

**vision
australia**

blindness and low vision services

NEWS



**Supporting
people who
are blind or
have low vision
through all life
stages.**

AUTUMN 2008

Bringing stories to life

“That’s not how it goes!” As anyone who has read to a toddler knows, it’s hard to skip a line of a favourite book and get away with it.

This is because young children “read” by memory. Children who are blind also memorise books, but for them the cues that help them to tell the story are often tactile rather than visual. With this in mind, Vision Australia’s Feelix Library has been designed to enable preschoolers who are blind or have low vision to enjoy storytime as fully as their peers.

Feelix also aims to inspire young Vision Australia clients to develop language skills and learn about written communication.



Each book comes in a kit that includes tactile and audio features. The kits are sent free of charge to families by request.

All books feature braille-embossed strips of clear tape that enable a sighted adult to read the words out as the child feels the raised dots. This helps a child who is blind, like Cooper



(pictured with his mum, Rebecca), understand that braille and print work together.

Feelix kits also contain an audio recording and a handbook featuring tactile graphics that enables children to tell the story.

“Just as pictures entertain a sighted child, tactile art helps a child who is blind or has low vision to focus,” says Louise Curtin, Feelix Coordinator.

To ensure these little books are sturdy, Feelix Assistant Roby Sainsbury-Vale (below) “stitches and glues them to within an inch of their lives”.

Feelix kits also include tactile aids that bring the tale to life. For example, the kit for Olga The Brolga contains a raffia bird that has a long beak and feathery tail. It’s all part of the fun of Feelix!



It costs us \$290 to create one Feelix Library book kit.

Feeling the words

A key element in a child’s formative development is being read to. Storybooks introduce young children to new language patterns and words.

Our Feelix Library enables our young clients to choose from 540 book kits that help them to develop these skills. Each of its 290 borrowers receives a library card shaped like an echidna, a native animal that doesn’t see well but gets by beautifully using touch, smell and hearing.

Guiding star

Have you ever been amazed by the skill with which a person who is blind makes their way through a busy street or boards a train?

For many people who are blind or have low vision, learning to move about with confidence involves years of orientation and mobility (O&M) training by qualified instructors.

O&M instructors teach people who are blind or have low vision to use their remaining eyesight and their other senses to detect landmarks and reference points. They also guide people in the use of the long cane, which tells the user about the surface ahead of them.

Bronwen Scott coordinates Vision Australia's new Graduate Certificate program, which trains healthcare and recreation professionals to become O&M instructors.

The offering of this new 32-week course at Vision Australia's Enfield centre is part of our commitment to improving O&M services, particularly in Queensland and New South Wales.

Course participants learn about the eye's structure and conditions affecting it as well as human development and working with children. The course's practical component enables them to "walk in the shoes" a person who is blind or has low vision.

Bronwen has spent much of her career working with children – the youngest being a 14-month-old she taught to use a tiny cane.

It's an extremely gratifying role: "One of my proudest moments was hearing a former student give the keynote address at a conference. I worked with him when he was 14 and now he has a PhD. It was very rewarding."

**It costs
\$296 per
client for a
single O&M
session.**



Bronwen Scott (right) with Vision Australia staff member Gillian True, who is taking part in our new O&M course.

Our services

Your generosity helps us to provide a variety of vital services, including:

- **Low Vision Services:** assisting people to make the most of their remaining sight.
- **Independent Living Services:** providing solutions for managing daily tasks such as cooking and personal care.
- **Employment Services:** helping people to find work suited to their skills and ambitions.
- **Children's Services:** facilitating a child's development needs.
- **Information Library Services:** providing reading materials in alternative formats.
- **Equipment Solutions:** offering access to equipment that helps people of all ages manage their daily activities independently.

Online inspiration

Over the past two years, Vision Australia client Dawson Ko has united hundreds of young people who are blind or have low vision online.

Dawson was struck with the idea for an online social forum while mingling with students after the 2006 Vision Australia Further Education Bursary Award ceremony in Sydney. He attended the event to speak about how the adaptive technology grant he received in 2005 had assisted his university studies.

A few months later, Dawson established The VIP Online Society for his peers. He followed its success with an online fashion magazine, Fashionable Eye for the Blind Guy... And Gal.

The business student was recognised for his inspiring peer work with a Vision Australia Youth Award, which he received at our 2007 Annual General Meeting in Brisbane.

As an athletic 15-year-old, Dawson was diagnosed with Behcet's disease, an auto-immune disorder. "As I was told about the prospect of becoming blind, I couldn't believe it was happening," he recalls.

By 20, he was blind and battling depression: "I would pray each night for my sight to miraculously return, but it never happened."



But with Vision Australia's support, he began to put his life back on track.

"At Vision Australia I realised life could be lived without sight. Mobility training began and I started to learn braille. A vast amount of other lessons were learned, which helped me regain my self-worth. I knew I could make it after all.

