2023 IMPACT REPORT



Our vision

Our vision is that every child's potential is realised through full participation in education. This belief inspires us to increase engagement in education, build aspirations and enhance learning outcomes of children in disadvantaged communities. We mobilise community and workplace volunteers to support schools.

Table of Contents

From the Team	4
Impact	6
Programs	8
In Residence	9
Pathways	12
Broadening Horizons	17
Education Volunteers	18
Literacy Buddies	19
Numeracy Buddies	20

From the CEO

The start of 2023 was an exciting one as we began rolling out our new five-year strategy.

One of its key pillars is to deepen our impact. We expanded our program offering to include more programs with multiple points of connection. It was great to see our wonderful Writer in Residence program evolve into Artist in Residence, creating different opportunities to develop children's confidence in self-expression, and the successful pilot of our Robotics Club, building enthusiasm and capability in the important field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

We were delighted to work with our existing schools, and partner with new ones, to flexibly respond to student needs. We were able to offer more of our programs to schools in regional Victoria, a trend we will continue.

Our commitment to deepening our impact involved designing and implementing our enhanced monitoring, evaluation and learning framework (MELF). The MELF underpins understanding our impact and efforts to continuously improve.

Another key pillar of our strategy is to give students a voice and greater agency in program design, delivery and evaluation. We facilitated our first student focus groups, established our inaugural Youth Advisory Group and engaged young researchers to advise on expanding youth engagement. We are so grateful to the students who participated with such dedication and enthusiasm. They offered unique insights and perspectives on strategy, policies, programs and approaches, leading to important improvements.

A core element of many of our programs is connecting children and young people with positive adult role models – our amazing volunteers. We never cease to be humbled by the people who step forward from the community and our corporate partners to give time and care to make a difference in a child's life. We are equally grateful and admiring of our behind-the-scenes volunteers for the skill, time and effort they give.

We are excited to have launched our inaugural Volunteer Steering Committee to gain insights into how we can strengthen the positive impact of volunteers' connection with students and further improve our programs and the volunteering experience.

Our gratitude to our incredible partners and supporters is just as enormous. Thank you for sharing our vision for children and young people and contributing to make it a reality.

Lisa Jones



Why our work matters

For every child to reach their potential, we need to see equality and equity in education become a reality. There is substantial evidence that Australia is far from achieving either.

Advantaged children benefit from a system that sees their potential propped up by resources across a wide variety of areas. They have ready access to resources, teachers, connections, and opportunities. Even the most talented and intelligent students in underserved communities, who work twice as hard, will struggle to keep up with their less able peers in advantaged schools.

There is an inherent unfairness in this dynamic. It is unfair on the individuals, yes, but also inherently bad for society. We are wasting the potential creative and economic contribution of each individual we fail to support. We are fostering individuals who feel less able to contribute to society and less valued by it, too.

The statistics clearly show that children in underserved communities do not fare as well. The disadvantage is not a simple equation. Wealth, gender, sexual orientation, race, location, neurological composition, physical abilities, language – all of these impact a child's ability to reach their potential.

Real equity comes when each child has what they need to learn and grow, regardless of their personal or social situation.

We need to make every effort to ensure that all children reach their potential, feel valued and important, and believe they can learn and succeed. They need to have the opportunity to reach their potential.

Ardoch programs are designed to foster the confidence, aspirations, wellbeing, social skills and school engagement of students in disadvantaged communities.

Students facing disadvantage are **3** years behind by Year 12

1 in 6 Australian *children* live in poverty, and 1 in 8 people Students facing disadvantage have 60%

high school completion rate, 30% behind more advantaged areas



"Living in poverty is a major contributor to poor performance. Year 9 students from families experiencing disadvantage are up to five years behind their more advantaged peers in literacy and numeracy." - 2023 NAPLAN data

Our Impact

During 2023, we delivered 709 programs to over 28,500 students, an increase of 4% in student numbers from 2022. Although we hope all of these children and young people across Western Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Regional Victoria have a great time, it is the broader impact these programs have on children's lives that matters. The 2023 evaluations tell us that Ardoch programs have a substantial impact on participating students.

The programs appear to have an especially strong impact on student confidence and engagement in learning.

From this perspective, key numbers include:

- 93% of teachers agreed that Literacy Buddies contributed to increasing children's confidence to engage in writing
- 79% of volunteer respondents believe the Education Volunteer program improved verbal and non-verbal communication skills in the students with whom they worked
- 70% of student respondents believed that participating in Learning through Lunch gave them greater awareness of possible jobs or careers that are open to them.



