

Welcome to Rascal Robot - a place for creative kids and young people.

Somewhere they can learn, grow, and build their confidence. An environment that fosters creativity and encourages free expression of ideas. And the chance to work with and learn from professional contemporary arts practitioners.

"Both my children have been involved in Rascal Robot through classes and remote lessons. They both love it!! And we have noticed that they are both becoming more confident in exploring and expressing their imaginations. It has encouraged them away from technology and back to basics. They are spending more time drawing etc and creative playing. Such a wonderful place."

- Kirsten Miller, mother of 2 founding students.

Founded in December 2019 by four friends (and parents of young, creative children) around a kitchen table, we opened our doors at 60A Weld Street in Beaconsfield in February 2020 when the school term started.



Rascal

Our mascot, Rascal, was drawn by (then) 6 year old Holly Richards from Beauty Point as part of a school holiday mark making workshop run by our Artistic Director, Sara Ferrington, in July 2019. Choosing to use Holly's drawing was the first step in our mission to empower creative kids. Can you imagine how your 6 year old self would feel seeing a drawing you made being used as a logo, on merchandise, and websites?

The Grand Plan

Starting so quickly meant that we had to think commercially from day one, despite being a not for profit with eyes on acquiring charity status. We knew that we would have to cement our place in the local community quickly so that we could make a strong case to funding bodies for operational funds from Year 2.

Sara and Vice Chair Dannielle Murfet have both previously run successful small businesses and put their skills to work creating budgets and plans based on running face to face group and private art classes in the studio.

Based on the reputation Sara had built in the local community for making fun arts experiences with professional outcomes, we had enrolments straight away and all our classes were at capacity within 4 weeks of opening our doors.

"The Beaconsfield Child & Family Centre consider Rascal Robot a key community partner in the delivery and support of early years learning programs in our community. We have been fortunate enough to partner with them on several projects that have yielded significant community benefits for children and families. We have been impressed by their professionalism, creativity, and ability to connect with children and parents alike. Through our collaborative projects (home learning packs, messy art play day, community art project) they have worked tirelessly to create unique, play-based learning experiences that are enriching, rewarding, and valued by our families."

-Stewart Bell, Centre Leader, Beaconsfield Child & Family Centre

Enter COVID-19

At this point we had been open for 6 weeks and things were going well. When the pandemic reached Australia, we had no choice but to close the doors. Sara made up some take home art packs of simple projects the students could do on their own and contemplated what the shutdown meant for our future.

Fuelled by caffeine and creativity, Sara set about changing the entire business model to an art project home delivery service. Every month since March, we've sent out packs to subscribers containing fun age appropriate projects including art supplies - air drying clay with handmade wooden tools, watercolour paints and paper, handmade journals, and more. The June pack includes STEM projects with artistic outcomes.

The new approach was a blessing - it's allowed us to keep trading and the subscriptions are covering the costs of materials, postage, and basic overheads. And as a bonus, because location was no barrier to participation, we have broadened our reach and now have Rascal students in NSW, WA, Hobart, and the greater Launceston region.

"During Covid-19, I could see stress levels rising in my 11 year old. The day the art package arrived from Rascal Robot, delivered right to our front door, I actually saw a physical change in our son. From the moment he opened the package and began to create, using the materials and instructions provided, his entire body relaxed. He became engrossed in the projects, and we saw the incredible calming effect being creative and working with his hands was having. I would highly recommend Rascal Robot to any parent, not only to bring joy and creativity into children's lives, but to help in the relief of stress."

-Jo Palmer, mum of Remote Rascal subscriber

The re-opening

We're planning to re-open our doors in early July 2020 for face to face classes with all of the government's recommendations in place for social distancing and hygiene. Parents of our face to face students have reported that they are busting to get back into the studio and we're excited to see their happy faces again.

"My daughter has always enjoyed art but since starting with Rascal Robot her skills have magnified at an amazing speed. But the most important thing has been the shift in her thinking. Prior to being a student my daughter was very critical of her achievements, Rascal Robot and Sara have shown her that her art is her own, it is stunning, unique and something to be proud of. This new confidence is starting to flow over into other areas of her life too. What massive bonus! Great art and therapy rolled into one."

-Elisha Deegan, mum of a Rascal private lesson student

Parents of our subscription students have also told us they want to keep receiving their monthly goodies even now that restrictions are lifting and school is going back, which is great news!

The workload

Through all of this, Sara has been working 60+ hour weeks doing everything necessary to keep Rascal Robot going. And knowing that the workload is going to get more intense once we re-open with both classes and subscribers, she's understandably nervous.

Why?

Because she's working those 60+ hours every week at C-level but only getting paid for 7.5 hours at minimum wage. The Board are doing everything they can to support her but they all have families and jobs and their own lives to lead as well. In fact Dannielle just received the West Tamar Council Volunteer of the Year award to honour her many contributions to our community.

