



IMPACT REPORT 2020-21

Variety – the Children's
Charity Queensland

How you made
a difference



All kids deserve a fair go in life. Thank you for helping Queensland kids who are sick, experiencing disadvantage or living with a disability.

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One of the main reasons I enjoy my role serving as Chief Barker for Variety – the Children’s Charity of Queensland is that I get to see firsthand the difference that support can make in a child’s life.

I witness the smiles, the pride when a young person achieves something they never thought possible, and the pure joy when children experience something magical, like receiving their first bike.

During 2020-2021, those special moments have never been more important. And for almost 7000 Queensland children living with sickness, disability and disadvantage, we are so proud to have brought those special times to them.

But the only way we have been able to continue to provide this care and opportunity is because of people like you, our supporters: incredible Variety donors, volunteers, event participants and sponsors.

I also pay tribute to the hardworking Variety Queensland team, who even through difficult times have ensured our fundraising efforts continue to deliver strong results, so we can support as many Queensland kids as possible.

Thank you all for being part of the Variety family. Together, we have made it through another challenging year, but we have also helped many, many kids realise their potential.

This report shows the impact of your generosity. I hope you enjoy reading about some of the extraordinary things you’re making possible.

Nick Harwood

Chief Barker, Variety Queensland



These are times when we have to help each other out like never before.

With the world focused on COVID-19 and the incredible challenges that came with it, this past year meant life got even tougher for many Queensland kids and their families.

Families looking after a sick child, or caring for their child with a disability. Families already struggling with poverty and isolation.

For Variety – the Children’s Charity of Queensland, our efforts to help these kids has never been more vital.

As always, our supporters stepped up to the challenge.

Thank you for understanding that these kids deserve a fair go. Thank you for being there for them, and their families, during another very tough year.

By participating in the Variety Bash and other events, by donating money, by partnering with us and by giving your time, you enabled Variety Queensland to distribute \$997,452 throughout 2020-2021 in support of kids.

Your generosity meant that 6934 kids were supported, so they could access grants for new mobility equipment or services... or receive a Variety Heart Scholarship to make their dreams come true... or experience the magic of Variety programs and experiences.

These things were only possible because of you.

On behalf of Variety Queensland, I am so grateful.

Steve Wakerley

CEO, Variety Queensland



Thanks to your support,
Variety helps kids with
these challenges:



Sick



Disadvantaged



Disability



OUR MISSION

To empower Queensland kids who are sick, disadvantaged or living with a disability to live, laugh and learn.

OUR WORK

Allows children to improve mobility, gain freedom and get out and about in the community, where they can better communicate, achieve independence and increase their self-esteem.

OUR VISION

For all Queensland kids to attain their full potential regardless of ability or background.

With your help, we support kids living with sickness, disadvantage and disability through:



GRANTS: delivering practical help including medical and mobility equipment, therapy, communication devices, learning aids, and transport



SCHOLARSHIPS: these support kids with an existing talent to reach their potential in the arts, education or sport

PROGRAMS: educational and inclusive, our programs help kids to shine. They include the Variety Kids Choir where singing is always fun, and Variety Activate Inclusion Sports Days where kids can have a go at various sports

ACTIVITIES: fun events ranging from Christmas parties to excursions and days on the water, where kids and their families can make new friends, relax, create special memories and have the best day possible!



This is how you've helped kids this year

6934



kids supported by Variety
Queensland

\$997,452

provided so Queensland kids
could receive life-changing
practical equipment, programs
and experiences



72

grants and
scholarships
allocated



167

activations of Kids Support
programs delivered



*"I never dreamed at the
start it would all get so
big – but now, thanks to
Variety, I am helping even
more kids and I can dream
even bigger."*

Young supporter delivers big impact

Philanthropist Reagan Pellowe is a little boy with a big heart – and even bigger dreams!

The 11-year-old's masterplan to convert cans into cash has taken over his family's Caboolture backyard and inspired his entire North Brisbane community to get behind his dream.

Variety Queensland is one of numerous charities Reagan supports. He donates money he raises to Variety to help children living with chronic illness, adversity or a disability – like his younger brother Hudson who has cerebral palsy.

Now, after receiving more than \$20,000 from Reagan's trailblazing efforts, Variety Queensland has created a scholarship in his honour. The Reagan Pellowe Scholarship Fund will assist a young scholarship recipient for a whole year by providing valuable funding to nurture their talents.

