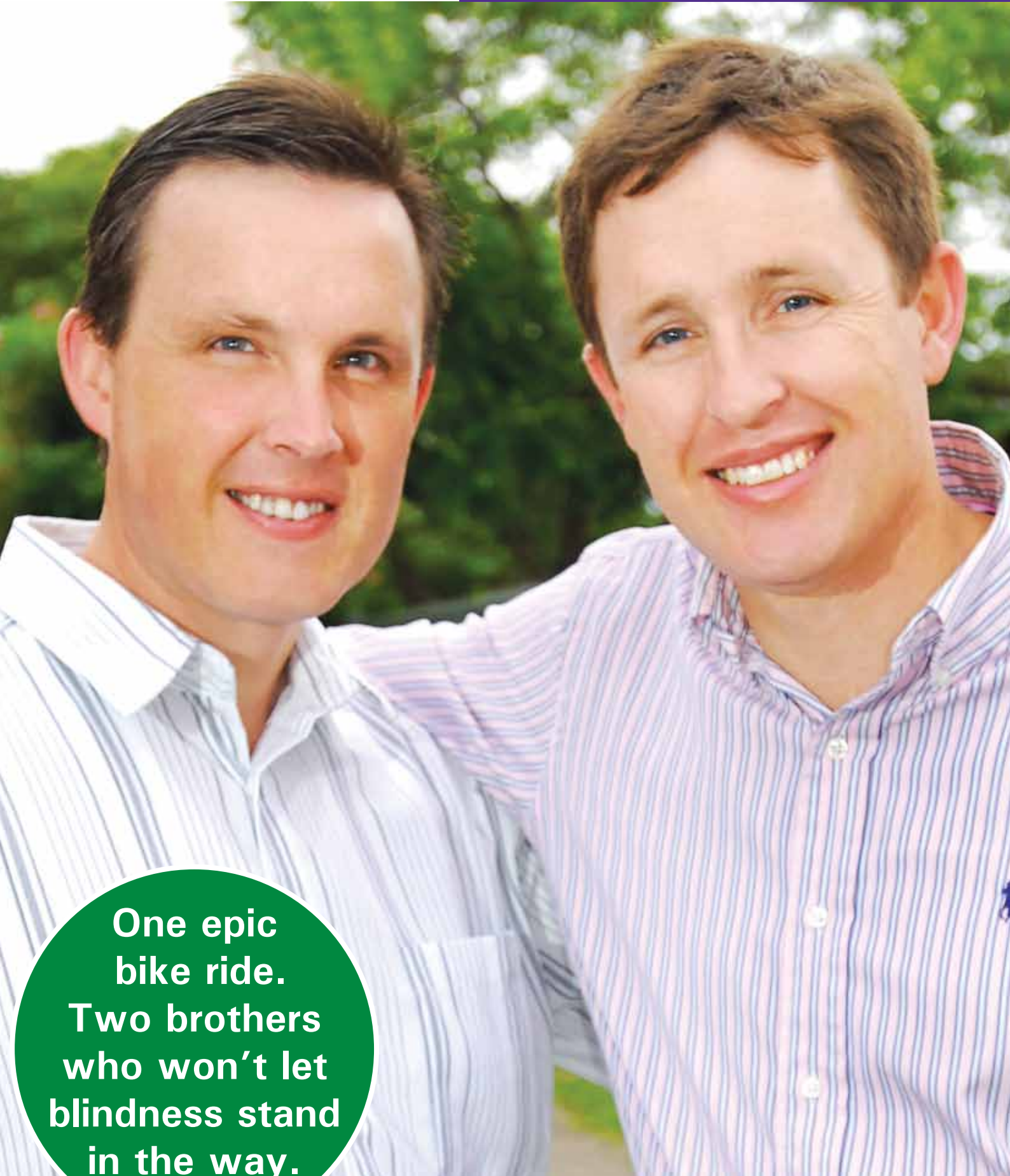


**vision
australia**

blindness and low vision services

NEWS



**One epic
bike ride.
Two brothers
who won't let
blindness stand
in the way.**

AUTUMN 2010

Working in tandem

Lorin and Dean Nicholson owe a lot to their Mum and Dad. Despite both boys being born legally blind, due to retinitis pigmentosa, their parents, Julie and John, were determined they would lead active and independent lives.

“We were typical boys from a family of six kids,” says Dean, who grew up in Tamworth but, like Lorin, now lives in Brisbane.

“We climbed trees like everyone else although we only had about 10% as much sight. We were always outside.”

