported the organisation of two events in their office. The first event was a visit to Blue Water's swimming carnival for Hampden Specialist School where they had fun races, games, relays and lots of cheering and laughter.



The second event was of the highest importance: assisting in Santa's safe arrival to the Lake Colac Specialist School. They helped deliver presents, took some happy snaps and got into the Christmas spirit.

The final Chief's Challenge event was held on the 18th of December and saw 24 athletes, their carers and support staff from Special Olympics Victoria attend the Victoria Police Academy for a day to promote inclusion, celebrate diversity and strengthen community ties.

The athletes had a full tour of the academy, participated in a Q and A Session, experienced and enjoyed a tailored defensive tactics session, and had an up-close encounter with some special friends in the K9 unit. And a BBQ lunch!

Some athletes stayed to watch and celebrate Squad 28 of 2025 in their Graduation Ceremony and did not miss a photo opportunity with the Chief Commissioner.



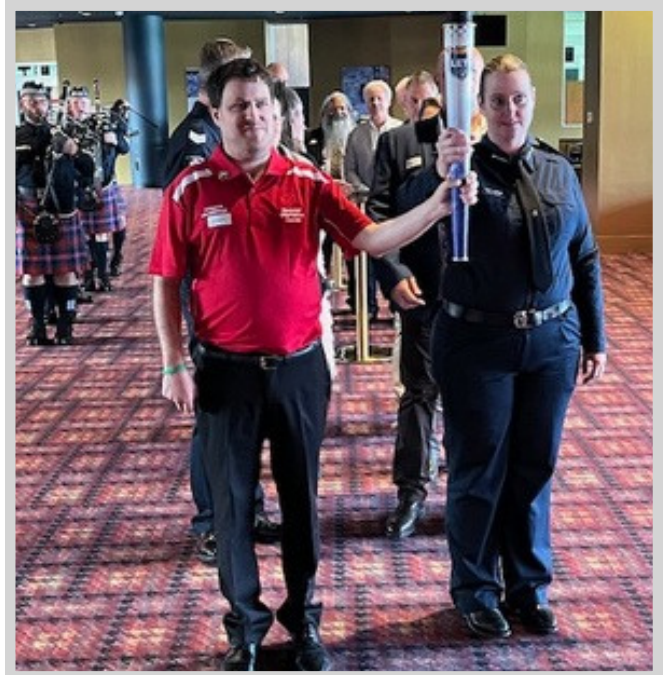
Thank you to all the members who took the time to organise and also attend these Chief's Challenge events. We value your dedication to inclusion and love seeing the smiles on the participants faces - they are priceless.

The Chief's Challenge will open for registrations in August with events starting in November. Information will be available on Viva Engage or our website. If you would like further information prior to then, or if we can help you with an event at all, please contact Elissa at secretary@torchrun.org.au

50 YEARS 1976 - 2026

Special Olympics Australia turns 50!

On Thursday 28th February 2026 friends and supporters of Special Olympics Australia gathered at the Olympic Room at the magnificent MCG to celebrate an amazing 50th anniversary.



Athlete representative Toby and LETR VIC president Kate proudly carried the Flame of Hope into the venue, where it was presented to Chief Commissioner Mike Bush and athlete Leader Joanne Cuddy. They were accompanied by LETR friends from Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria and the Victoria Police Pipe band.

MC Russel Howcroft presided over a day of celebration. We heard from inspiring guests Eliza Hull OAM, Keiran Corry, Mack Horton and Paul Nunnari. We listened to Chief Commissioner Mike Bush, our President Kate, and Special Olympics Australia CEO Jamie O'Connor.

It was a wonderful day of celebration. We look forward to the next 50 years of Special Olympics!

Thank you WPG and Volunteers

Your generosity, time, and unwavering support are the foundation of our work. Our regular fortnightly Workplace Giving contributions, combined with the dedication of our volunteers, form the steady base that allows us to operate effectively and plan with confidence. Whether you support us quietly behind the scenes or in visible roles, your impact reaches far beyond what you may see.

Special Olympics Victoria Clubs

Ballarat: Basketball, gymnastics, swimming.

Email: ballarat.chair@specialolympics.com.au

Barwon: Athletics, basketball, golf, gymnastics, swimming, tennis, tenpin bowling.

Email: barwon.secretary@specialolympics.com.au

Bendigo: Swimming, tenpin bowling.

Email: bendigo.chair@specialolympics.com.au

Dandenong Casey: Basketball, bocce, gymnastics, swimming, tenpin bowling.

Email: dandenongcasey.sport@specialolympics.com.au

Echuca: Basketball, bocce, golf, netball, swimming, tenpin bowling.

Email: echuca.secretary@specialolympics.com.au

Melbourne Eastern Ranges: Basketball, bocce, swimming, tennis, tenpin bowling.

Email: melbourneeasternranges.membership@specialolympics.com.au

Melbourne Inner East: Athletics, basketball, bocce, cricket, equestrian, football (soccer), gymnastics, swimming, tennis, tenpin bowling, winter sports.

Email: melbourneinnereast@specialolympics.com.au

Melbourne North: Bocce, tenpin bowling.

Email: melbournenorth.secretary@specialolympics.com.au

Melbourne Southern: Basketball, bocce, football (soccer), swimming, tennis, tenpin bowling.

Email: melbournesouthern.secretary@specialolympics.com.au

Melbourne West: Athletics, basketball, bocce, gymnastics, swimming, tennis, tenpin bowling.

Email: melbournewest.secretary@specialolympics.com.au

Ovens & Murray: Athletics, basketball, bocce, gymnastics, powerlifting, swimming, table tennis, tenpin bowling.

Email: ovensmurray.sport@specialolympics.com.au

Westernport: Athletics, basketball, golf, swimming, tennis, tenpin bowling.

Email: westernport.secretary@specialolympics.com.au



Special Olympics Victoria can be contacted via: info.vic@specialolympics.com.au





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Thank you to our sponsors and supporters



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