In true Reagan style, the young waste warrior has pledged he will raise \$5000 every year towards the scholarship in his name, thrilled to discover he will be helping other youngsters fulfil their own potential.

Variety grants making dreams come true

With your support, Variety provides grants to kids for medical and mobility supplies and equipment, technology, educational resources, wigs and essential personal items.

We also help schools and organisations with learning and play equipment, as well as Variety Sunshine Coaches to assist with transport.

In 2021, Variety Queensland provided 72 grants and scholarships to individuals and schools.

And while the 2020 Variety Special Children's Christmas party was cancelled due to the pandemic, some special grants meant 6000 presents were still delivered across South-East Queensland by Santa and his helpers to 2551 kids in foster care, sick or living with a disability.

Grants & Scholarships



\$667,000

granted to help Queensland kids

5296

kids benefitted
from grants and
scholarships



Grants included high
jump mats, sensory
equipment, iPads, wigs
and bikes

Bikes for the kids of Dunkeld

There's plenty of dirt road leading into Dunkeld.

Located 80 kilometres from the nearest town of Mitchell and 122 kilometres south-west of Roma, Dunkeld's population in the 2016 census was reported as 41.

Despite its isolation, Dunkeld has a wonderful co-educational one-teacher school, which offers levels from Kindy to Year 6. In 2020, it had 11 students travelling in from properties throughout the area.

Variety wanted to help address the disadvantages of isolation for the kids of Dunkeld.

Most of the students at Dunkeld State School had never ridden or owned a bike, so a heart-warming surprise was planned for the 2020 Variety Bash.

On day 3 of the Bash, 290 participants stopped in at Dunkeld State School for lunch, and gave each of the 11 students a brand new bike and helmet, on behalf of the Variety family.

The reaction on the kids' faces was priceless and brought so much joy to all who witnessed it.

The students hopped straight on their new bikes on the oval, and even those who had never ridden a bike before picked it up quickly.

The bikes have given the students the freedom and independence to ride with their peers and siblings, and the responsibility of owning something they need to look after themselves.



Without Variety's supporters,
these life-changing gifts for
disadvantaged Queensland
kids would not be possible.

Shooting for the stars: Variety Heart Scholarships

Variety Queensland offers annual competitive scholarships to support talented kids living with a disability, chronic illness, financial hardship or geographic isolation.

The Variety Heart Scholarships support kids aged 6 to 17 across the arts, education and sport, so they can reach the next stage of development and achieve their full potential.

Funded by our generous supporters, Variety Heart Scholarships are awarded to successful recipients at up to \$5,000 per child per year.

This can help them cover expenses such as fees, training, competition entry, lessons, supplies, maintenance of equipment, uniforms, travel and competition accommodation.

In 2021, 17 Variety Heart Scholarships were awarded, to the value of \$80,000.

Grants & Scholarships

17

Variety Heart Scholarships
awarded this year in Queensland

\$80,000

in Heart Scholarship support
for talented kids



Paralympian Maddie leads the way

When Maddie McTernan swapped her basketball boots for bathers her family had no idea she was poised to become one of Australia's future swimming stars.

Now, after returning from the Tokyo Paralympic Games in 2021 with a silver medal for the Mixed 4 x 100m relay and a 4th placing in the 100m backstroke, Maddie, 20, is on track to achieve her ultimate dream of excelling at the 2024 Paralympics in Paris.

Maddie, who has autism, ADHD, anxiety and intellectual impairment and is classified in swimming as an S14, says her love affair with the water began at the Surf Life Saving Nippers program, and blossomed after she abandoned basketball to focus on her passion for swimming.

"My intellectual impairment means I was a little slower off the blocks, so I had to learn techniques to overcome it and be the best I could without letting my disability hold me back."

Maddie initially received three Variety Heart Scholarship Grants which covered the costs of competing at a national and international level, including things like race gear, travel and accommodation. Once her family moved back to Queensland after living in NSW, her success prompted Variety Queensland to award her another scholarship grant as she aimed to secure a place in the Australian Paralympic Swimming Squad.

"Without Variety's help this would never have been possible," explains her mum Allison, who was forced to take leave from full-time nursing to care for Maddie's chronically ill father, another daughter with health issues and a young son who has autism, an intellectual disability, global delay and suffers severe seizures.

Recently, Maddie was a VIP guest at one of Variety's Activate Inclusion Sports Days where she was humbled to learn that her success was inspiring other young people.