This can-do attitude, instilled from an early age, is now driving a four-week Perth to Sydney tandem cycling trip – and hopefully a place in the record books.

The idea for the trip came from their sister, Louise, who also has retinitis pigmentosa.

Lorin, the musician and educational speaker who wowed millions with his performance at Vision Australia’s Carols by Candlelight®, and his environmental scientist brother Dean, start the 4,200km trip in late March.

They will each ride tandem with friends John Eder and Grant Williams piloting the course.



Dean (left) and Lorin are ready to hit the road.

“We want to show the nation that anything is possible when you put your mind to it.”

“Even though we have a disability, we have done a lot with our lives,” says Lorin.

“We both have great careers and are happily married, each with four children.

“But we haven’t done it on our own. We’ve had great support from our family, friends and Vision Australia.”

The brothers will be raising funds for Vision Australia as they ride, as well as awareness about the capabilities of people who are vision impaired.

“We want to challenge the public’s perception and encourage employers to give people who are blind or have low vision a go,” says Lorin.

Follow their journey on www.blindcourage.com or donate at www.visionaustralia.org.



Prue grabs gold in Rio!

Vision Australia client and staff member Prue Watt recently picked up four gold and two silver medals for Australia at the International Paralympic Committee World Championships in Rio.

“I was pleased with my performance at this competition,” she says of the December 2009 event. “The highlight was winning gold in my first event of the competition, the 100m individual medley.”

Prue, who was born with low vision, works in our Kooyong centre to support our IT and staff training divisions. She completed an administration internship with Vision Australia late last year.

Thanks for your quality support

Vision Australia's Quality Living Groups are going from strength to strength thanks to wonderful community support.

You may recall Vision Australia's Spring Appeal focused on the difference these peer support groups are making to the lives of Australians who are blind, including Gaye Gutteridge (pictured with peer Jo Ann Sherman, right).

Thanks to your generosity, we raised the funds needed for this initiative.

Quality Living Group (QLG) programs enable clients to break the isolation and confidence barriers of vision loss. Led by a trained facilitator, members discuss common issues of home life and the attitudes of partners and friends.

Vision Australia has already hosted the first QLG for parents who are vision impaired – one of many special interest peer groups.

Course Coordinator Cameron Algie says this first meeting was so successful that members went on to form a self-help group that now meets using Vision Australia's telelink service.

Meanwhile, a Bendigo Quality Living Group, with members aged from 38 to 82, has been advocating for improved safety in their area.

"I'm pleased to see the group work can be so inclusive of age and bring about positive changes to clients," says Ruth O'Connell, Vision Australia Bendigo Team Manager.

Thanks to your support, Queensland has held its first Quality Living Group. In December, people in their twenties and thirties exchanged ideas and support via a teleconference facilitated by staff in our Brisbane centre.

"For many participants who were isolated, it was a much-needed social outlet and a validation of the challenges they face and their coping strategies," says Courtney McKee, the state's first Vision Australia QLG facilitator.



Geelong's dynamic duo

Judy Stephens and Ros Stuart make a great team.

They not only co-present a program on Vision Australia Radio Geelong, but also coordinate local Quality Living Groups together.

The friends, who are both vision impaired, trained to be QLG coordinators after personally benefiting from peer support. This year the volunteers will work with staff at our Geelong centre to run four local QLGs.

Vision Australia would like to thank The Howard Glover Charitable Trust for its significant support of these life-changing programs in the Geelong area.



Ros and Judy in the studio.

Recognising excellence

Vision Australia has again recognised major contributions to the blindness and low vision community at an annual awards ceremony.

Three inspirational individuals, who are all blind, received Vision Australia Awards at our Kooyong centre on 27 November.

