Vision Australia Annual Report 2015-16

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# Accessibility

This Annual Report is available in standard print text, large print text, braille, audio and DAISY formats, and accessible digital formats. Contact us on 1300 84 74 66 to order a copy in your preferred format or visit our website www.visionaustralia.org

# Why we exist

To support people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.

# How we deliver

Our values define us and drive the way we interact with each other and our clients. They are: person-centred, accountable, collaborative, commercially focused and agile.

# What we do

We work in partnership with people who are blind or have low vision, their families, supporters and other providers, to help them to achieve their goals.

**Cover image**:Sophie Weaver, seven, has albinism. Unless an object is very close, it’s like seeing the world in two dimensions through a sheet of broken glass. She has big dreams and loves playing with her younger siblings Scarlet and Saxon.

**Inside page image**:James Norquay started painting and drawing at the age of eleven, after he lost his vision due to optical nerve damage from a brain tumour. Now aged 16, James would like to be a known artist.

# A message from our Chair and CEO

Vision Australia’s mission of supporting people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose is as important today as it was when the organisation was formed 12 years ago.

Our passion for putting the client first is at the centre of everything we do. This approach is essential to the human rights of every individual we support and also to the future of our organisation.

The rollouts of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and rapid implementation of My Aged Care (MAC) have offered Australians an unprecedented level of control over the support they receive and who supplies it. These profound changes underscore the importance and relevance of our mission.

Vision Australia has been diligent in preparing for both the NDIS and MAC changes.

Three years ago, the NDIS introduced trial sites in the Hunter Valley and Barwon. At the same time, we established Demonstration Sites in Newcastle and Geelong. When the Australian Capital Territory launched the NDIS one year later, we became an active participant through our Canberra office. This experience enabled Vision Australia to develop a new service delivery model that places our clients at the centre of the decision-making process.

Thanks to the Wicking Foundation’s ongoing support, we have invested in information systems that enable our expert staff to be more responsive to our clients’ needs. An investment in mobile technology including mobile phones and tablet computers means our clients, even in rural and remote areas, can access services through videoconferencing technology.

Investment in our core business systems over the last 12 months has been necessary to ensure we are able to meet the needs of our clients into the future. The newly implemented Client Management System will improve front-line serve delivery, reduce administrative costs and provide a more integrated service experience to clients.

Vision Australia now delivers services to every state and territory in Australia. The demand for Seeing Eye Dogs is growing in Western Australia and South Australia. A growing client base in Perth is offered a wide range of services, often delivered from the East Coast via the innovative use of technology.

People living in Western Australia also have access to Vision Australia Radio for the Print Handicapped service, adding to the loyal group of listeners in South Australia and Victoria.

Vision Australia engages clients, staff and stakeholders to design our services. The Client Reference Group is a volunteer group of clients who ensure all people with vision impairment have a voice in service design. We would like to thank this group for providing their expert voice to the Board and management.

We are truly thankful to the many thousands of individuals, philanthropists, foundations, trusts and businesses of all sizes which, through Vision Australia, support the blindness and low vision community. We particularly acknowledge those who have supported Vision Australia by way of a bequest creating a legacy that will benefit future generations.

Effective governance is an important foundation for the success of any organisation and Vision Australia is fortunate to have an exceptional Board of Directors.

Each director brings expertise to the complex issues that we face and their passion ensures Vision Australia provides enduring benefit to the blindness and low vision community. We fondly farewell past Chair Dr Kevin Murfitt and Nick Carter, who have provided 12 and 10 years of dedicated service, respectively and we thank them for their tremendous support of our organisation.

The extensive range of services provided to people who are blind or have low vision is made possible by the efforts of many individuals. Every year nearly 2,700 people volunteer with Vision Australia. We are grateful for their support. We also offer our sincere thanks to the nearly 800 dedicated and professional staff working for Vision Australia, all of whom contribute to supporting people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.

We look forward to the next 12 months and the different challenges that will help us to make a big difference for the blindness and low vision community of Australia.

The next 24 months:

* Further developing services in the areas of education, employment, independence and social inclusion.
* Full rollout of NDIS and My Aged Care.
* New service locations in Sydney, Melbourne and Townsville and a redevelopment of the Wicking Centre at Kooyong.
* The launch of Vision Australia’s new brand.

