



# Impact Report 2021

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**The Inclusion Foundation is championing the inclusion of people with Down syndrome. Together, we are changing the way intellectual disability is experienced and seen, helping people become equal, active and respected members of society.**



## **Our purpose**

To change how the world views and values people with Down syndrome.

We see an inclusive world where people with Down syndrome are equal, active and respected members of society.

We support our vision through four key pillars:

### **ENGAGEMENT**

We champion inclusion with the amazing and generous support of volunteers, local and national businesses. Come young, come old, come with knowledge, passion, a sense of fun and a genuine desire to make a difference in the lives of people with Down syndrome and their families.

### **EMPOWERMENT**

We set positive expectations for people with Down syndrome – and positively redefine those of society. Our initiatives and programs promote social inclusion, facilitate greater independence and empower people with Down syndrome to be all they can be.

### **EDUCATION**

We provide ongoing learning for people with Down syndrome that elevates and inspires them to do more, be more and achieve more.

We use education to positively challenge and change societal perceptions of Down syndrome.

### **ENERGY**

Inclusion is a goal that requires energy, positivity and passion from those with Down syndrome and those close to them. People with Down syndrome can fill a room with their infectious spirit and zest for life – traits that run through every aspect of our organisation.

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Images in this report are representative of our programs including pre and post Covid-19. We are committed to protecting the health of our participants and volunteers and follow COVID-safe processes in delivering our programs.

The Inclusion Foundation wishes to acknowledge that we are on Aboriginal land. We pay our respects to all traditional custodians, past present and future.

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# A message from our founder

More than 12 years have passed since my husband Luke and I first watched our then-six-year-old daughter Alexandra take to the stage and dance alongside 40 other children, each of them with Down syndrome, before a delighted audience of family and friends.

The room on that night fizzed with joy, excitement and hope, and these emotions were not limited to the performers. After years of watching Alle become increasingly excluded from the everyday activities she loved to do, from school to swimming and dancing, simply because people didn't understand Down syndrome, watching her on stage that night was a turning point.

We believed then, and continue to hold true today, that people with Down syndrome must be included as equal, active and respected members of our communities.

The fundamental concept of inclusion was at the heart of our name change, from emotion21 to Inclusion Foundation in late 2020. Whether the conversation is around creativity, employment, education, or any other of the myriad of experiences that fill and enrich our daily lives, people with Down syndrome have as vital and valid a place as everyone else.

The change of name and associated rebrand marked the start of a new era for the Foundation. We updated our vision, mission and values, and now centre our activities around two flagship programs, emotion21 and Impact21. Both of these programs changed and grew despite the difficult year we all experienced, and we are thrilled to share more about their progress in this report.



Above: Cate Sayers and her daughter Alle.  
Photographed by Jake Terrey, Vogue Australia, May 2018.

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**“We believed then, and continue to hold true today, that people with Down syndrome must be included as equal, active and respected members of our communities.”**

I feel tremendously positive for this next chapter of the Inclusion Foundation, and look forward with a great deal of hope for what the future has in store. I want to thank each and every one of you who has made a donation during the past year: It is directly because of your generosity and foresight that we were able to successfully graduate 12 Impact21 students, pivot our emotion21 programs in the face of COVID-19 lockdowns, and expand our reach and opportunities further than ever before.

With your continued help, the Inclusion Foundation is poised to expand its reach introducing additional programs across regional Victoria in 2022. Providing people with Down syndrome across the State, and in time, across Australia with the same opportunities that we have been enjoying in Melbourne.

**Cate Sayers**  
Founder and Director

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**"Thanks to the resilience of our participants and the talent and dedication of our staff and supporters, the Inclusion Foundation not only survived but thrived in the past year."**

Luke Sayers, Chairman, Inclusion Foundation





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# A message from our leaders

It is impossible to reflect back on 2020–21 without COVID-19 being front of mind. The pandemic has impacted everyone, and it certainly created a swathe of challenges for the Inclusion Foundation. It limited opportunities for face-to-face learning, performances, socialising for our participants, employment opportunities, and the fundraising activities that are necessary to ensure participants in our activities receive the very best support and resources.

This was exacerbated by the reality that people with Down syndrome are disproportionately affected by COVID-19, as the higher occurrence of comorbidities puts them at greater risk if exposed to the virus. In addition, ongoing episodes of isolation have had an extremely negative impact on the wellbeing of our community.

It is therefore a testament to the resilience of our participants and the talent and dedication of our staff and supporters that in such a year, the Inclusion Foundation not only survived but thrived. We seized the opportunity for reflection, looking closely at our values and goals, and pivoted to better serve our community of individuals with Down syndrome, and their families.

We concluded our *Organisational Reboot*, which culminated in a change of name, a complete rebrand, new website, and new social media platforms. We also established a new leadership team to manage a larger team dedicated to increasing our capacity and delivering on our mission statement. This is genuinely the next chapter in our organisation.

