



BLESSING
BAGS
MELBOURNE

Blessing Bags Melbourne 21/22

Blessing Bags Melbourne
Annual Report 2021-2022



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Blessing Bags would like to acknowledge the many sacred lands and waterways we work on. While our work is predominantly on Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung lands, we know our bags travel far and wide across the many traditional lands in what we now call Victoria. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and that First Nations people are shamefully over-represented in the population of those experiencing homelessness, and accessing homelessness services in Victoria. Our aims to help those experiencing homelessness and provide meaningful change naturally extends to joining the struggle for true and meaningful reconciliation with our First Nations peoples. This was and always will be Aboriginal land.

At A Glance



13,910

Blessing Bags made and distributed to those in need since 2015.



Key Successes

Amassed over 960 Instagram followers
2 Bagging Days held



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Our Values

Dignity, Compassion, Community


Blessing Bags' **VISION** is to see people experiencing homelessness treated with compassion while receiving the appropriate support, and for these individuals to have access to safe, affordable and secure housing.

Our organisation's **MISSION** is to provide people experiencing homelessness with essential items that we often take for granted. We aim for a judgement-free approach to our work to ensure our services are accessible.



Our Impact

Why we do what we do



This year, rents have risen by 9.7% nationally (Homelessness Australia 2021). Throughout the pandemic, house prices rose on average by a record 25% (ABS 2021). According to a 2021 survey conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, more than 1 million Australian households are under housing stress (AIHW 2021). Whereby, they are spending 30% or more of their income on housing. The number of Australians experiencing housing stress is only going to increase as interest rates continue to climb and wage growth continues to slow.

Today, the population of people experiencing homelessness consists of women fleeing domestic violence, families, young people, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders and single women aged over 50 years (the fastestgrowing population of people experiencing homelessness). Again, these changes reflect the social, economic and policy trends in recent years. The pandemic deepened a lot of the underlying reasons people experience homelessness including an increase in domestic violence and housing unaffordability.

In 2022 the housing and cost of living crises impacting so many Australians was once more pushed into the spotlight with the federal election. However, as the time for impressive speeches about Australia's future pass and the monotonous rhetoric settles in. It is our job and responsibility to keep pushing, keep reminding those politicians what is at stake for some of our most vulnerable members of society.

Our Impact

From July 1 2021 to June 30 2022


Blessing Bags have the privilege of providing bags to a wide range of individuals and communities across Melbourne and surrounds. We partner with organisations, crisis centres, schools, community groups and businesses who reach out to us for support. We supply bags of toiletries containing: a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, soap, deodorant, tissues a muesli bar and a note of hope and encouragement.

These bags are regularly distributed to individuals and groups who are facing disadvantage and/or homelessness. This past year we have also been able to supply bags to communities facing crises such as flooding, displacement, and Covid-related disadvantage. This has been possible due to the generosity of the wider Blessing Bags community, who have contributed their time to transport our bags across Melbourne and even interstate..



Our Impact

From July 1 2021 to June 30 2022



We make and distribute approximately 500 bags quarterly and since being founded in 2015, we have made and distributed 13,910 bags. This past year has continued to be a tough one, with the continued presence of Covid-19 making it challenging to hold regular bagging days safely. However, despite this, thanks to the generosity of our community, we were able to hold small bagging days to help those in need. In this past year we have been able to make up bags for the following organisations/groups:

- SHARPS Frankston
- Community Support Frankston
- Mobilise
- Winter Night Shelter Frankston
- Monash Health Dandenong
- Frankston Brekky Club
- Biala Peninsula
- Cohealth Innerspace
- Humble Mission
- Dardi Munwurro
- Skillinvest
- Privately run Flood Relief program in NSW

These groups/organisations pass on bags to those they work with who are in need of some extra support. This can include people going through homeless/insecure housing, addiction/substance abuse, domestic violence, loss of income and mental health difficulties to name a few. Not only do these bags assist in keeping these people as healthy and hygienic as possible, but it also helps them maintain their dignity and assists them in trying to maintain relationships and jobs. We strongly believe in the power of hope and know that if we share that alongside practical support, it can make the world of difference.



