

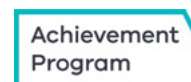


ANNUAL REPORT 2021

PARTNERS



GEELONG CATS
FOUNDATION





WELCOME FROM THE CATS COMMUNITY TEAM

OUR COMMUNITY IS THE HEARTBEAT OF OUR CLUB

Since our inception in 1859, our Club has had a genuine commitment to the community that has provided support, strength and love to us. That support has been truly felt through this global pandemic and we are ever so grateful.

Our Cats Community programs have continued to be offered, albeit a little differently, and our commitment has been unwavering. It is our vision to engage and empower our community to thrive in building healthy, active and inclusive lives. We commit to providing a welcoming environment for people of all backgrounds and abilities through our education programs, game promotion, game development and social inclusion programs.

We commit to continuing to build on the strong foundation we have established since our formation. After all, we know the power of footy is much more than the game.

We thank the Geelong Cats Community Foundation, our valued sponsors and partners, our players, our staff, and our members.

Sarah Albon
GM – Community



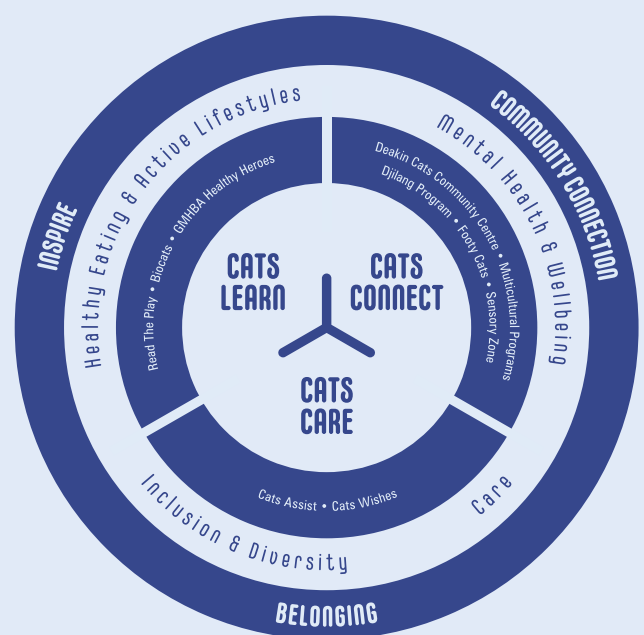
CATS COMMUNITY

The Geelong Cats aim to engage and empower our community to thrive in building healthy, active and inclusive lifestyles.

Cats Community is the community service provider that aims to build a healthy and inclusive community by positively influencing children and young people's attitudes and behaviours.

Our suite of Cats Community programs fall into three key pillars:

- **Cats Learn:** highlighting the importance of healthy eating, active lifestyles and mental health and wellbeing.
- **Cats Connect:** working collaboratively with our partners to build a sense of belonging and connection to our game, club and community.
- **Cats Care:** responding to the needs of our community, assisting those who need us most.





CATS LEARN

Our Cats Learn suite of programs highlight the importance of healthy eating and physical activity, plus mental health and wellbeing.

- GMHBA Healthy Heroes
- BioCATS
- Read the Play





TO SEE MORE OF GMHBA HEALTHY HEROES, HEAD TO:

[Grade 3/4 'Veterans' Program](#)

[Grade 5/6 'Leadership Group' Program excursion](#)

[GMHBA Healthy Heroes resources](#)



While the COVID landscape brought its fair share of challenges, 2021 was an exciting year for the GMHBA Healthy Heroes program, which expanded from its traditional Grade 3/4 offering to encompass a suite of programs for students from Foundation through to Grade 6.

Students of all ages in the Geelong region benefited from the program's messages around healthy eating, active lifestyles and mental health and wellbeing.

GMHBA Healthy Heroes visited students at their schools, where possible, across the region, but pivoted to a virtual delivery when COVID restrictions called for it, enabling students to still take part in the fun and engaging health program.