"Ardoch has also enabled our students to engage more fully in excursions and opportunities to expand their experience and aspirations that would otherwise not have been possible due to the limited financial circumstances of many of our families." - Principal



Measuring Impact

During 2023, Ardoch implemented an enhanced Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF). This framework continues to focus on the key elements that we know make a difference to children and young people's ability to reach their potential:

- Confidence
- Aspirations
- Wellbeing
- Social Skills
- Engagement in learning

Ardoch's MELF focuses on ensuring we can clearly connect the design and implementation of our programs to the outcomes achieved, whilst constantly looking for ways to improve.

Expanding our data collection to include teacher interviews, student and volunteer focus groups, and more child-friendly survey options, has enhanced our understanding of the impact of our programs. Improved analysis and reporting tools have resulted in a more comprehensive picture of our impact. This is already enabling us to better understand how we can continue to improve and expand Ardoch's work. Continuous improvement, quality and child safety are important themes that cut across all our work and are embedded in our evaluations.

As 2023 was the first year of a new approach, we gained some critical learnings. We still have work to do to ensure our evaluation processes are accessible to all young people and we can capture a greater number and broader range of student voices. We will refine our student surveys and expand the number of student focus groups in 2024 to gain further insights. Listening to students is critical to Ardoch and creating more opportunities to hear from them is a key priority in 2024.

Ardoch is working to streamline our processes to ensure that, as well as improving our impact, we can be as cost-effective as possible, to maximise the use of our funds, time and resources to deliver more projects to the children and young people who need them most.

Confidence

Students believe in themselves and have courage to try new things

Aspiration

Students understand the study and career possibilities available and are inspired to pursue them

Wellbeing

Students are resilient and know strategies to manage their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing

Social Skills

Students understand themselves, can communicate well and know how to engage with their peers and adults

Engagement in Learning

Students value education and are interested and actively participating in learning

Our Programs

In Residence

"We have a student who when she first came to the school she was non-verbal. She is still very quiet now, but she was able to talk to Lukas [artist] and produce a piece of her own work for him." – Teacher about Artist in Residence

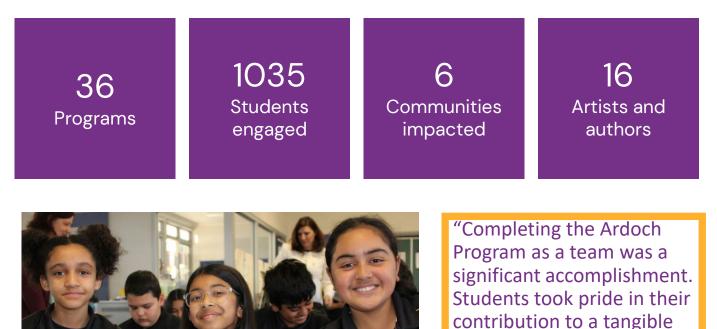
Ardoch's In Residence programs now include:

- Writer in Residence
- Artist in Residence
- Scientist in Residence.

The programs run for 4–6 weeks and give students the opportunity to learn from a program facilitator who is knowledgeable in their field and can help the students write a book, create art or program robots.

Ardoch's In Residence programs have continued to grow, in number, type and impact. In 2023, we trialled Artist in Residence and Robotics Club (which will form part of Scientist in Residence going forward). We also delivered In Residence programs in Western Sydney and regional Victoria for the first time.

The number of programs increased by 200% on 2022 and saw children's confidence in their creativity, and collaboration skills grow. Just over 1,000 students took part in In Residence programs in 2023.



9

product, and this sense of

increased confidence in their abilities to set and

achievement led to

achieve [goals]."

- Teacher

Artist and Writer in Residence

"Some of these students were a little reluctant with learning literacy in the classroom, however, every single one of them has been so engaged and keen to write." – Teacher

These programs had a significant impact on the children involved.

- 100% of teachers agreed that participants displayed heightened confidence in selfexpression, increased pride, and an overall boost in self-confidence.
- 100% of teachers believed that Writer in Residence resulted in an increased willingness to participate in creative activities. Additionally, 68% of students agreed the Writer in Residence program had contributed to them having an increased focus on learning in school.
- 70% of teachers agreed that the programs positively impacted students' physical and mental health.

There were some important lessons learned as the program expanded and Artist in Residence was introduced. We increased the numbers of artists and authors involved to accommodate the growth and strengthened our guidelines and processes to ensure consistent program quality and support. We discovered just how expensive and logistically complicated murals are and determined that, although very appreciated by the schools, they will not remain part of the Artist in Residence program! We will trial involving volunteers in the programs in 2024 to ensure that all students have the support they need to foster their creativity and social skills.

