



**vision
australia**

blindness and low vision services

NEWS



Enabling
people who
are blind or have
low vision to
live life to
the full.

SPRING 2008

The road to Beijing

When the Athens Paralympics were held four years ago, Bryce Lindores could never have imagined he'd be competing in the next Games.

Six days before his 18th birthday, Bryce was sitting in the back of a ute that was towing a car. In an instant, the shackle snapped and hit the Gold Coast teenager in the head, blinding him.

"It was a hard time," he says. "I was tired during the recovery process and couldn't do much."

Before the accident, Bryce (pictured leaning on a bike alongside Paralympian Gerrard Gosens) had led a very active life, playing rugby, tennis and touch football.

Gerrard, who is Vision Australia's Special Projects Manager, offered hope when he visited Bryce in hospital.

"I gave Bryce and his family an insight into what can be achieved by someone who is blind," says Gerrard, who will be running in 1500m and 5000m events at Beijing – his third Paralympics.

He organised for Bryce to receive equipment, such as a talking watch and a soccer ball with a bell in it, and also introduced him to tandem cycling. This sport enables a cyclist who is blind or has low vision to ride with a sighted "pilot". Steve George will be Bryce's pilot in Beijing.

"I've noticed a dramatic change in Bryce since I first met him," says Gerrard. "It's been a long road to recovery, but sport has great mental and physiological advantages."



Bryce is the first to agree. "Cycling has changed the way I think. I started to take it seriously in September 2006, then I went to the World Championships and won a bronze.

"I now train six or seven days a week for three hours a day," he says. "I'm riding 100km a day and going to the gym three times a week. I'm very excited about the Paralympics – and I'll celebrate my birthday in Beijing!"

Good luck at the Paralympics

Vision Australia wishes all of its clients who are competing in the 2008 Beijing Paralympics, including Courtney Harbeck and Ian Speed (both pictured), the very best of luck. Tune into Vision Australia Radio or the ABC for results from Beijing.



Joining our living partnership

It's official! Seeing Eye Dogs Australia (SEDA), the only national provider of dog guides, and Vision Australia have joined forces in order to better respond to the needs of Australians who are blind or have low vision.

SEDA's high-quality provision of seeing eye dogs to the blindness community complements the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services already offered by Vision Australia.

This partnership enables a stronger outcome for clients by reducing waiting times for seeing eye dogs and offering more of them across the nation.

The Governor General, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery (pictured), recently met a future seeing eye dog at a morning of celebration held at Vision Australia Kooyong.

SEDA brings with it significant expertise and high-quality facilities in the Melbourne suburb of Kensington that will be enhanced and maintained by Vision Australia.

The partnership has been driven by the belief that the blindness community is best served by one national organisation rather than a disparate collection of independent agencies.

Vision Australia warmly welcomes all SEDA staff, clients and supporters to its living partnership.



It costs \$306 to run a Vision Australia orientation and mobility session.

Together in Tassie

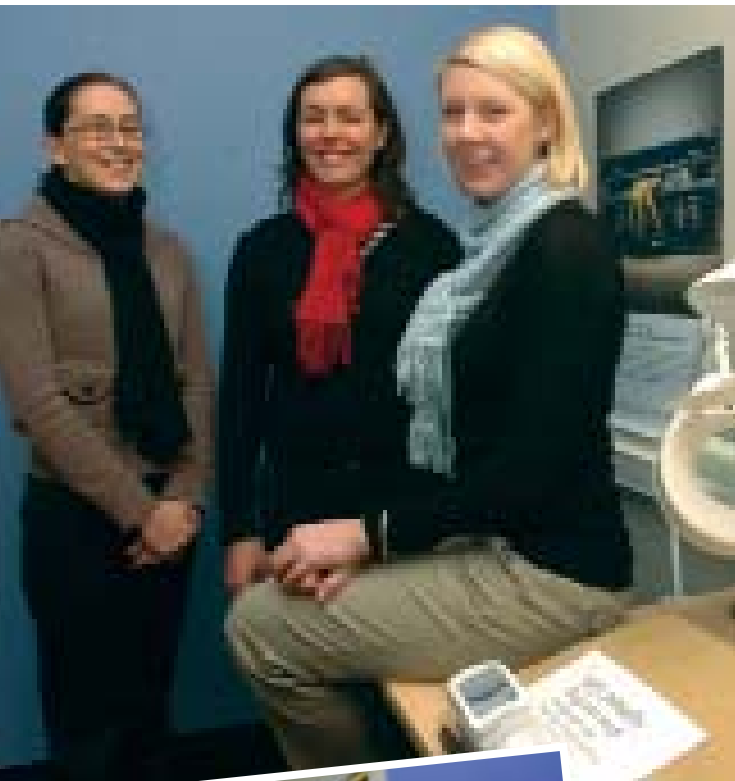
An exciting new joint venture between Vision Australia and Guide Dogs Tasmania is improving services for local people who are blind or have low vision.