With the help of ambassadors across the Cats men's and women's squads – as well as club mascots Half-Cat and Clawdia – all of the GMHBA Healthy Heroes programs aim to inspire, teach and empower children to make positive choices that lead to good health.


GMHBA Healthy Heroes also caters for parents and teachers, as these groups have major impacts of health-promoting behaviours in children. As such, GMHBA Healthy Heroes offered a weeklong series of online workshops for parents, as well as a teacher professional development session in October. These sessions were conducted with the assistance of experts within the Geelong Football Club, as well as players from the Cats AFL Women's team, and renowned psychologist Dr Michael Carr-Gregg.

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY





BioCATS

A partnership program by  

BioCATS is a program that incorporates STEM learning with its practical application to a day in the life of a professional footballer, encouraging students to be physically active, eat well and look after their bodies.

In 2021, BioCATS returned to the Deakin Cats Community Centre, with Grade 5/6 students from across the state making their way to GMHBA Stadium to partake in the program.

Students calculated the hydration and nutrition needs of footballers, worked with GPS data, crunched some stats and more as they took a look at footy through a maths and science lens.

BioCATS welcomed onboard a new ambassador, with Maddy Keryk joining Patrick Dangerfield as the player champions of the program.

TO SEE MORE OF BIOCATS, HEAD TO:

[Patrick Dangerfield attends BioCATS](#)

[BioCATS resources](#)



PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY

Bisinella
the key to your community

BioLAB
VICTORIAN BIOSCIENCE
EDUCATION CENTRE



TO SEE MORE OF READ THE PLAY, HEAD TO:

[Online modules](#)

[Read the Play kicking goals
in the youth mental health space](#)



**Read
the
Play**

FOUNDING PARTNER
KEMPE
ENGINEERING

In 2021, Read the Play returned to delivering its fun and engaging educational games, designed to remove stigma and educate about mental health, into junior football and netball clubs across the AFL Barwon region.

With help from player ambassadors Danielle Higgins, Mark O'Connor and Mark Blicavs, Read the Play delivered important mental health messages through its program and to the wider community through social media.

Free online resources continued to be available for club Player Wellbeing Officers and parents to increase the knowledge, literacy and confidence required to engage with a young person who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

The program also released the results of an independent review, which found young people who had taken part in the program showed a marked increase in mental health literacy and help-seeking behaviours.

The Cats are proud supporters of the Read the Play program



CATS CONNECT

Cats Connect sees us continuing to work collaboratively with our community partners to provide unique engagement and participation activities aiming to build a sense of belonging and connection to our game, club and community.

- Deakin Cats Community Centre
- Sensory Zone
- Djilang Program
- Multicultural Programs
- Footy Cats
- All-Abilities Clinics



DEAKIN CATS COMMUNITY CENTRE.

COMMUNITY. EDUCATION. LEARNING.

Throughout the challenging and ever-changing COVID landscape, the Deakin Cats Community Centre continued to be a valuable resource for local community groups and Cats Community programs.

The centre, which is made freely available to community groups with a health focus, celebrated a special milestone this year with its 125,000th visitation since opening its doors in 2013.