33 Programs 16 Artists and Authors 899 Students Engaged

It is great to see "Students who are normally quiet and reserved to grow in their confidence and to really embrace to world of writing." Teacher



Robots in Residence

(Robotics Club)

"I thought it was gonna be much like harder and complex. Maybe that's for, like, grade sevens and high schoolers, but ... it was like a bit challenging, but... not too challenging... I thought it was like a really good program to do!" ~ Student

In 2023, Ardoch piloted Robotics Club – a six-week program where a class of students, work in small groups to build and code robots supported by a facilitator and 2–6 volunteers. While the facilitator led the session, volunteers worked with the groups of students helping support their collaboration and engagement in the challenges. This program was a great success.

Teachers saw significant changes in their students' confidence, with 100% agreeing that students' confidence to try new things improved, especially their confidence in using technology.

- 69% of students thought that the program increased their belief that they can improve over time with hard work and effort, with only 6% disagreeing.
- 67% of students felt the program increased their confidence to try new things and, more specifically, 59% agreed their confidence in STEM improved over the course of the program. 63% agreed the program increased their belief in themselves and what they can achieve.
- 80% of teachers agreed they had seen an increase in students' verbal and non-verbal communication skills. 80% agreed that students had developed their ability to work effectively with others. 100% felt that students had increased collaboration skills.

The success of this program means we will:

1) Continue the program in 2024

2) Trial using volunteers in the Artist in Residence and Writer in Residence programs, based on the difference it made having volunteers there to support the students during Robotics Club

3) Explore adapting the model to offer programs in more STEM areas (thus the name change to Scientist in Residence)



Pathways Beyond School

Ardoch's Pathways Beyond School program offers students engaging learning experiences that are designed to support their preparation for employment, as well as increase aspirations towards continued education and training, with a view to gaining long-term employment. Pathways Beyond School activities focus on building career and educational aspirations and preparing students for life beyond school.

Our Pathways program includes:

- Mock Interviews
- Learning Through Lunch
- Speed Careers
- Project Magnify
- Industry Visits
- You-Niversity

Unsurprisingly, the Pathways program has the best results when it comes to increasing student aspirations.

In 2023, we made some program adjustments to accommodate the needs of schools. For example, in regional Victoria, we found a strong interest in bringing together grade six students from different schools to enable them to engage with peers from other schools and ease their transition to high school.

We were fortunate to receive pro bono support to evaluate our Pathways program from a volunteer perspective. The results were excellent in relation to volunteer experience and perceived student impact and indicated opportunities to improve. In 2024, we will strengthen our engagement with workplace coordinators and volunteers to ensure we give them a great experience while helping them provide an impactful experience for the children and young people they support.

9,451 Students supported

339 Volunteers 98% Of volunteers indicated it was rewarding

"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to expose our students to new pathways. It takes a village, and every opportunity has to increase the chances that some children who have never observed family members working, may change their life course." - Teacher



Mock Interviews

"For a lot of the students, this was their first job interview. The myths they had about job interviews was different to what they encountered. It has given them more confidence in themselves and their ability to sit an interview." – Teacher

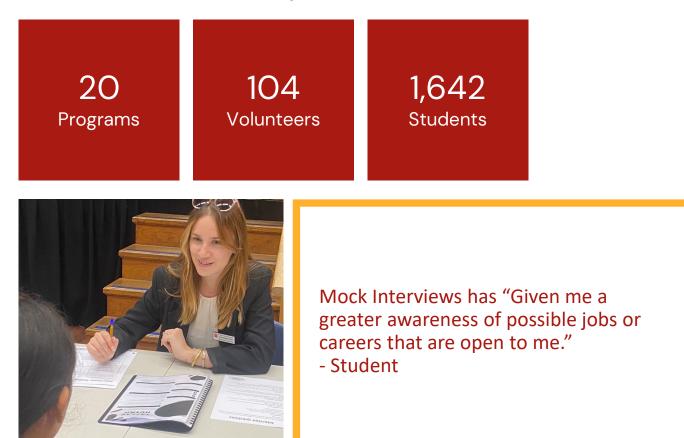
This valuable experience helps prepare young people for the job market. Secondary school students are connected with working volunteers who take part in mock interviews with them, helping them to build interview techniques that are crucial to securing employment.