Meanwhile at an organisational level, we not only maintained but grew our two flagship programs throughout this second COVID-19 year ultimately giving our participants every opportunity to reach their full potential.

At the start of the year, emotion21 was already available across nine Victorian locations. Now, it's also available online, making these life-changing classes available to people with Down syndrome across Australia, and regardless of lockdowns.

The cancellation of the annual concert in 2020 was a severe blow to both the enthusiasm of our participants and our capacity to raise philanthropic funds that support our programs, but this year, we were able to pivot and perform online.

Meanwhile, Impact21 graduated its pilot students and saw them into fulfilling, paid employment; recruited 12 new students and seven national Employer Partners; and successfully negotiated \$1.27 million in funding from the Victorian government to roll Impact21 out across regional Victoria over the next two years.

Ultimately, 2021 was a year of positivity, change, and hope, despite the many challenges, and we are now well poised to enter 2022 with enthusiasm and excitement.

**Luke Sayers**  
Chairman

**Andre Carvalho**  
General Manager

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# Our impact & outcomes

Too often, people with Down syndrome are thought of in terms of 'can't,' rather than 'can.' The Inclusion Foundation was born out of a determination to say "can," and emotion21 was the first of its programs. The past year was one of significant change, but also genuine progress.

Changing our name to Inclusion Foundation marked the start of a new era for the Foundation. The name change was the outward expression of our internal realignment; we updated our vision, mission and values, and firmly centred our activities around our two flagship programs, emotion21 and Impact21.

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**"The Inclusion Foundation was born out of a determination to say 'can'."**

Approximately 50% of our income was underwritten by NDIS fees, but it is only because of the generosity and philanthropic support of the community that we can ensure that every person who needs us can access our critical programs.

**\$957,575**

Total income

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**\$1,143,997**

Total expenditure

**89%**

Total income directly funded our programs



All figures in this report are from financial year 2020–2021



## Snapshot of our impact



**12**

students graduated from pilot Impact21 program



**10**

graduates from Impact21 employed, with 100% retention rate



**2,400**

emotion21 classes held



**21,430**

enrolments in all emotion21 classes



**4,020**

volunteer hours' worth a total value of \$144,720\*

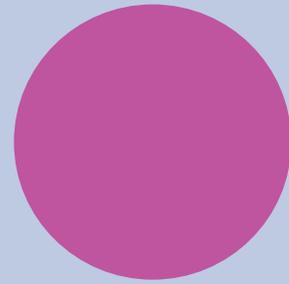


**45+**

online classes a week delivered as emotion21 adapted to lockdowns



\*Calculated using medium wage hourly rate of \$36.



# Moving towards an inclusive future

emotion21 is the only program of its kind in Australia. It creates a supportive and inclusive community for people with Down syndrome, delivering classes in dance, yoga, fitness, and nutrition. All are designed specifically to address the physical, social and emotional needs of children and young adults with Down syndrome – and their families.

As participants come together for these lessons, they also grow in confidence, form friendships, generate better health through exercise, and develop self-esteem and other valuable life skills.

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**“The benefits of emotion21 extends beyond the physiological impact on our participants. Family, friends, local businesses and community groups also benefit as a caring network of support develops and focuses on positive mental health and wellbeing.”**

In response to the lockdowns due to COVID-19, emotion21 courses were adapted for online learning, and are now run right across Australia.

Students are able to take classes in Latin dance, hip hop, contemporary, musical theatre, yoga, wellness and relaxation, fitness, and general dance for specific age groups, in nine locations across Victoria. Now, they can also participate online from anywhere in the country.

The annual emotion21 concert is the highlight of the year, galvanising participants, volunteers, families and friends, and providing an opportunity for people with Down syndrome to demonstrate their abilities, collaborate with others and build their self-esteem.

Its cancellation in 2020 was an enormous loss to our community but in 2021 we regrouped, presenting the concert online. This was an exciting opportunity for each and every one of our students, teachers, volunteers and families, who worked incredibly hard throughout the year and fully deserved their moment to shine.

An extension of emotion21, the Artistic Capacity Building program (ACB) is a ground-breaking program that supports dancers with Down syndrome to develop their artistic identity. With specialised workshops that works on creativity, collaborative skills and confidence, it helps them translate their passion into skills that are required for meaningful careers in the arts.

We were thrilled that three of the six participants in the inaugural ACB program went on to find employment as professional assistant dance teachers or assistant choreographers, and others continue to volunteer as mentors and teachers in community dance programs.



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**“There has been such a change in our daughter’s appreciation of dance and also in her own self-esteem and confidence since she joined emotion21. Confidence is not something that can be turned on and off. It shows in appearance, speech, movement, and behaviour.”**

Jenny, parent to emotion21 dancer

# Working towards an inclusive future

We are tremendously proud of the outcomes delivered by Impact21, Inclusion Foundation's newest program. This is a two-year immersive program that leads to meaningful and matched employment for young adults with Down syndrome, and their employers.