"I tell them, if you have the drive and the passion just to do it... dream it, believe it and you will achieve it," she says.



Getting kids involved across Queensland

From singing to kicking a footy, your support through Variety Queensland meant Kids Support programs could continue to be delivered across the state this year, brightening the lives of many kids and helping out their families.

More than 450 kids were introduced to team sports, thanks to our Activate Inclusion Sports Days in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Cairns and Townsville.

Variety developed the AISD program to create more opportunities for kids living with disabilities. We have four more days planned for early 2022 in more regional locations and hope to expand this program in coming years.

The Variety Kids Sports Camp held in the Gold Coast in April 2021 was a resounding success, introducing 50 kids with a physical disability to an array of sports, aiming to improve their social, physical and mental health.

Meanwhile, our Variety Kids Choir has expanded and is busy recruiting new members. This year these incredible kids performed on the prestigious stage at Queensland Performing Arts Centre, singing an original song they wrote. In 2021 experiences for other kids in our big Variety Family also included visiting Brisbane Town Hall to meet Paralympians and Olympians and even the Premier.

Programs

Programs included Variety Kids Choir, Youth Ambassador Program, Bikes For Kids, Activate Inclusion Sports Days, Just Like You, Variety Kids Sports Camp, Financial Counselling

1619

kids and families supported

\$295,890

in programs delivered across Queensland

167

Kids Support programs activated this year



Cruz-ing with confidence

Ask pint-sized battler, Cruz Goodwin, about the highlight of his day, and he won't hesitate to tell you: it's having friends!

The youngster's delight about his social circle is a dream come true for proud parents Nathan and Tammy, who attribute their son's newfound confidence and growing friendships to Variety the Children's Charity.

The Goodwins say that joining the Variety Queensland 'family' has been life-changing for eight-year-old Cruz, who was born with the rare genetic condition 2q37 Deletion Syndrome, known to affect fewer than 100 children worldwide. The syndrome means Cruz has a malfunctioning bowel and stomach, global developmental delay and intellectual and physical impairments.

It has been a gruelling journey for the Gold Coast family. Cruz spent the first two years of his life in hospital in Brisbane, and the Goodwins were left struggling to fund every aspect of their son's care – from speech therapy to physiotherapy.

But life began to look up for Cruz after he joined weekly Riding for the Disabled classes and his core muscles strengthened. When Cruz began to walk short distances, after learning to take steps in his walker provided by Variety Queensland, he then borrowed a wheelchair, which bolstered his confidence enough to join one of Variety's popular sport camps for kids.

"His whole life opened up that day," recalls Tammy.

"Until that moment he had been a shy, highly-anxious, clingy little boy who refused to leave my side, but the other children were so encouraging that after watching them for a while he took off in his wheelchair with another little boy, ready to socialise."

At the next Variety Kids Sports Camp, his mum was amazed to see him holding a tennis racket and a ball for a fleeting 20 seconds.

Today, Cruz has mastered conceptional 'signing', has a vocabulary of around 30 words, and walks short distances with his frame.





Libby: a kid with big dreams

Thirteen-year-old Elizabeth is a little girl with big ambitions.

And to prove it, the aspiring young writer and movie director began her dream career at the very top – with a world exclusive interview with the future King of England!

Elizabeth (Libby) got the big break she had been waiting for in April 2018, when Juiced TV – the Queensland kids TV network made by kids in hospital for kids in hospital – rang with a secret commission involving two high profile VIPs.

“It was super-secret and I was very excited about finding out who I was going to meet,” explains Libby, who has spent most of her life in and out of surgery to deal with the physical challenges of the congenital birth defect, spina bifida.

The youngster was amazed when she discovered her VIP guests were the Prince of Wales and his wife the Duchess of Cornwall.

“I was so excited when Charles and Camilla put aprons on and started making lamingtons with me,” recalls Libby.

Life has been an uphill battle for Libby, who was born with the genetic neural tube defect estimated to affect around 150 Australian babies every year.

Although some people with spina bifida can walk, for others like Libby it means they can only walk short distances in braces and may rely on a wheelchair, a walker or crutches.

Libby’s royal experience only reinforced her determination to be defined by her talents rather than her disability.

After attending Variety’s popular Activate Inclusion Sports Day at Brendale, she was thrilled to find herself surrounded by new friends who saw only the bright, talented girl behind the wheelchair. The sports day was a defining moment for Libby, who left with a new dream – to become a youth leader and mentor for other youngsters facing adversity.