Deputy Premier Lara Giddings MP (pictured with Vision Australia Chief Executive Officer Gerard Menses, client Doug McGinn and Guide Dogs Tasmania Chief Executive Tony Wright) launched the partnership in June at our joint Hobart centre.



Ms Giddings highlighted the importance of collaboration in the disability sector.

The following day, a second launch in Launceston marked the start of our partnership in the state's north.



New centres, new services

With the number of Australians who are blind or have low vision set to double to 600,000 by 2020, Vision Australia is preparing for a busy decade.

We recently opened two new facilities in Orange, in central western New South Wales, and Cairns, Far North Queensland, that are better equipped to meet this growing demand.

The new Orange centre, relocated to Anson Street, includes additional space for services, such as a children's playroom and computer training areas. Staff, including (pictured above, from left) Occupational Therapist Kylie Nash, Orthoptist Noni Hoskin and Occupational Therapist Mareike Greve, were on hand to give advice at the centre's open day in August.

Our Cairns centre, now in Grafton Street, also offers improved services, including adaptive technology training and daily living skills programs.

"Vision Australia has been able to help me adapt to living without my sight and this new centre will mean that many more people can benefit from their specialised services and expert advice," said client Ted Thorburn at the centre's launch in May.

Ted joined Vision Australia CEO Gerard Menses, and Cairns Deputy Mayor Margaret Cochrane (all pictured left), to officially open the centre.



Knowledge sharing

Congratulations to Rochelle Hutson, an Occupational Therapist at our Enfield centre, for receiving a prestigious Churchill Fellowship.

Rochelle plans to use her Fellowship funding to visit Canada, the United States and Europe to study techniques used to build early literacy skills in children who are blind.

On returning, Rochelle will share her findings with her colleagues. "This is a great opportunity to make contact with the best in the field and bring the knowledge back to Australia," she says.



Jenny's journey

At a time when many young people prefer not to fly the nest, 23-year-old Jenny Sao is marking a decade of living away from her parents' home.

At 13, Jenny left her family in Cambodia to visit Australia for a series of singing performances. With the support of the local Cambodian community, she stayed in Sydney.

Blind since infancy, Jenny had not received any formal education in Cambodia. "When I first arrived it was scary," she recalls. She then spent her high school years living with friends and staying in a women's refuge.

Today Jenny shares a flat – and the housework – with her sister, Punleu.

To assist, Vision Australia staff put tactile markers on the stove and washing machine so Jenny can feel the dials. We also offered cooking and cleaning tips, and gave advice on coordinating clothes and applying make-up.

This year Jenny was one of 26 students to receive a Vision Australia Further Education Bursary. The grant enabled her to buy adaptive technology to assist her TAFE introductory computer studies.

Jenny hopes to draw on her experiences to work in the welfare sector.

**It costs
\$188 an hour
to run one
adaptive
technology
session.**



Cutting it away from home

Moving in together is a big step for any couple, but for Chloe Robinson and her fiancé Anthony Manning it came with extra challenges.

Chloe was born with low vision and Anthony is totally blind.

Although Chloe could manage in her parents' kitchen, she contacted Vision Australia for a few more tips before moving out.

"I had most skills, but cooking was still a challenge. I've learned new ways to do tasks and take precautions, such as wearing really long oven gloves to prevent burns."

Staff from our Enfield centre also taught Anthony strategies to manage household tasks and visited the couple's home to stick braille labels on their appliances.