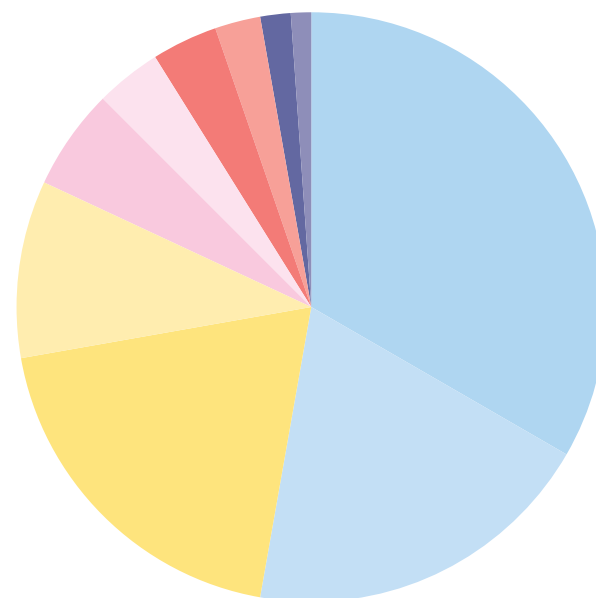
The centre has welcomed more than 150 Community Access Partners with a health and wellbeing focus in that time, and is the home to Cats Community programs, the Gartland Heritage Centre, Sensory Zone and the Geelong Cats Past Players and Officials Association.

Cats Community programs BioCATS and GMHBA Healthy Heroes Grade 5/6 Leadership Group operated out of the centre in 2021, while a portion of the All-Abilities Clinic also took place in the centre.

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY



DEAKIN CATS COMMUNITY CENTRE VISITATIONS SINCE 2013:



32%

Community Group

20%

People with a Disability

19%

Young People

9%

Junior Sport Program

6%

Women

4%

Older Victorians

4%

CALD

3%

LGBTIQ+

2%

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander

1%

Other



SEE MORE OF THE SENSORY ZONE

[Online tour](#)

[More information and social story](#)



**Sensory
Zone**

The Sensory Zone was opened to patrons once more on AFLW and AFLM match days in 2021, as well as for other sporting events held at the stadium.

The Sensory Zone, which is housed in the Deakin Cats Community Centre in the Players Stand, makes a day at the footy accessible to more families and fans, providing an accommodating and comfortable experience for guests and fans with sensory needs.

It encompasses a quiet room and multi-sensory room, while sensory bags and weighted lap mats are available to borrow around the stadium.

All staff who work in the Zone on game days have received special training in the area of sensory needs, and Cats Community put a special focus on the centre during Autism Acceptance Month in April.

The Sensory Zone welcomed a new ambassador in 2021, with Georgie Rankin joining Gary Rohan in the role.

SENSORY ZONE GAME DAY ACCESS 2021

ROOM NO. ENTRIES	ROOM NO. PEOPLE	MINUTES SPENT IN ROOM	BACKPACKS	MINUTES WITH BACKPACK	LAPMATS	MINUTES WITH LAPMAT
26	65	660	15	1803	1	160

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY



MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT & CONNECTION

WELCOME TO GEELONG

Each year, the Cats welcome members of Geelong's multicultural community to GMHBA Stadium for Welcome to Geelong, a fun day learning about our game and our club, including a clinic to introduce people to the skills of Australian Rules Football.

In 2021, more than 150 guests from Diversitat and Catholic Care joined AFLW players Georgie Rankin and Liv Barber for the clinic, which was run with the assistance of Cats staff, SEDA Students and volunteers from Viva Energy.

Families also had the opportunity to experience a Welcome to Country and an Australian feast inspired by footy food.

Watch: see Welcome to Geelong in action

WELCOME TO OUR GAME

The club held a Welcome to Our Game event aligned with Harmony Day, inviting more than 100 members of the multicultural community through Diversitat and Catholic Care to experience a day at the footy during the AFLW season.

Esava Ratugolea greeted guests and sat with them during the game, explaining the game and its rules, while AFLW players Georgie Rankin and Mia Skinner also made an appearance pre-game.

CATS LEAP

The Cats LEAP program, an all-inclusive football-based program, was delivered to Grade 5/6 students in Geelong's northern suburbs, helping students develop an understanding of the fundamental skills of football, as well as developing their leadership and communication skills through games and challenges.

Cats Community had more than 2000 touchpoints through the Cats LEAP program in 2021.

UNITY CUP

The Unity Cup program saw a team of culturally and linguistically diverse participants from Geelong come together to learn how to play Australian Rules Football in February and March.