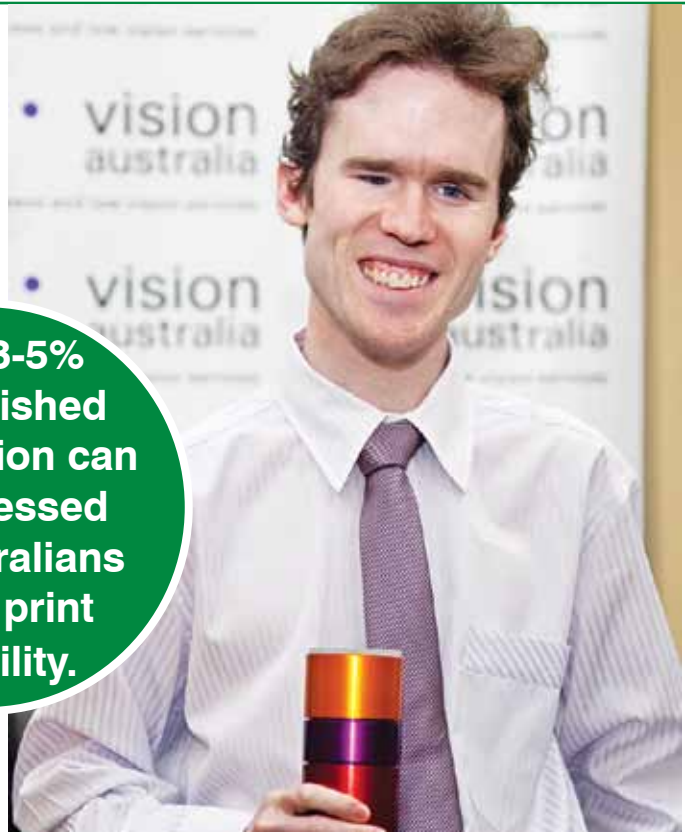
The Vision Australia Youth Service Award was presented to Michael Curran (right) of Melbourne. In 2007, Michael developed a free screen-reading software program, which is now a well-respected and used product.

The Vision Australia Client Service Award was presented to Don Maculaitis of Dandenong for his outstanding community work.

Don is a trained Vision Australia peer worker who convenes three telelink phone groups that enable people who are blind or have low vision to connect with their peers.

The Vision Australia Award, Individual, was presented to Rob McQuillan, who spent 27 years

Only 3-5% of published information can be accessed by Australians with a print disability.



working on reception at our Enfield centre and as part of our NCC First Contact Team. Over the years, Rob built a reputation for great warmth and professionalism.

The Vision Australia Award Corporate was presented to Microsoft Australia in recognition of its efforts to make information more accessible to people with a print disability.

The recipients were honoured at a ceremony following Vision Australia's 2009 Annual General Meeting (AGM).



From left: Sue Jamieson, Deborah Mould and Jamie Kelly answered questions at the Information Library Service stand.

Services on show

For the first time Vision Australia's AGM was complemented by a special expo showcasing our wide range of services.

AGM guests had the opportunity to learn more from staff and volunteers representing 16 programs, including our library, Accessible Information, Audio Description, Vision Australia Radio, Policy and Advocacy, Independent Living, Seeing Eye Dogs, Orientation & Mobility, Employment, National Contact Centre and Volunteer Services.

Top marks!

Ria Andriani (pictured right) is not one to shy away from a challenge.

Blind since the age of five, she overcame the odds to top the 2009 Higher School Certificate subject of Indonesian background speakers.

What makes Ria's academic performance even more remarkable is the fact that she only moved to Australia three years ago and had to learn both English and braille in a new language.

She completed her final exams by reading the questions in braille and then typing her answers on a laptop computer.

Ria started using Vision Australia's services soon after arriving in Sydney. While studying at Canterbury Girls' High she was supported by Vision Australia's library, Independent Living, technical and braille transcription staff.

"Vision Australia has done a lot to help me," she says. "They even helped me to talk to the university people when I was still in Year 12. I'm now getting the benefits of all that work."



PHOTO: NICK BLOUKUS, CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN EXPRESS

Ria is now studying music and English at the University of New South Wales.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Ria has also received a Vision Australia Further Education Bursary Award, which she is using to buy much-needed assistive technology.

On the move

Five new Orientation & Mobility Specialists recently joined our ranks, having completed a year of training at our Enfield centre.

Michael Simpson, Vision Australia's General Manager Policy & Advocacy, presented the specialists with their Graduate Certificates in Vision Impairment (Orientation and Mobility) at a ceremony in late January.

They are all now working throughout Sydney and Brisbane, teaching safe mobility to people of all ages who are blind or have low vision.

Six students began the 2010 course in February and expect to be supporting Vision Australia clients by the end of the year.



From left: National Manager O&M Nicola Misso, Margaret Steggles, Steve Hamer, Michael Simpson, Metaxia Tsoukatos, Jane Reynolds, Melissa Grintell and Course Coordinator Bronwen Scott.

Leading the way for 50 years

PHOTO: NEWSPIX



If Teddy could talk he'd tell you that in 2010 a dog's life is none too shabby. This lucky pup is a permanent resident of Brisbane's Hilton Hotel, thanks to the generosity of the Kendall family.

The Kendalls are puppy carers – volunteers who take future Seeing Eye Dogs into their homes to teach obedience skills and prepare them to deal with a range of environments.

Given Martin Kendall's role as a Hilton general manager, their home just happens to be a five-star hotel.