Proud mum Alison says joining Variety’s Youth Ambassador Program would be a perfect opportunity for Libby to use her own life experience and inspire other youngsters to follow their dreams.

Welcoming the news, Variety Queensland CEO, Steve Wakerley, says the program was set up during COVID to empower young Aussies who are living with a disability, illness or disadvantage.

“Our young ambassadors do a fantastic job advocating for children living with a disability, disadvantage or a chronic illness, by raising awareness in the wider community about the challenges they face.”

Some more kids you've helped

Callum: reaching for the stars

When Callum Simpson won six gold medals at the 2020 Queensland State Championships for swimming, this wasn't just the story of another young sports star doing well.

Living with ADHD, dyspraxia, an auditory processing disorder and a chromosomal deletion and gene mutation, the teen was told as a younger child that he may never walk, run or swim ‘normally’.

Yet Callum has defied the odds and is now one of the best swimmers in his age group in Australia for para multi-class swimming, a sport he took up to help with his therapy and strengthen his body. It clearly is working; at the Queensland titles he won the 400m freestyle, 200m freestyle, 100m freestyle, 50m freestyle, 100m breaststroke and 100m backstroke.

Callum is a recipient of a Variety Heart Scholarship, funded by supporters of Variety Queensland. These special scholarships assist kids in sport, the arts and education. Callum is proof of the impact that Variety donors make in the lives of children in need.

Now aiming to make the Olympic Development Squad in the next few years, the future looks bright for this amazing athlete.



Paige: an exceptional champion

“I said to mum is there a chance that one day I can go to the Paralympics.”

They were the words of then 12-year-old Paige Leonhardt.

When she was five, Paige was in a car accident and experienced severe injuries. She has hemiplegia on her right side, intracranial hypertension, epilepsy and autism.

After starting swimming as therapy, her talents in the pool shone through.

This led to Paige becoming a Variety Heart Scholarship recipient, which helped her attend trials for the Rio Paralympics – and beyond.

By 20, Paige had made her second Paralympic team and in 2021 she won silver in the women’s 100m Butterfly (S14) in Tokyo.



New support for kids and families

This year has been especially exciting, with new programs introduced to help kids and their families.

Thanks to community support, Variety Queensland launched Just Like You in June 2020, which is a disability inclusion program fostering inclusivity and tackling bullying.

Already the program has reached more than 1000 kids in Brisbane and Gold Coast primary schools. Educating children that fellow students who live with a disability are just like them, it teaches students about different types of disabilities and how it's possible to include everyone in activities, whether that be in the playground, invites to birthday parties or sports.

In September 2020 we also officially launched the Variety Financial Counselling service. Raising a child who is sick or living with disability can be even very expensive and caring duties can mean reduced incomes.

Our new counsellors Tony and Rod have been busy helping families manage debt and household budgets, negotiating with creditors, advocating on parents' behalf and much more, to help ensure Variety families can provide a better future for their children.

Programs

As a result of Just Like You:

94%

of students demonstrate empathy towards people with a disability

93%

of students believe people with disabilities are able to do many things

Breaking down the barriers

Kids with a disability just want to be kids. Just like the others in their class.

And that's why Variety delivers a very special program to help these kids, and foster understanding and acceptance in schools across Queensland and throughout Australia.

It's called Just Like You.

Research from Children and Young People with a Disability Australia (CYDA) reveals that 48 per cent of students with a disability experience bullying at school; and 40 per cent of students with disabilities had been excluded from events or activities.

Just Like You is a revolutionary disability inclusion program featuring a series of free and fun disability awareness workshops.

The aim is to stop bullying and build understanding, acceptance and inclusion of those living with a disability.

Kids in primary school from Year 1 to 6 attend the workshops, which are mapped against the Australian Curriculum.

Professional facilitators with a disability, such as Nhon Huynh who was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy and using a wheelchair by age 10, speak with students and work to celebrate differences, create inclusion and challenge the norms in schools.

Since 2015, the program has helped more than 60,000 students across Australia. It's crucial that we keep building on that number so we raise future adults, employers and leaders with knowledge of disabilities – and a readiness to accept all abilities.

Thanks to our supporters, Just Like You is teaching children about inclusion, empathy and the importance of a fair go for all.

Just Like You has already reached more than 1000 kids in Queensland schools. Our goal is to reach 4000 kids each year.