"I live my life and have a smile. If this impacts on others positively or creates growing blindness awareness, then this whole existence is all worthwhile."

To read more of Dawson's moving story, visit www.visionaustralia.org/ourstories



Congratulations!

The presentation of awards to two Queenslanders who have given so much to our community was a highlight of our AGM.

The Vision Australia Award was presented to Norman Wilson for his outstanding service to the organisation. Norman (far left) combined his love of technology and Morse code to develop an automated method of translating braille into print.

This year's Client Services Award went to Maureen Davenport (left), acknowledging her volunteer work within the blindness community over the past 20 years.

A lifetime of support

Vision Australia values all its generous supporters, but every now and then we come across an individual who deserves special recognition.

We recently presented Arthur Norburn of Port Stephens, New South Wales, with a certificate in appreciation for many decades of support.

Born in the United Kingdom in 1907, Arthur and his family of 14 moved to Sydney in 1917 and settled in William Street, in the city's centre.

At the time, Vision Australia (then the Royal Blind Society) had premises in Arthur's street, and he recalls watching the men who were employed in its workshop walking together to the tram stop.

The employees made mats, baskets and wicker chairs. They were built to last — Arthur still has an entrance mat he bought from the William Street shop in his youth.

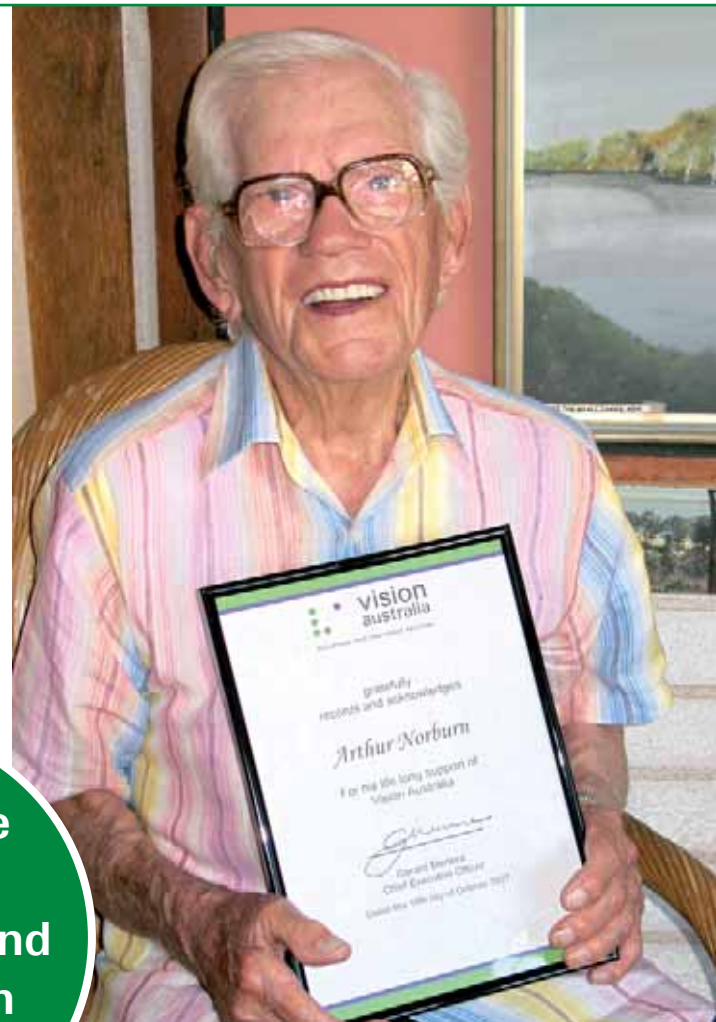
He first made a donation to Vision Australia 87 years ago and has supported us every year since. In this time Arthur has witnessed the growth in opportunities for people who are blind or have low vision.

At the age of 100, Arthur's sight is not what it was due to glaucoma and macular degeneration.

Late last year he visited our Newcastle centre for advice on how to make the best use of his remaining vision to read the newspaper.

Our staff quickly set him up with a magnifying lamp for reading. After a lifetime of support from Arthur, we were glad to be of service!

**On average
it costs us
\$56 to buy and
duplicate an
audio book.**



We value your feedback

Arthur Norburn is one of hundreds of Vision Australia supporters who responded to our recent Donor Survey.

We would like to thank everyone who sent back their survey forms. Your valuable input has enabled us to gain a better understanding of our donor community and the public perception of blindness and low vision.

Vision Australia very much appreciates the time and effort taken to assist us.

Many thanks for your support. Without you we would be unable to deliver our essential services to thousands of Australians who are blind or have low vision.

Mother knows best

Mother-of-two Sharyn Ryan (right) can offer plenty of advice about bringing up sons. From bandaging their knees to cheering her boys on at footy, she's done it all.

But unlike most mums, Sharyn is blind. Born with a rare congenital condition, she attended a Vision Australia school in Melbourne from age five to 15.