Students across various schools expressed a positive connection with volunteers during Mock Interviews, citing aspects such as the interviewer's enthusiasm in explaining questions, friendly and positive conversations, genuine interest in students' aspirations, and the welcoming and supportive demeanor of the volunteers. Teachers observed that students felt at ease and appreciated the welcoming atmosphere created by the interviewers. Overall, students generally felt connected and supported by the volunteers during the Mock Interview experience.

- 92% of teachers thought that students' participation in Mock Interviews increased their knowledge about the job-seeking process. 62% of students agreed.
- 88% of volunteers felt that students' participation in Mock Interviews contributes to student's having higher aspirations for themselves.

Students and volunteers indicated that they would like to see more time allocated for interviews, or have multiple interviews, to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth experience. This would offer more opportunities for students to build their confidence and develop interview skills.

In 2024, we will focus on ensuring that students have all the support and resources they need to prepare for Mock Interviews and gain the most out of the experience. We will endeavour to engage volunteers with more diverse backgrounds that better reflect the communities with which we work as this resonates strongly with our students.



Industry Visits

"For girls, it was a very male-dominated environment. It would be wonderful for them to see that women can become diesel mechanics and engineers too, perhaps through role models." – Teacher

Industry visits involve students visiting the workplace of an industry partner. Students tour the facility and meet an array of staff from different areas.

- 91% of teachers agreed that the Industry Visit encouraged students to be interested in learning more about careers and industries and 73% of students agreed that the program motivated them to do additional learning that will help them to succeed in future.
- 75% of students thought that participating in the Industry Visit made them more interested in learning more about careers and industries and 69% of students agreed that participating in an Industry Visit made them more motivated to do additional learning that will help them to succeed in their future career.

In 2024, as part of our continual improvement process, we will trial several different options with the program structure, including exploring different schedules and activities. Ardoch will take deliberate steps to showcase diversity during the visits. In particular, we will work with the Industry Visit host to recruit speakers from various backgrounds, genders and ages to serve as role models.



"Students enjoyed the day and made links to the curriculum at school. Teachers can refer to excursions to make connections for real world need for learning."

-Teacher



Speed Careers

I liked "the different types of jobs like: nurse, police, lawyer and more. Another thing that I liked about the program is how people got to listen on what to do if they wanted to be like a doctor or other jobs." Student

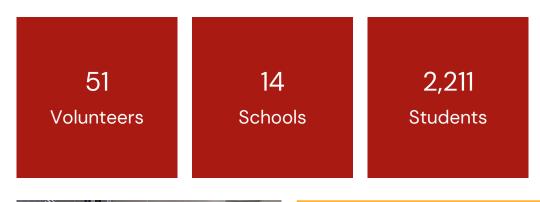
Ardoch offers three different options for Speed Careers:

- Volunteers attending the school to discuss their careers with small groups of students
- Providing buses so that students can attend Career Expos
- Sharing videos and information about careers with schools for them to use at their convenience.

The program aims to ensure a diverse representation in career fields, ages, and cultural backgrounds that resonate with students' interests. Recruitment strategies included reaching out to local councils, tertiary institutions, police groups, corporate partner networks, and existing volunteers. Using volunteer job recruitment platforms and volunteer organisation networks helped Ardoch to assemble a comprehensive and varied roster of speakers.

- 100% of teachers and 67% of students agreed that participating in Speed Careers gave the participants a greater awareness of possible jobs or careers that are open to them.
- 89% of volunteers thought Speed Careers allows students to have higher aspirations.
- 100% of teacher respondents and 89% of volunteer respondents agreed that Speed Careers increases students' social skills.
- 100% of teachers indicated that Speed Careers contributed to increased motivation to undertake additional learning required to succeed in their careers. 60% of students agreed.

In 2024, we will explore offering inter-school expos, providing additional support to volunteers preparing for Speed Careers, and sharing enhanced pre-program information with students to allow them to think about what they would like to learn from the volunteers





"The presenters were fantastic, from a range of professions and with a range of ages and experience. They showed students that there are myriad pathways into the professions you want. They also normalised having a range of jobs and even careers throughout a person's life." - Teacher

Learning Through Lunch

"It was effortless thanks to the wonderful adult at our table who was incredibly kind and supportive, encouraging us to raise our hands and ask as many questions as we pleased. Her warm and inclusive approach made it a delightful experience, especially for those of us who tend to be shy or anxious." Student, Learning through Lunch

Learning Through Lunch (LTL) is a unique program that involves a class of students attending a two-course dining experience at a TAFE or hospitality training venue. Groups of students are seated with a volunteer during the lunch who encourages them to talk over the meal about career pathways, employment and further education. A tour of the training facility is provided to prompt thinking about post-school options and further education.