Financial statement

For year ending June 30, 2021

INCOME

Donations - Individual Contributors	\$777.34
Fundraising Income	\$1,407.00
Grant Income	\$336.00
Grants Received	\$3,000.00
Interest Income	\$1.07
Mistake Deposits	\$75.34

TOTAL INCOME	\$5,596.75
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GROSS PROFIT	\$5,596.75
AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL INCOME	100.00%

OPERATING EXPENSES

ATM Operating Fees	\$2.50
Clothing	\$83.94
Consumer Affairs	\$59.20
Fundraising Expenses	\$424.46
Grant Expenses	\$720.00
Product for Blessing Bags	\$4,268.62
Storage Expenses	\$132.60
Website	\$132.60

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$5,940.97
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NET PROFIT	-\$344.22
AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL INCOME	-6.15%



Financial statement

For year ending June 30, 2022

INCOME

Donations - Individual Contributors	\$2,480.19
Fundraising Income	\$320.00
Grants Received	\$500.00

TOTAL INCOME	\$3,300.19
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GROSS PROFIT	\$3,000.19
AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL INCOME	100.00%

OPERATING EXPENSES

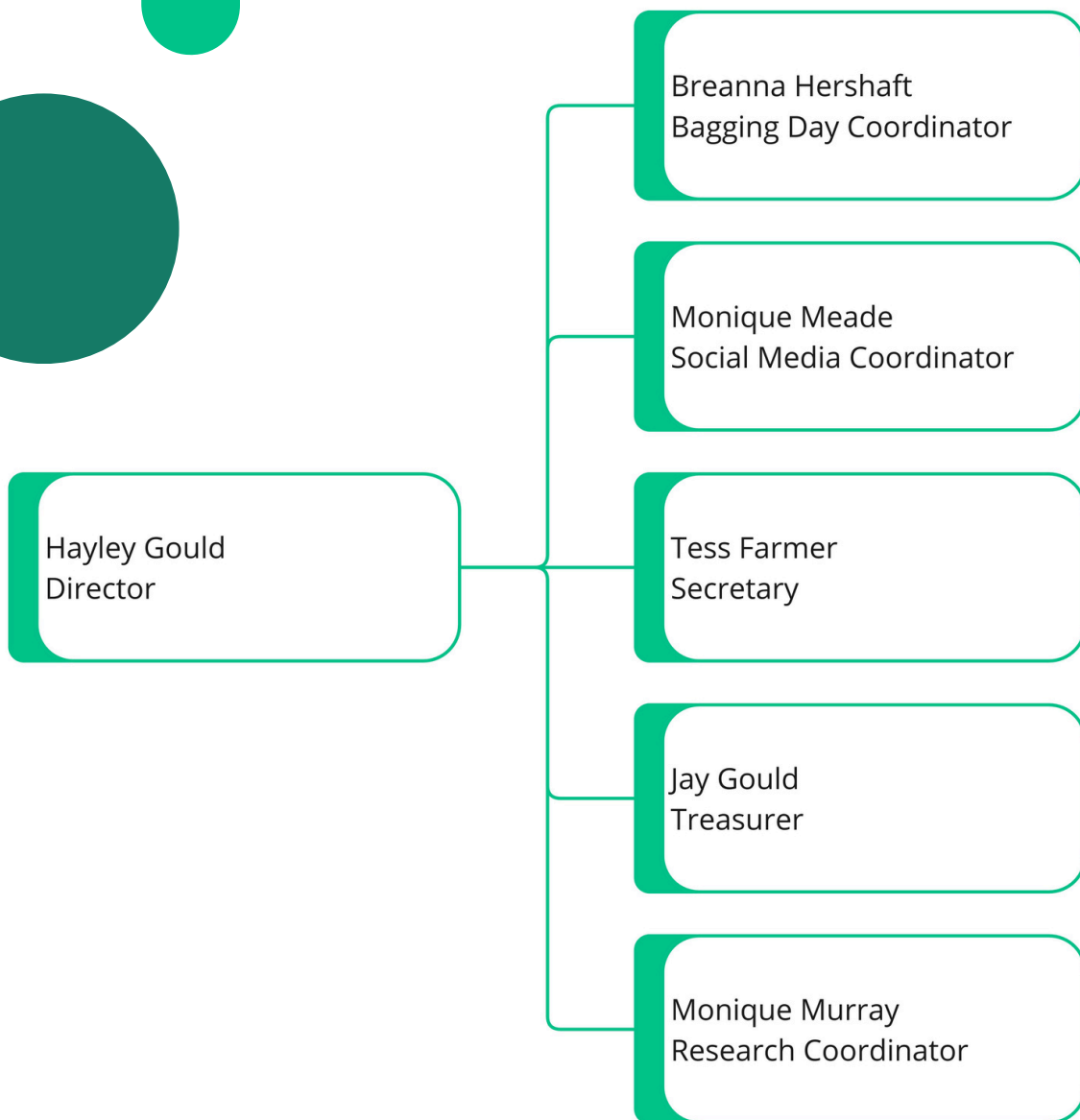
ATM Operating Fees	\$2.90
Fundraising Expenses	\$198.20
Product for Blessing Bags	\$3,936.68
Website	\$269.91