**Caption: Andrew Moffat and Ron Hooton and talk to the 2016 Career Start graduates. From left: Chris Page, Ron Hooton, Andrew Moffat, Caroline Lane and David Steeds.**

**Andrew Moffat, Chair, Vision Australia**

****

**Ron Hooton, CEO, Vision Australia**

Signature for Ron Hooton.

# Client story: Olivia Chan, Wantirna South, Victoria

Olivia Chan, four, is like most kids her age. She adores her sister Zoe and loves going to kindergarten.

Olivia has been blind since birth due to retinopathy of prematurity, a complication that can occur among some premature babies. As a result she only has limited light perception in her left eye.

Olivia’s mother, Mei-Fern, first contacted Vision Australia when Olivia was eight months old.

“It is very daunting as a new parent with a kid with low vision so it’s important to have support. It is as if we need to learn a new language overnight.”

Olivia is visited by a Vision Australia early childhood educator at kindergarten and home, approximately twice a month. She is currently learning to use a white cane so she can become more independent. Olivia is also referred to other services such as orthoptists and speech therapists as the need arises.

“She has developed so much. Olivia is a very independent child. She enjoys drawing, playing pretend cooking and has lots of friends at school who really adore her. She looks forward to going to school and playing with her friends. She’s a very sweet and caring person,” Mei-Fern said.

“Vision Australia guided me with how to cope with a child with vision loss, how to make sure Olivia reached her milestones on time.”

# About us

Vision Australia is proud to support Australia’s blindness and low vision community.

For 150 years, we have worked with people who are blind or have low vision, their families and supporters, in a way that assists them to live the life they choose.

Over 26,000 clients receive services from 29 Vision Australia centres across all states and territories. Outreach programs provide advice and support to people living outside of metropolitan areas, or those experiencing financial, social or other barriers that make accessing services difficult.

Clients, from the very young to the not-so-young, can access services that meet their individual needs.

To help a young child reach their developmental milestones we provide early intervention services, such as occupational therapy and speech therapy. During the school years, we support children with adaptive technology equipment and training, or one-on-one advocacy, so they can do their best at school. We also support adolescents to transition to adulthood, helping them to learn the necessary skills that will help them achieve the goals they set for themselves throughout life.

Innovative tele-health technology makes it possible for clients to connect with us, regardless of where they live. Even in regional and remote locations we are delivering high quality services and supports direct into clients’ homes.

So much is possible, however the blindness and low vision community still face challenges within everyday society; whether it’s not being able to enjoy free-to-air television with their family due to the lack of audio-described content or their job is threatened due to their vision impairment.

Vision Australia takes on these challenges at an individual and societal level to influence positive change. Working with government and industry, and standing alongside our community’s side, we add our voice to the issues that matter.

## Table of client numbers

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Service type** | **ACT** | **NSW** | **VIC** | **SA** | **TAS** | **WA** | **NT** | **QLD** |
| Vision Australia clients | 396 | 6,335 | 7,484 | 14 | 29 | 19 | 45 | 3,248 |
| Working Seeing Eye Dogs | 6 | 46 | 82 | 6 | 8 | 30 | 0 | 41 |
| Library Service Clients | 208 | 4,178 | 4,270 | 423 | 347 | 233 | 39 | 2,458 |

# A refreshing change

Vision Australia has grown and evolved since it began 150 years ago. Today, Vision Australia is a national provider of disability services that supports people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.

Our relationship with clients covers their entire vision loss journey and we’re proud to offer the right tools, experience and services to guide and support themalong the way.

Over the next few months we will refresh our brand to reflect both the evolution of the organisation as well as its vision for the future. And, in an increasingly competitive marketplace, these changes will help us increase our visibility and relevance to the community of people who are blind or have low vision, our donors and supporters, referral partners, employees and volunteers.

While the brand including the logo will change to better represent who we are today, Vision Australia’s proposition remains the same – our combination of a deep understanding of blindness and low vision, a commitment to quality service provision, and our desire to put clients at the centre of the decision-making process will enable us to continue to develop long-lasting and rewarding client relationships.

The new brand identity will launch later this year in time for Carols by Candlelight.

## Client story: Debbie King

An avid skier since the age of five, Debbie King has continued the sport she loves after losing her vision essentially overnight. At 51, she was diagnosed with optic nerve head drusen, a condition that has resulted in a loss of her peripheral vision leaving her with approximately 15 per cent total sight.

# The year in review

## A focus on supporting clients

### Your expert NDIS and MAC partner

The NDIS and MAC are changing the way disability services are delivered.

Vision Australia has been involved in both schemes from the beginning. We are proud that our advocacy efforts improved the breadth and level of services and supports available to our community under these schemes.