The program ran as a six-week series of clinics to introduce participants to the skills and format of footy, culminating in the TAC Unity Cup Gala Day, which saw more than 450 new footballers from across the state take part.

The Geelong team tasted success on the day, taking home the trophy after winning the senior team grand final.

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY





SEE MORE OF THE DJILANG PROGRAM

[Djilang: Building Cultural Connections in Our Community](#)



DJILANG PROGRAM

More than 140 children and young people took part in the 2021 Djilang Program, presented by Barwon Water, creating art that is set to have a lasting impact at GMHBA Stadium.

The Club's Aboriginal cultural connection program encouraged participants to tell their story through handprint art, which featured in the men's Djilang match in Round 21, and will feature again in the next women's Djilang match. The art will also become part of a lasting feature at the stadium.

Working with local organisations Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative, the Homework Club, Department of Education and Training's Delama Mok-Borriyn Education and Leadership Program, Strong Brother Strong Sister and Kupang Al, the 2021 program rolled out around NAIDOC Week.

This year's project also recognised National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, which is annually acknowledged on August 4. This year's theme 'Proud in Culture, Strong in Spirit' was reflected in the handprint art created by the children and young people.



PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY





FOOTY CATS

The Footy Cats program encourages participation in team sport for its social, emotional and physical benefits, as well as community wellbeing. While 2021 again made visits to local junior clubs and Auskick centres difficult, the Cats were able to engage virtually and deliver programs in collaboration with AFL Barwon and AFL Victoria.

AAMI COMMUNITY CAMP

- This year's AAMI Community Camp was conducted virtually, with players from the Cats men's program Zooming into classrooms and family homes across the Barwon region and East Arnhem Land.
- Joel Selwood was able to celebrate a special moment with two young footballers from Newcomb Junior Football Club, Patrick and Tuscan, with a kick out on the hallowed turf of GMHBA Stadium.

[Selwood Surprises Two Fans](#)

GALA DAY

- The culmination of a series of clinics with AFL Barwon saw young footballers from Geelong's northern suburbs come together for the Northern Stars Gala Day.
- With a special appearance from Geelong Cats mascots Half-Cat and Clawdia, the clinic was a big success with Auskickers and prospective Auskickers having fun and consolidating their skills.

AFLW CATS CHAT

- The Cats launched a new program aimed at connecting with young female footballers from across the region, building engagement and skills virtually during the off season over Zoom.
- The monthly AFLW Cats Chat covered a range of topics, including keeping physically and mentally active in the off-season, maintaining fitness and leadership.
- Participants heard from some of the club's AFLW stars, including Becky Webster, Liv Barber, Amy McDonald and Meg McDonald. AFLW program staff also offered their wisdom and insights, including senior coach Dan Lowther, physical performance coach Anula Costa, and club dietitian Dom Condo.

IN PROUD PARTNERSHIP





ALL-ABILITIES CLINICS

The annual All-Abilities Clinic returned in 2021, with players across our men's and women's programs joining young people through Leisure Networks and Gateways Support Services for a day of footy fun at GMHBA Stadium.

The clinic provided an opportunity for 80 children with disabilities to enjoy playing football in a safe and inclusive environment, with many playing alongside their siblings under the guidance of Cats players and students from SEDA College.

The Cats then joined with AFL Victoria to deliver the Geelong Cats Access All-Abilities Auskick Centre across four weeks in November and December.

SEE MORE OF ALL-ABILITIES CLINICS

[Cats Captains Joel Selwood and Meghan McDonald launch clinics](#)

[All-Abilities Clinic comes to GMHBA Stadium](#)

WITH THANKS TO





INCLUSION & DIVERSITY

Cats Community prides itself on making programs that are inclusive and accessible, and by extension, making football more inclusive and accessible. Each year, Cats Community supports a number of dates of significance and special initiatives.