- 91% of teachers and 92% of volunteers agreed that students' participation in LTL helps improve their confidence
- 97% of teachers and 88% of volunteer respondents agreed that students' participation in LTL increased their career aspirations. 65% of students agreed that the program helped foster their aspirations
- 94% of teachers, 100% of volunteer, and 63% of students agreed that LTL increased students' social skills

In 2024, Ardoch will expand its data gathering to better understand the noted gap between student and adult observations, for which there are several potential explanations. We will continue to work with schools to improve program delivery and the student experience, including by:

- Reviewing program materials for volunteers to foster more conversations including some hands-on activities
- Trialling a rotation system for volunteers between courses to enhance interactions
- Reviewing table layouts and student-volunteer ratios to foster meaningful interactions.

195 Volunteers

Programs

6,593 Students

"I would just like to say thank you for allowing (our) students to celebrate the end of the year in such a way. I saw my students in a different light. There are many in this classroom that struggle with not enough food in their homes and to be given such an opportunity with no strings or cost attached is just amazing in today's society. Thanks Ardoch for including us in 2023. We are very grateful." - Teacher



Broadening Horizons

I liked "the good strategies. I was stressed the night after and I used one of the strategies and it worked well." – Year 4 Student, Broadening Horizons (Wellbeing)

Ardoch provides a wide range of incursions and excursions to students. Chosen by our school partners, these activities form our Broadening Horizons (BH) Programs. BH programs offer Ardoch the opportunity to address a wider range of school focus areas and scale the number of programs that Ardoch can deliver on its own.

These incursions and excursions provide opportunities for children and young people that they might otherwise not be able to access. They foster students' abilities in many ways, most notably in students growing confidence and engagement in learning.

- 83% of teachers agreed that the BH Wellbeing/Culture programs increased overall confidence in students
- 86% of teachers agreed that the BH STEM program increased overall confidence in students
- 87% of teachers agreed that the BH Wellbeing/Culture program increased student engagement in learning activities
- 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the BH STEM program increased student engagement in learning activities.

In 2024, we are pleased to be able to extend the option of BH programs to our school partners in regional areas. This will involve sourcing new incursion and excursion options for different areas, as well as working with current partners based on their ability to deliver programs to students in regional areas.

372 Programs 20,012 40 Student Delivery participations partners



"Scienceworks fit perfectly into our Science unit of inquiry. Students were able to have a hands-on experience of learning which really helped some of our students who struggle to stay focused engage in the activity and participate. It provided a different way for students to experience hands-on activities, activities which would be impossible to facilitate at school. Students have shown increased engagement, and lots of questioning and wondering." – Teacher

Education Volunteers

"For some of our students, the time spent with our volunteers is the only 1:1 time they have with an adult who is entirely focused on them and their ability/needs. They speak with growing confidence each week and it has been wonderful to watch their conversational skills develop as they feel they have something to say and share with an adult who values their thoughts and ideas." Teacher

Ardoch places screened and trained volunteers into school classrooms at the request of our education partners. Volunteers may provide additional learning support to students and/or help to extend those students that are accelerating. Education Volunteers become a valued addition to the classroom and a welcome support for teachers.

Education Volunteers commit to volunteering a minimum of two hours a week, for at least two terms at the partner school they are matched with. This support is provided at the same time each week. Volunteers are provided with ongoing training to ensure they have a meaningful impact in the classroom.

- 100% of volunteers found the experience rewarding
- 77% of teachers believe the program has a positive impact on students' confidence
- 77% of teachers thought that working with an education volunteer contributed to students having an increase in verbal and nonverbal communication skills
- 77% of teachers indicated that collaboration with Education Volunteers has contributed to students' increased engagement in learning, with 85% of volunteers agreeing that the program contributed to an increase in students' enthusiasm for learning

During 2024, we will work with the Volunteering Steering Committee to review the professional development offerings provided to volunteers. We will also trial volunteer peer mentoring, engaging more experienced volunteers to share their insights and support newer recruits.