Beaconsfield is a special place

Beaconsfield has been an economically disadvantaged area for some time. Before COVID-19, unemployment rates were significantly higher than the national average (12.4% compared to 6.9% in the 2016 census) and median household income is 53% of the national median. The proposed re-opening of the Beaconsfield Mine promises to deliver some relief to those statistics but if you look at 2006 Census data when the mine was at full operation previously it doesn't look much different.

Apart from the fact that most of the Board live in a 10km radius of Beaconsfield, the decision to open Rascal Robot here was a deliberate choice on our part. We could see the impact on the community that our organisation could deliver - jobs, skills development, community cultural development, and social opportunities for creative kids and families.

An opportunity for investment in growth

Keeping our programs affordable has been a key priority for us - cost is a big barrier to participation in the local community. The size of our space has limited the number of students we can have per class as well as the number of concurrent classes we can run.

But the limit of Sara's time and energy is also a key factor to consider here. Given that her job description runs the gamut from cleaning the toilet to strategic planning for the organisation, she understandably feels as though there's never enough time in the day to achieve everything the organisation is capable of. And she's doing it all essentially as a volunteer.

So here is the ask:

Rascal Robot would like \$104,721 to cover a full time salary for Sara and allow the Board to hire an Operations Manager part time. (see appendix for breakdown and rationale)

In the 6 months that our organisation has existed we have already had an incredible social impact on the local community and further afield. The testimonials throughout this document are a clear demonstration of this (so here's another one!).



"I really love attending the studio with Sara and Dan to release expression in a variety of art forms. Learning how to do these has opened up so many options to think of my future."

-Connor (11), Rascal private student

What are some of the impacts this might have?

The positive impacts of covering our staff's salaries for the next 12 months would probably need an economist to fully outline them but I'll attempt it anyway!

Sara's full economic participation.

She and her husband, Dan Kershaw (also an artist and our Public Officer), are trying to build their first home together in the Beaconsfield area. They have a 4 year old who is an NDIS participant and attends child care in Beaconsfield, as well as 4 other children from ages 8-20. They operate Kitten Hammer Creative, a private enterprise, as an outlet for selling their artwork and merchandise. Both of them currently receive benefits from Services Australia so Sara would

become a contributor to the tax system, rather than a participant in the welfare system. They'll contribute to the building and construction industry while building their home, and continue to support local businesses like the local IGA's, petrol stations, child care centre, newsagent, and restaurants.

The creation of a 0.5 FTE job in Beaconsfield.

Paid at a nationally relevant wage level, the creation of this job would increase local economic participation from the incumbent. This is an immediate effect on employment and economic statistics, and gives the organisation capacity to develop our programs further.

Casual and contract jobs for guest teachers.

With the salaries for these 2 staff members secured, we could use the \$150 per week that Sara is currently being paid to hire casual guest teachers and tutors with specialist training and knowledge, further increasing our employment contribution.

Expansion of our programs and fundraising capacity.

With an Operations Manager taking responsibility for administration, marketing, grants and philanthropic applications, and bookkeeping, Sara would be able to fully step into her role as Artistic Director. This translates to:

- more time developing and teaching classes in the community, local schools, online, and at the studio;
- Teaching and mentoring young artists in the practicalities of starting and running a creative business, a service that is lacking in the arts industry landscape, particularly for young people.
- Starting an exhibition program in the studio, increasing local students' exposure to contemporary arts practice and theory and providing exhibition and income opportunities for local artists.
- Working towards sustainable fundraising and sponsorship opportunities, and develop a long term strategic plan for the organisation.

What else could we use help with?

Some things on the wish list for Rascal Robot currently include:

- A desktop computer each for staff - Sara is currently using her personal laptop and ergonomically, it's not fantastic.
- iPad's and Pencils for the studio that students can use to learn digital art and design technologies;
- Contents insurance for the studio's assets;
- Furniture and storage systems that maximise the space available for making; and
- Exhibition hanging system and plinths.

And other programs we'd like to add to our offerings are:

- Process art/sensory playgroup for 0-5's;
- Performing art options like drama games and singing lessons; and
- An annual arts and culture festival for Beaconsfield.

We aren't just "shovel-ready", we've already dug the hole.

An investment in Rascal Robot is a smart move socially and economically. We are an already existing organisation with a passionate, dedicated team behind it. We have very quickly made a positive impact on the families we've welcomed here and adding a part time support staff member would see us able to expand our programs to reach more creative kids and young people. Funding us would produce immediate positive benefits to the social and economic outlook of Beaconsfield and the West Tamar, while we recover from the interruptions of COVID-19.

Appendix 1 - Remuneration calculation rationale

Job title	FTE	Annual salary package (incl super)	Hourly rate
Artistic Director	1	\$75,555	\$34.413
Operations Manager	0.5	\$29,166	\$26.569
Guest teachers (casual)			\$100
Total	1.5	\$104,721	

Salary calculations are based on recommendations in the National Association for Visual Arts Code of Practice:

- Section 7.13 for administrative roles (small organisation Director and Senior Manager).
- section 7.7.2 for guest teacher rates.