In Australia, 95 percent of adults with Down syndrome are unemployed. Unemployment effectively shuts them out of society, both economically and socially, keeping them entirely dependent on family or State support. This in turn has a devastating impact on their confidence, independence, and self-esteem.

Impact21 creates real jobs for people with Down syndrome, enabling them to earn real wages and achieve independence. The student curriculum was designed in partnership with large scale employers, and focuses on creating work-ready graduates who each possess the industry relevant skills, confidence, independence and social connectedness to succeed in the workplace.

Thanks to a special grant of \$1.27 million from the Victorian Government, we are rolling out Impact21 across regional Victoria. We look forward to supporting increasing numbers of adults with Down syndrome into fulfilling careers.

With philanthropic support from generous Australians and in partnership with our employer partners, we plan to expand the program beyond state borders. Impact21 will become the country's leading and most meaningful employment-readiness program with inclusion at its heart.

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## Thank you to our employment partners

The success of Impact21 simply would not be possible without the belief, participation, knowledge and support of our employer partners.

Our ten active employer partners include those who co-designed the program in the pilot and now employ graduates. They also include employers partnering with us and receiving inclusion confidence training alongside engagement activities in the journey towards customised roles for 2021 graduates.

- ACMI
- CVGT Australia
- Deakin University
- DuluxGroup
- JB Hi-Fi
- Melbourne Sports Centres
- PwC
- Torrens University Australia
- Sodexo
- Tennis Australia

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# Emily is all in

Emily Woodward is one of our most well-known and a deeply beloved alumni, joining emotion21 in 2011 as a bubbly 18-year-old.

Warmth and positivity shines through when Emily explains why she wants to be a dance teacher; "Because I love seeing the kids smile. It makes me happy!"

Now, Emily is living out her dreams not only as a dancer but as a professional dance teacher, hosting her signature "Bust a Move: All In" dance class at Greenbrook Community House for a range of students from all backgrounds and ages.

Greenbrook Community House's coordinator, Rachel Cooper, explained how Emily is making a difference in her community:

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**"You could feel the joy in the room as Emily shared her love of dance and got us all moving with some pretty sharp moves. Her style of teaching is so perfectly aligned with Greenbrook – kind, encouraging and fun and we all finished the session with a huge amount of joyful energy."**

Recognised primarily for her talent as a dancer and her gift as a teacher, Emily espouses the true value of inclusion in our communities. Her vivacity and her infectious passion for dance has brought people together in a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters community and wellbeing for all participants.





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**"I absolutely love teaching. Seeing the students smile makes me have fun too. It's just perfect!"**

Emily Woodward, emotion21 participant and Inclusion Foundation dance teacher

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# Together we can champion inclusion

We are extraordinarily proud of the hard work that our staff, volunteers and most importantly, our participants have done during the past year. Together, they have helped to ensure that in a year fraught with challenges and setbacks, Inclusion Foundation not only stayed the course, but made great strides in changing the way people with Down syndrome experienced inclusion and opportunity in the world.

But it would be remiss if did not celebrate the critical role that philanthropy also played in the benefits we were able to bring to children and adults with Down syndrome during 2021.

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**“In fact, more than a third of our income this year came from donations and grants. It is safe to say that philanthropy has been critical to giving thousands of people with Down syndrome opportunities and connections they otherwise simply would not have.”**

Your donations made it possible for us to create, recruit for and deliver dance and wellbeing classes across Melbourne to more than 200 participants via emotion21. You enabled us to research, develop, train and deliver the pilot Impact21 employment-readiness program to such a high standard that all graduates gained and retained their jobs.

Because of you, we are poised to be able to help more people with Down syndrome and intellectual disabilities than at any other time in the history of our organisation.

With the generous support of the community we will create a movement of change. Our goal is to start a movement, where inclusion is an integral part of everyday Australian life.

And your donation will make a direct impact. You will help:

- Reach people with Down syndrome in remote and regional areas by establishing three new sites in country Victoria
- Ensure that people with Down syndrome can access our critical programs online
- Create a volunteer and leadership program where our dancers become mentors and role models to young children in schools
- Attract additional employer partners in Impact21 which translate into more job opportunities
- Get more people with Down syndrome into open employment by rolling out Impact21 across the country.

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# Count me in!

**Inclusion Foundation relies on the generosity of individuals, groups and businesses who are committed to championing the inclusion of people with Down syndrome. We are grateful for their support.**

## **Make a donation**

Credit card donations can be made by visiting our website or calling our office

[inclusionfoundation.org.au](http://inclusionfoundation.org.au)

03 9854 7100

[info@inclusionfoundation.org.au](mailto:info@inclusionfoundation.org.au)

## **Volunteer your time**

We are looking for “movers” for our emotion21 dance and fitness programs, get in touch

03 9854 7100

[volunteer@emotion21.org.au](mailto:volunteer@emotion21.org.au)

## **Become an employer partner**

Build a more inclusive workplace by joining our employer-led work readiness program Impact21

03 9854 7100

[info@impact21.org.au](mailto:info@impact21.org.au)

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