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	\$4,407.69
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NET PROFIT	-\$1,107.50
AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL INCOME	-33.56%



Our Structure 2022



Community Engagement



Community Engagement

This past year has been another challenging one for Blessing Bags, with the continued effects of Covid-19 making operations difficult. Unfortunately, we were unable to hold as many bagging days as we would have hoped, due to density limits, safety restrictions and infection rates within the committee and wider community. Bringing people together for our bagging days is such a special part of our work and it has been challenging not being able to share that with our community.

We have been grateful that so many people continued to collect donations and make up bags in their own homes at times we were unable to gather in person. We have also been thrilled that we have had an increasing number of schools expressing interest in running a bagging day with their students as part of their curriculum. Bayside Christian College in Langwarrin South is one of the notable cases here, hosting a bagging day that was such a success that they are hoping to continue our relationship into the future and hold one every year for their students.

Run during their 2022 Service Week, the Year 9 students worked with us to get the resources and information they needed and then worked with their school community to put it into action. After getting a run-down from our committee, the students were able to advertise, create a call-out for donations, organise the event and put the bags together. They made an incredible 341 bags on the day, with some students continuing to go home and make up some more with their families. The teacher helping coordinate the event said that the students had really enjoyed learning about the organisations that Blessing Bags partners with and this had really inspired them to make as many bags as possible.

We are so thankful for their support this past year and are looking forward to upcoming events this coming year. Looking ahead, we are in the planning stages of organising our next event which will be an Amazing Race style scavenger hunt across the Peninsula. We are hoping that this event will raise funds and awareness for Blessing Bags, as well as bringing the community together for a bit of fun. We are looking forward to more events such as this in 2022-2023.



Policy and Research

Monique Murray

This past year our policy and research team have focused inward on ensuring Blessing Bags' advocacy work is based on best evidence and reflects the needs of those experiencing homelessness. As such, it was important for us to recognise the impact language has in our work. You can read our inclusive language policy [here](#).

This year has been an important one for Australia's housing and homeless policy. In June, the Labor Government committed to developing a national plan to address homelessness. This milestone decision laid the foundation for this year's Homelessness Week theme: To End Homelessness Week We Need A Plan. You can read our 2022 Homelessness Week statement [here](#).