AFLW PRIDE ROUND

The Cats were thrilled to be involved in the inaugural AFLW Pride Round, and were one of five teams to don a special guernsey for the occasion. The Cats Pride Guernsey featured both the Pride and Transgender flags, and was worn in the Round 2 clash against Collingwood.

Cats AFLW player Rocky Cranston, who was part of the Cats Pride Guernsey working committee, unveiled the design as she joined Cats men's player Darcy Fort, our Pride Supporter Group and Brian Cook in raising the rainbow flag at GMHBA Stadium.

IDAHOBIT DAY

Our men's players donned rainbow socks at training and stood with the LGBTQI+ community on May 17 to mark IDAHOBIT Day – International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia.

WEAR IT PURPLE DAY

The Cats reiterated their commitment to stand with young people who are sexually and gender diverse on Wear it Purple Day on August 27, a day of LGBTQI+ awareness especially for young people.

RUOK DAY

The Cats partnered with Read the Play to deliver key mental health messages on RUOK Day.





MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

The Cats put a renewed focus on mental health during October, recognising World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Week. With the help of staff and player ambassadors, the Cats shared information, insights, and wellbeing activities across the week.

HARMONY DAY

The annual celebration of Australia's cultural diversity coincided with the weekend of a Cats home game at GMHBA Stadium, opening the doors for Cats Community to hold its first Welcome to Our Game Event, presented by Viva Energy, in March.

FOOTY COLOURS DAY

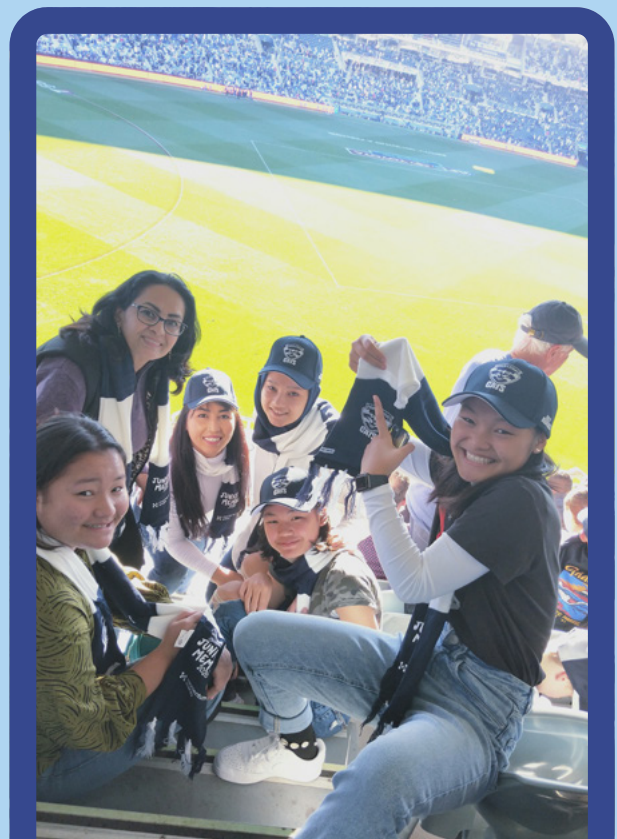
Renee Garing again donned the blue and white hoops proudly as an ambassador with the Fight Cancer Foundation for their annual Footy Colours Day in September.

FOOD HAMPER DONATIONS

Through our partnership with local organisations, the Cats were able to help families in Geelong's multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with the donation of food hampers, hoping to lessen the impact of such difficult times.

FORD COMMUNITY TICKETS

Thanks to the generosity of Ford, Cats Community were able to invite 20 members of the community to each men's home game in Geelong that had crowds. Attendees included recipients of Cats Wishes, as well as community groups. Among the groups that attended this year were SES volunteers, headspace Geelong staff, and members of the multicultural community, including Afghan women and Karenni men.