Just Like You Facilitator,
Nhon Huynh

Fundraising Events



When Bash met Adventure

After a very tough year, November 2020 saw our Variety family reunited once again for our combined Variety Bash Adventure event.

The Bash Adventure was a wonderful chance to welcome 100 incredible newbies, joining 195 other Variety Bash and Variety 4WD Adventure supporters in hitting the road and travelling 2,128 kilometres.

Along the way they visited 11 schools, immediately helped more than 1,700 kids and raised a net profit in excess of \$1.15 million... a truly amazing effort and an incredible result for Aussie kids.

Our sincerest thanks and congratulations to our 2020 Variety Bash Adventure highest fundraisers, Lesa, Jo and Bill from Car 640 who raised in excess of \$81,500!

Jet trekking

The 2021 Yamaha Variety Jet Trek in March 2021 saw 93 riders take to the ocean, heading north for six action-packed days on the water and raising in excess of \$194,000.

Supported by 98 road crew and a team of experienced officials, our riders travelled through Rainbow Beach, Agnes Water and Gladstone but the most fun was had during our epic two-night layover at Kingfisher Bay Resort on K'gari.

Massive congratulations to our soon-to-be Jet Trek Legends and 2021 Highest Fundraisers, Greg and Paula Deighton.



Airlie Beach backs Paris – and Variety

Gardener-turned-beauty-queen, Paris Bedford, has a knack for growing things. She has sown the seeds for a flourishing community network that has helped her raise more than \$50,000 for Aussie kids in need.

Paris's success as a finalist in Miss World Australia saw her on a crusade to raise vital funds for Variety. From a slow start selling homewares and clothes at the market in the beautiful tourist hotspot of Airlie Beach in North Queensland, and helping with sausage sizzles and raffles, things really took off when a friend offered to help.

Together, they embarked on a mission to encourage the small town's tight-knit business community to get behind a gala charity event.

"The response was phenomenal and it was an instant sellout," says Paris, 27.

Donations were soon pouring in, ranging from a \$10,000 five-night luxury catamaran cruise around the Whitsundays to reef tours, snorkelling and jet ski trips, romantic getaways and candlelit dinners, photography, artwork and jewellery. Paris raised over \$50,000 at the event.

"Airlie Beach is such a small friendly community that people were really generous and rallied around me, which I could never have imagined happening if I'd lived in a big city," says Paris – a down-to-earth girl from the town's big gardening company where she is best known for getting her hands dirty with the lawn maintenance team.

Community Fundraising



Madalyn's special gift

Ever since she was a little girl, Madalyn Crichton's mane of thick brown locks has been her crowning glory.

But this year the fourteen-year-old, who lives in the Gold Coast, had her hair chopped off so that she can give back to Variety.

Backed by her dad Cameron and mum Shauna, Madalyn had 35.5cms lopped off her luscious waist-length hair after getting behind Variety Queensland's Hair with Heart program which donates ponytails and pigtails to make wigs for people who have lost their hair due to a medical condition such as alopecia or cancer.

Madalyn has a long relationship with Variety Queensland, which has provided her with grants for vital disability aids and helped her family with car modifications.

Life has been an uphill battle for Madalyn, who was born at just 30 weeks and spent her first few weeks on a ventilator in the NICU unit of a North Queensland hospital. When the family finally took Madalyn home, she developed bronchiolitis and stopped breathing before going into full cardiac arrest.

When Variety's Hair with Heart program popped up on Shauna's Facebook the family saw a chance to give back to the charity that has made such a difference to their lives.

"Everyone dug deep and Madalyn blitzed her goal of \$2000, raising \$6058 for a great cause," says her mum.

Thank you to all our supporters



Thank you to all our supporters

Cairns Regional Council
 Department of Social Services
 Griffith Corporation
 Local Hire
 Longreach Regional Council
 Mogo Wheelchairs
 NetEffects
 QCoal
 Queensland Government – Arts
 Queensland
 Reegan Pellowe

RSL Southport
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 The Supreme Society
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 Townsville City Council
 Toyota
 Village Roadshow
 William Angliss Charitable Fund

Thank you also to all our incredible:
2021 Yamaha Variety Jet Trekkers
2020 Variety Bash Adventure participants
Miss World Australia entrants





You have made an amazing impact in the lives of Aussie kids through your support during the past 12 months.

You imagined a future where every child, regardless of circumstance or ability, can be supported, included and equal.

**Thank you for supporting Variety
Queensland as we work to
make this vision a reality.**



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