2,224 Students supported

39 Schools 3,182 Volunteer hours 81 Volunteers

"My students have made incredible growth after working with Joan. She has changed the way that they perceive the world through numbers and language for the better. I am so thankful for the support she has provided them. It will cause a ripple on effect that will positively impact them as they transition to high school" – Teacher



Literacy Buddies®

"Some learnt how to talk to adults, some learnt how to be more confident, some learnt how to articulate themselves, I guess just how to interact with other people. Sometimes, you know, we're in a bubble. You only interact with people in the school or in the classroom. Those skills are really important for our children, you know, that's a life-long skill." -Teacher

Literacy Buddies[®] matches volunteers with students in a letter exchange program that is seen by teachers, volunteers and students as being both enjoyable and effective. The program has particularly strong outcomes in the areas of engagement in learning and increasing student confidence. It is also shown to help foster students' social skills and aspirations.

- 93% of teachers agreed that for participating students the program contributed to increased willingness to engage in literacy activities.
- 80% of Literacy Buddies[®] volunteers agreed that the program contributed to students having increased confidence to engage with writing.
- 93% of Literacy Buddies[®] teachers believed that for participating students the Literacy Buddies[®] program contributed to higher aspirations.
- 68% of students agreed that participating in the Literacy Buddies[®] program has increased their confidence in writing.
- 97% of surveyed Literacy Buddies[®] volunteers agreed that volunteering with this program was rewarding for them personally.

In 2024, we are looking at strengthening the buddy connection earlier in the program by booking in the school visit early. This will help Little Buddies feel more confident writing to their Big Buddy and provide them with the opportunity to explore more areas of interest.



Numeracy Buddies

"This program increased the student's confidence and broadened their understanding of the purpose of maths in the real world. It gave them hope for the future and a reason to study. The visit gave them new dreams and has motivated them to learn and be more focused and self-driven." - Numeracy Buddies teacher

Numeracy Buddies is very similar to Literacy Buddies except, instead of exchanging letters, the focus is on maths – and the exchange is done through online blogs rather than letters. The evidence is clear that Numeracy Buddies is incredibly rewarding for both the Little Buddies (students) and the Big Buddies (volunteers).

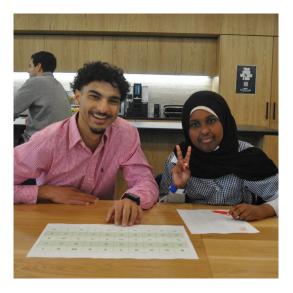
- 94% of surveyed Numeracy Buddies students thought that participating in the Numeracy Buddies program has increased their confidence with numeracy.
- 88% of Numeracy Buddies volunteers felt that the program contributed to students having stronger skills in connecting, communicating and interacting with people from outside their social circles.
- 95% of Numeracy Buddies volunteers agreed that volunteering with this program was rewarding for them.

However, despite the overall positive feedback, Buddies indicated that they would like some more substantial exchanges. In 2024, we will provide the opportunity for Numeracy Buddies to exchange letters rather than the shorter blogs. Maths will still be the focus. We will also trial some new curriculum-aligned questions, which are easy to navigate and can be made suitable for a range of abilities.

222 Students 132 Volunteer Big Buddies Programs

"...this program gave them a reason to expand their thinking and drill deeper. They learned to be active learners. They questioned their teachers and asked for more challenging work."

- Numeracy Buddies teacher



Thank you

In 2023, we delivered more programs and supported more students compared to 2022, whilst simultaneously rolling out a new monitoring, learning and evaluation framework and piloting multiple new programs. We could not have achieved what we did without the support of our corporate, philanthropic, community and, crucially, school partners

Ardoch's program delivery in 2023 was only possible with the committed support of:

- Our funders philanthropic, corporate, community and individual supporters and donors have enabled Ardoch to deliver our programs with flexibility, confidence and in an engaging manner. The commitment shown by our partners to support Ardoch, our education partners and the children and young people we work with has been immense and an absolute success.
- Our volunteers community and workplace volunteers alike, whose dedication throughout the year cannot be overstated. The endeavour to ensure they have completed their child safety compliance enabling them to participate in our programs, is always appreciated. The enthusiasm to write letters and blogs when their Buddy couldn't respond and their commitment to their volunteering and our partnership despite limited free time, heavy workloads and other responsibilities made our programs not only possible but also created a positive impact on children and young people's lives.
- Our school partners who worked with us in creating a safe environment for all their students, encouraging students to fully participate, and allowing us into their classrooms. We say thank you for your ongoing contributions.

The support of all our supporters has played a crucial role in exceeding program goals and impacts in 2023. We thank you enormously for your commitment and devoted support.



Contact Us

For more information on our work or how you can get involved, please contact us.

info@ardoch.org.au 1300 ARDOCH www.ardoch.org.au