After moving home to Wentworth, Victoria, for Year 11, Sharyn returned to Melbourne to learn audio typing and switchboard operation at the then Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind Training Centre. This led to a job with a city law firm.

In 1984, she met Edward, who is also blind. They married three years later and moved to Dareton. Damien (seen right of Sharyn) was born in 1988 and Justin (left) arrived in 1991.



It costs \$97 per client to run a program of telelink sessions.

While raising two boys was not without challenges, Sharyn managed with the support of her family, Vision Australia and clever devices.

“We had a ball with a bell in it so we could play with them. We also borrowed braille books to read to our kids and played brailled board games together.”

A monthly telelink program enabled her to pick up parenting tips from other Vision Australia clients via the phone.

“When I joined the program my boys were five and eight,” she says. “I received a lot of advice and now I’m passing it on to new mothers.”

She is involved in three other telelink groups, devoted to crosswords, books and sport (“I’m still basking in the Cats’ win!”).

An avid reader, she often has a Vision Australia braille book and an audio title “on the go at the same time”.

Mother’s Day is always a big event in the Ryan household, with a win for Geelong on Sharyn’s wish list that weekend!



Helping hand at home

These devices help people who are blind or have low vision to run a household:

- Talking measuring jugs that tell the user the quantity of liquid inside and liquid level sensors that beep when a cup is full.
- Plastic boil-control discs that clang about in a saucepan when its contents boil.
- Portable braille labellers.
- Speaking can tops that store short voice messages identifying tin contents.

Visit www.visionaustralia.org/catalogue for more Equipment Solutions

Great gift ideas for Mum

Mother's Day will be here before you know it, so why not start planning now. Vision Australia has many innovative and useful presents that your mother or grandmother will appreciate — and use! GST is included in all of the quoted prices. Here are just a few fabulous Mother's Day gift ideas.



Talking alarm clock \$29

Measures 13 x 10 x 6cm. Simply push a button to hear the time.



A Fare To Remember \$20

Vision Australia's Whoorel Auxiliary members share their family recipes. (Not available in alternative formats)



Make-up mirror \$9

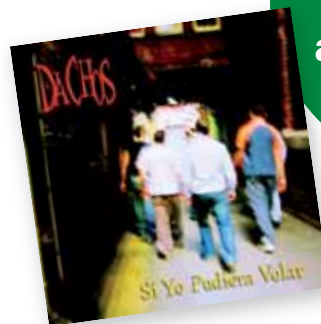
Five-times magnification.



Blank note cards \$15

Box of 24 cards with envelopes. Six designs. (10.5 x 10.5cm each)

First 50 orders over \$45 receive a FREE Latin music CD.



HOW TO PLACE YOUR ORDER:

Post: Locked Bag 3012, Burwood NSW 1805

Freecall: 1800 42 20 77

Fax: (02) 9334 3126

Web: www.visionaustralia.org

Order form (MAIL ORDERS ONLY)

Title: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ Postcode: _____

Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Enclosed is my: Cheque Money order
(made payable to Vision Australia)

OR Debit my: Mastercard Visa
 Diners Amex

Card number: _____/_____/_____/_____

Expiry: ____/____

Cardholder's name: _____


Signature: _____

Item	Price	Qty	Total
Talking clock	\$29		\$
Cookbook	\$20		\$
Mirror	\$9		\$
Note cards	\$15		\$
Subtotal:			\$
Postage & handling:			\$
Donation:			\$
TOTAL:			\$

Postage & handling (incl. GST)

1 item \$6 2-3 items \$10

4 items or more \$15



Help a **child** who
is **blind** make
sense of their world.

So many ways to support us

Choice is important to us at Vision Australia. We offer thousands of people who are blind or have low vision a range of services that enable them to live the lives they choose.

Our supporters also have choices, with several ways to assist us.

You can make a one-off donation that will go towards providing essential services. There's also the option to sign up to our Live the Vision monthly giving program. By giving automatic monthly donations, you enable us to more effectively plan for the future and help us to reduce our administrative costs.

It's also a more convenient way to donate as you need only tell us your details once and a gift is then automatically deducted each month.

Another way of supporting us is to buy items from our Gift Catalogue or to take part in our regular Lotteries. You could win a new car, a dream holiday or one of many gift vouchers.

Finally, you can assist us by telling others about the work we do. Spread the news!

For information about our work, to support us or become a Live The Vision partner, call **1800 42 20 77** or visit **www.visionaustralia.org/donate**



A big thank you to everyone who took part in Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight™ on Christmas Eve. From those who attended the show at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, to the millions who tuned in to the TV and radio broadcasts and phoned in to donate, your support made this event all the more memorable.

And special thanks to Anthony Callea, our Carols Ambassador (pictured above, with client Kate Law), who did so much to promote the event.

**Your
generosity
enables us to
change lives.
Thank you!**

To donate call 1800 42 20 77 or visit www.visionaustralia.org