Campaigns and Media

Monique Meade

The year of 2021 saw Blessing Bags fully adopt its new logo and colour scheme / branding into the social media campaigns. The logo provided a modernized representation of Blessing Bags, using the words “Blessing Bags”, a stylized letter “b” incorporating a heart design, and a heart-shaped “bag” representing the Blessing Bags that are assembled and distributed. The heart imagery provides a nod to the heartfelt, handwritten notes that are included in the Blessing Bags – a feature that is unique and core to the work of Blessing Bags. The incorporation of a new logo and colour scheme – green, black, grey – allowed Blessing Bags to progress toward a distinguished, consistent and recognizable presence on social media platforms.

Blessing Bags continued to utilize two social media platforms – Facebook and Instagram – to connect with supporters and those in the wider community. The Blessing Bags public Facebook page has amassed 2500 likes and the public Instagram page has over 960 followers. These two platforms allowed Blessing Bags to continue to connect with supporters and community members, particularly in times of COVID-19 restrictions where face-to-face connections were not feasible. Social media posts made by Blessing Bags aimed to inform supporters of upcoming events (fundraisers, Bagging Days, etc.), encourage their participation in the organisation through donations, and provide information about the distribution of the Blessing Bags to other organisations and services.

The Facebook and Instagram pages were often utilised as an initial point of communication for individuals and organisations to connect with Blessing Bags and/or receive its services. Individuals in need were able to send private messages asking for services/supplies, and organisations were able to connect with Blessing Bags to offer bulk donations and/or request bulk orders of Blessing Bags for their consumers.



Campaigns and Media

In addition to the public social media platforms, Blessing Bags also utilised a private Facebook group – Friends of Blessing Bags – to connect more closely and directly to its regular volunteers and supporters. This group was used to invite individuals to stock-take days, working-bees, and Bagging Days, and to ask for assistance with collection and distribution of donations and/or Blessing Bags. This group allowed members of the local community to take on smaller, informal roles/duties within Blessing Bags, allowing supporters to develop a greater sense of connection to, and involvement with, Blessing Bags and the surrounding community.

Blessing Bags continued to inform and engage its supporters through the quarterly newsletters, which were emailed to those who requested to be on the Blessing Bags mailing list. The newsletters provided a concise summary of the work of Blessing Bags over the preceding few months, ensuring supporters remained up-to-date and aware of the work of Blessing Bags within the local community. The quarterly newsletters aimed to incite motivation and continued enthusiasm from supporters/volunteers whose involvements and contributions are paramount to the continued operations of Blessing Bags.



Bagging Days 2022

Breanna Hershaft

This financial year, we were able to hold two Bagging Days. Some of our team members also participated in at-home Bagging Days so we were able to provide and distribute our bags during lockdowns. Some of these bags were donated to those affected by the floods and Beyond housing in Seymour. Bayside Christian College held a Bagging Day for us at their school and Toorak College collected donations. Thank you to both these schools.

In December, we were able to have our first Bagging Day of the financial year which was our Christmas Bagging Day. I would like to give a huge thank you to all of the volunteers that came to help out on the day. We made over 500 bags that were given to SHARPS Frankston, Community Support Frankston, Humble Mission, Monash Health Dandenong, Food Van St Albans & Mobilise.

In May, we had our second Bagging Day of the financial year where we made 300 bags. These were delivered to SHARPs Frankston, Community Support Frankston, Brekky Club Frankston, Winter Night Shelter, Monash Health Dandenong and Biala Peninsula. This brings the total number of bags made since Blessing Bags started to 13,910.

Next financial year, I am looking forward to hopefully being able to get back to running our 4 yearly Bagging Days and distributing the bags to the local community.



Thank You

Blessing Bag's impact in communities across Victoria is a direct result of the hard work our dedicated team of volunteers put in. It is their passion and commitment to helping others in need, that makes our organization succeed.

Our deep gratitude goes to not only our core team but all of the volunteers who show up to bagging day events, donate items, or make financial donations. We appreciate your support and look forward to continuing our work with you, to build a stronger community.





Questions? Contact us.



Friends of Blessing Bags



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[blessingbagsmelbourne](https://www.instagram.com/blessingbagsmelbourne)