This year Seeing Eye Dogs Australia, a division of Vision Australia, marks 50 years of training people who are blind to move about safely and independently.

To find out more about becoming a puppy carer or sponsor, please call **1300 84 74 66**.

Charlotte Kendall takes Teddy for a walk outside the hotel – or is that Teddy walking Charlotte?!

Dick Smith calls in

Staff at our National Contact Centre (NCC) in Sydney were pleasantly surprised when philanthropic adventurer Dick Smith dropped in.

After filming a promotional clip with young clients for Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight®, Dick met Christo Sarantakis and his NCC colleagues.

The tech guru was keen to talk about the assistive technology that enables staff like Christo to access databases, emails and other electronic files. Of the 11 people in our NCC's First Contact Team, which takes calls from clients, donors and healthcare professionals, eight are blind or have low vision.



First Contact Team Member Christo Sarantakis and Dick Smith.

Thank you for supporting Vision Australia!

Coorparoo centre off to a flying start



Dr Kevin Murfitt, Vision Australia Chair turns the sod with client Renee Russell and the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk. Topsoil from the site has been donated to Coorparoo State School to construct basketball courts.

A new era in blindness and low vision service provision in south-eastern Queensland is about to dawn with construction of Vision Australia's new Coorparoo centre well underway.

Almost 200 supporters, staff, clients and Government guests joined Vision Australia's Board for a sod-turning ceremony in late November.

The Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, Minister for Disabilities and Multicultural Affairs, represented the Queensland Government, which is providing \$10 million in funding.

Representatives from the Charles and Sylvia Viertel Charitable Foundation spoke about working with Vision Australia to build a new low vision clinic in the centre, made possible by a generous \$657,000 grant from the foundation.

Bunnings is kindly providing the centre's sensory garden.

A highlight was an address by 10-year-old Renee Russell who told of the support she has received from Vision Australia since she was diagnosed with blindness as a baby – and her dream to be a toy inventor.

The Minister and Vision Australia's Regional Manager, Karen Knight, presented certificates to Stepping Forward participants. Of the six graduates of this 2009 work preparation initiative for people who are blind or have low vision, three have found jobs.

Work is progressing on the 3,800 square metre site, chosen for its proximity to a proposed major transport hub and community amenities. It will have a capacity to support up to 102 staff and volunteers.

This major centre will support the estimated 25,000 in wider Brisbane who are vision impaired.

Shop and share

Did you know Queenslanders can now help raise funds for Vision Australia while they grocery shop?

Cornett's IGA Queensland stores will donate a percentage of every dollar you spend back to Vision Australia. To find our more, visit www.cornetts.com.au.



Something to sing about

Heavy rain didn't stop the stars from shining at the 2009 Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight®.

Thousands braved the inclement weather in Melbourne's Myer Music Bowl to enjoy thrilling performance by luminaries such as Guy Sebastian, Silvie Paladino and The Ten Tenors.

A staggering two million more enjoyed the big night at home courtesy of Channel Nine's fantastic live coverage. Others tuned in to the show through 3AW, Magic and associated stations in the eastern states.

Thanks to the promotional efforts of Myer, our presenting partner, and media partner The Herald Sun, this year's show once again raised vital funds and awareness for Vision Australia.

A big thanks also goes to those dedicated volunteers and staff who sold merchandise, assisted guests at the Bowl and manned our donations hotline.



Guy Sebastian (above) entertained the crowd, including Layla Bodnar (left), the Face of Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight for 2009.

Vision Australia is grateful to everyone who contributed to our Christmas fundraising efforts, including Myer Gift Wrap and our appeal featuring little Layla Bodnar.

Your generosity helped us to raise almost \$1 million for children who are blind or have low vision.

If you would like to support Vision Australia on a monthly basis as a Live The Vision partner, please fill in the form below and post it to: **GPO BOX 9802, IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY**

Yes, I would like to:

- Be a Live the Vision partner, with a monthly donation of:**
 \$20 \$25 \$50 \$35 My choice: \$ _____
- Give a one-off gift of:**
 \$25 \$30 \$50 My choice: \$ _____
- Receive a Vision Australia Gift Catalogue.**

Title: _____ First name: _____
 Surname: _____
 Address: _____
 Suburb: _____
 State: _____ Postcode: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

Please debit my:

Mastercard Visa Amex Diners
 Card no: ____/____/____/____
 Expiry date: __/____
 Name on card: _____
 Signature: _____

OR My cheque/money order is enclosed.

- Send me a direct debit form to debit my bank account (monthly donations only).
- I would like information on making a bequest.



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