"We've found other ways to do things," says Chloe. "For example, when Anthony vacuums I walk around to feel if he's missed a spot."

"It's going well – and we've yet to have a disaster when washing our clothes! Getting groceries is still hard, but we're learning how to shop online, which will help a lot."



Enterprising individual

If there was an award for the keenest worker in Australia, Geoff Ralph would have to be a frontrunner.

On weekdays he catches the first train of the day to arrive at Vision Australia Enterprises in Prahran, Melbourne, 20 minutes before his 6am start.

In the decade Geoff has worked for our manufacturing division, he has made everything from shelves to playpens and the mug trees (below) featured in our Christmas Catalogue.

Geoff (pictured far right, with Wood Shop Supervisor Ernie Dos Santos) lost most of his sight in a car accident when he was just 10 weeks old.

He uses a monocular to optimise the fraction of vision that remains in one eye. A typical day at work might involve oiling nail guns, screwing hinges onto toy boxes and trimming wood.

"I'm doing much more here than I've done anywhere else before," he says. "I'm fairly able to catch on to how to use the machines. I really enjoy the work and I get along with everyone."



To buy a mug tree and other Vision Australia products, visit www.visionaustralia.org/shop

Funds raised from the sale of goods in our Christmas Catalogue help us to deliver vital services.

Young talent time

One of our young clients, Charles Pruden, created this dragon (below) in an art class at Vision Australia's Education Centre in Melbourne.

"I was gobsmacked when this picture was chosen for the calendar," he says.

Charles attends our Support Skills program for young clients, which aims to build social, physical and practical daily living skills.

Our calendars and diaries are sold at our centres for \$10 and \$20 respectively. You can also order from our online shop. Go to www.visionaustralia.org/shop



Read all about it

So many Australians rely on print to stay informed, study and escape into novels. But as our population becomes more susceptible to age-related eye conditions it is expected that more people will turn to alternate formats such as braille, audio and large print for their information.

Vision Australia's Information Library Service posts books, magazines, coursework and other publications in alternate formats to Australians who have a print disability. This service is free of charge.

Audio books are the largest growing sector of the library, especially since the introduction of digital technology, which enables titles to be copied, shared internationally and condensed more easily.

In the past year, 5,942 digital audio titles were added to our collection.

Even if you can read print, audio books are a great alternative, enabling you to enjoy a book while driving or walking.

Our Christmas Catalogue features a range of audio book titles that make perfect gifts.



An \$81 gift will enable us to buy and duplicate one library title.

Trish Anderson had fun in our Kooyong studios recording an audio book of nursery rhymes for Vision Australia's Felix Library. Trish's daughter is a former Felix borrower.



Magni-ficent

Vision Australia's Equipment Solutions shop specialises in devices that enable people who are blind or have low vision to perform everyday activities.

Our range includes the Magnitube (left, demonstrated by Marian Jones), which can turn any television into a CCTV. Simply plug the device into your TV, then place it on a document and the print will appear on screen magnified up to nine times. At \$250, it's much cheaper than a CCTV.

To buy one, drop into a Vision Australia centre or call **1300 84 74 66**.

Caleb lives the Vision

Caleb Neyenhuis of Geelong has come a long way since he lost his eyes to cancer three years ago. He is now enjoying his first year at school – and mum Danielle couldn't be prouder.

"Caleb's doing really, really well," she says. "He's made so many friends this year."

If you'd like to support more people like Caleb, consider joining our Live the Vision regular giving program.

You can give a nominated amount every month either by credit card or debit card.

This method of giving saves you time and cuts down our administration costs, enabling us to direct more funds into our essential services.

Visit www.visionaustralia.org/pledge to sign up, using our secure online payment page, or call **1800 42 20 77**.

Or you can fill in the form below and post it to:
**GPO BOX 9802
IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY**



**\$25 a month
can help a
child like Caleb
to learn daily
living skills.**

PHOTO: THE GEELONG ADVERTISER

Yes, I would like to become a Live the Vision regular donor.

Please accept my monthly donation of:

\$15 \$25 \$35 \$50 My choice: \$ _____

Title: _____ First name: _____
Surname: _____
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Please debit my:

Mastercard Visa Amex Diners

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