CATS CARE

Cats Care ensures we continue our 160-plus year commitment to assist those in the community who need us most.

- Cats Assist
- Ward Walks
- Cats Wishes

CATS ASSIST

In 2021, the Cats Assist program continued to support not-for-profit organisations, fundraising groups and individuals in times of need, with items donated as gifts or given to assist with fundraising efforts. Items donated included 2021 team-signed guernseys and AFL men's team-signed lithograph prints.

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY



WARD WALKS

With restrictions limiting access for visitors to hospitals, 2021 saw the Cats connect virtually with patients in the children's ward at University Hospital Geelong.

Aiming to bring some joy into the lives of young people going through a tough time, players from the men's and women's programs talked over Zoom with patients, who also received gifts from the Club.

WITH THANKS TO





SEE MORE OF CATS WISHES

[Tom Meets Malu for the Good Friday Appeal](#)

CATS WISHES

Caring has always been fundamental to the Cats work in the community. In 2021, with special thanks to St John of God Hospital Geelong, the Cats continued to respond to Wishes that were requested through the club for fans and members of the community going through difficult times.

When circumstances allowed, the Cats were able to invite fans to special match day experiences, or to training to meet the players.

Players also connected with Wish recipients through personalised video messages, phone calls, and by sending gifts.

Tom Stewart was able to offer a special Wish to young Malu, the face of the 2021 Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal, inviting the two-year-old and his family to GMHBA Stadium for a special tour and kick on the oval.

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY





SUNRISE CENTRE

The Sunrise Centre is a state-of-the-art exercise and rehabilitation centre, located in the Premiership Stand at GMHBA Stadium.

The Centre allows Barwon Health to provide specialised services in a less clinical setting and is a unique initiative made possible by the generous support of the Geelong Cats and Kardinia Park Stadium Trust.

The centre offers oncology and cardiac rehabilitation, with interventions before, during and after cancer treatment aiming to reduce the side effects of treatment, while for cardiac patients, there is an exercise and education program offered to assist people with recovery from a heart event.

CATS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

While negotiating the difficulties of the pandemic landscape, Cats Community was still able to forge meaningful connections with our community, both in person and online.

OUR 2021 REACH AT A GLANCE



More than

1200

connections via our Accessibility & Connection inclusion programs including:

Sensory Zone · Multicultural Programs
All-Abilities Program · Girls Programs · Food Aid Provision



140

Children & young people
participated in our
Djilang Aboriginal
Connection Program



There were

5396

visitations to the
Deakin Cats
Community Centre



More than

7600

children participated in our
Cats Learn programs including
GMHBA Healthy Heroes
and BioCATS



More than

2000

young people received the mental
health literacy Read the Play
program through their junior football
and netball clubs



We granted

50

Cats
Wishes



Provided
assistance to

200

charities, not-for-profit
organisations and sporting
clubs



More than

60K

engagements via our
Cats Community
Instagram channel

CARTER FAMILY COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

The Carter Family Community Champion Award is awarded annually after the respective AFL Men's and AFL Women's seasons to a player or players who have provided outstanding commitment to the community, for the Geelong Cats and/or via relationships with community-based organisations, programs, campaigns or initiatives.

In 2021, the Cats crowned two AFLW champions and one AFLM champion.

RENEE GARING

There are few in the AFL world who are as community-minded as Renee Garing. The 2020 Club Community Champion continued her wonderful work in the community this year, with notable contributions in the mental health space and supporting community organisations.

Despite balancing a busy schedule as an AFLW player and teacher, Renee still looks for any opportunity she can to give back to the community. She volunteered with the Pretty Foundation, Salvation Army and the Fight Cancer Foundation, where she is an AFLW Footy Colours Day ambassador. She also threw her support behind the Barwon Health virtual Run 4 Geelong event.

Renee regularly looks for opportunities to help out and use her AFLW profile to support important causes and empower girls and young women.

She sets a sterling example for her teammates and we congratulate her on her back-to-back wins in the award.



STEPHANIE WILLIAMS

Stephanie Williams made a big impression in her first year at the club, embracing the opportunity to show leadership and educate teammates and staff.

She helped promote the inaugural AFLW Indigenous Round and the Cats' special guernsey, and also stepped up ahead of the AFLM Sir Doug Nicholls Round.

Stephanie took the opportunity in those weeks and over the course of the AFLW season to educate players and staff by sharing her personal experiences and stories.

She uses her social media profile to educate and to empower young women, and support Indigenous causes.

We congratulate Stephanie for her wonderful work in the community and in winning the award.



ESAVA RATUGOLEA

The Geelong Cats are committed to making footy a game for all, and Esava Ratugolea has been a true champion in the multicultural space.

Esava's eagerness and enthusiasm for the Cats Community multicultural programs Welcome to Geelong and Welcome to Our Game was truly commendable. He proved to be a role model children could look up to, and was welcoming and helpful to participants.

Esava also attended an Iftar dinner at Diversitat as a representative of the club, during Ramadan.

He is a champion in the inclusion space, and has built special ties with Geelong's multicultural community.

We thank Esava for his wonderful contribution to the community and congratulate him on winning the award.





JIM STYNES COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD FINALIST

GEORGIE RANKIN

Georgie Rankin's outstanding commitment to the community was recognised when she was named a finalist in the prestigious Jim Stynes Community Leadership Award.

Georgie was particularly committed to the inclusion space, stepping up as the club's AFLW ambassador for the Sensory Zone, alongside Gary Rohan. She also gave her time to speak with guests at the Welcome to Our Game event during the AFLW season, and helped run the clinic at Welcome to Geelong. Both programs are aimed toward people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds in the Geelong region, as a gateway to create connections with the Geelong Football Club, the game of Australian Rules football, and the wider Geelong community.

Georgie also became a facilitator for the GMHBA Healthy Heroes 3/4 Veterans program, and was presenter at a Grade 5/6 Leadership Group program, sharing important messages about healthy eating, active lifestyles, and mental health and wellbeing.

She was also part of the Pride working group responsible for the design of the Geelong Cats inaugural Pride Guernsey, assisted at the club's All-Abilities Clinics in April and November, and attended an Iftar dinner at Diversitat as a representative of the club.

Georgie was also named a finalist in the Variety **Tom Hafey Heart of Football Award**, which recognises an outstanding commitment to Australian children.

The Geelong Cats are extremely proud of Georgie Rankin and the work she has done in the Cats community.



GEELONG CATS FOUNDATION

The work Cats Community does would not be possible without the support of the Geelong Cats Foundation – Our Ambition’s generous donors.

Our Ambition forms the ongoing invitation to members, sponsors, supporters and the wider community to philanthropically invest in our great Club. It aims to be the leading foundation program in the AFL for the way it engages, develops relations and supports our Club’s evolution.

Gifts towards the Foundation support three key pillars which provide different opportunities for individuals to engage and donate towards our great Club:

- Our Future: Football
- Our Present: Community
- Our Past: Heritage

The community arm of Our Ambition supports our Cats Community programs. Our community programs continue to make a positive difference, provide a sense of connection and belonging, and empower our community to thrive in building healthy, active and inclusive lives.

Our Ambition supports the sustainability of our Cats Community Programs, contributing \$350,000 annually to help the Cats continue to make a difference. The 2018 Community Challenge raised over \$1 million to support community programs from 2018-2021.

In 2021, the Geelong Strong Raffle raised over \$60,000, while \$140,000 was raised through TME operational fundraising.

If you would like to support Cats Community programs, please consider donating to Our Ambition.

WATCH THIS SPACE!

In 2022, Our Ambition will launch a major fundraising campaign to raise \$1m+ to sustain our Cats Community programs for the next three years (2022-2024)