This year, we led successful negotiations with the Department of Health to secure three-year funding agreements to transition to the national aged care’s Commonwealth Home Support Program. Through this program, clients in Queensland and New South Wales now have access to our services through MAC.

* Clients who had contact with Vision Australia before applying for the NDIS were more aware of the services available and had a higher level of overall satisfaction with their package
* 77% of clients felt that the support they had received through their NDIS package was greater than what they had previously received
* 653 people who we were not previously supporting are now receiving MAC supports through us

### Supporting you, where you live, with what you need

To make accessing services easier for clients, we’ve opened new support centres and relocated others. Vision Australia centres in Bendigo, Wollongong and Canberra have moved so that they are more accessible; new centres have opened in Epping, New South Wales and in Townsville, Queensland; and we have new teams servicing clients in Wangaratta and the New England area.

Not all clients live in metropolitan areas. So, we deliver support to them through videoconferencing technology in their homes. We also make scheduled visits to places as far north as Weipa, and west to Mt Isa and remote communities including Tenant Creek and Katherine.

* A new bi-monthly outreach clinic was established at The Gathering Place, an Indigenous health service in Werribee
* 127 new home care packages were brought to the Eastern Melbourne and Melbourne South East regions
* A new Memorandum of Understanding was established with the Institute of Urban Indigenous Health in Queensland
* 48,610 pairs of spectacles and optical appliances have been provided to eligible recipients through the NSW spectacles program

## Independence and inclusion

### Tools for life

Life is so much easier with the right equipment and technology, and the right training.

* 23,450 equipment sales orders were fulfilled
* 7,000 talking timekeeping products were sold through our stores
* 4,414 questions from clients about technology were answered by our help desk
* 31,192 hours of adaptive technology training were delivered

### Connecting with others

We’re bringing people together to share their experiences with others who are blind or have low vision, learn from each other and stay in touch.

* The first men’s social group in Caringbah, New South Wales was established
* 52 Vision Australia Community Groups met regularly in person
* 2,554 Telelink® telephone social and recreation discussion group sessions were held including 8 groups in different languages
* 451 clients participated in 52 Quality Living Programs

### Growing our six-legged partnerships

With a $500,000 grant from the Victorian State Government the Seeing Eye Dogs Australia breeding and training centre will be extended to include a new Indoor Mobility and Safety Training Centre. The centre will contain real-life settings including pedestrian and train crossings, a café, and overhanging obstacles. Our clients will have a safe and controlled environment in which they can practice their Seeing Eye Dog and white cane orientation and mobility skills, before they are used in the real world.

### Lots of puppies

We were in the fortunate position of experiencing a puppy boom and for the first time, our puppy centre was at capacity. So we didn’t have to slow down our breeding program we launched an innovative social media campaign to call out for puppy carers.

* A social media video campaign attracted more than 85,000 views and 3,500 comments
* 961 people enquired about puppy caring in direct response to the campaign

### Turn the page

A world of information is available to people with print disabilities and, new technology is making it even easier to access different content.

* 600 library members are using our new app Vision Australia Connect to download from our online library
* 2,139 library members have instant access to titles through an easy-to-use 3G player
* 70% of library content is delivered online
* 46,614 titles are available in our library collection

### What’s your goal?

For families it might involve helping their child to achieve the greatest levels of independence, participation and development, so that once school is finished they can participate fully in life.

For adults it might include gaining a qualification to support a career change, playing a team sport or starting a business.

Whatever the goals are, we’re helping people of all ages to reach them.

* 13,812 hours spent supporting children in their early years
* 25,263 hours spent supporting young children in their primary school years
* 10,569 hours spent supporting older children in their high school years
* Six children and eight adult clients from Sydney participated in a workshop led by world-renowned echolocation expert, Daniel Kish
* 232 volunteers supported clients to access recreational activities

# Client story: Josh Campbell, Albury, NSW

Vision Australia’s Further Education Bursary program is 20 years old and has supported 316 students across Australia since 1996.

Josh Campbell wants to make a difference to youth in regional areas who are living with mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety.

The 22 year-old is in the third year of a Bachelor of Human Services and Master of Social Work at La Trobe University in Wodonga.

This year, Josh has chosen to defer his studies to complete a three-week intensive employment workshop through Vision Australia.

“I have cone rod dystrophy, which means that I have no night vision and I struggle to see in low light. I am also sensitive to glare, which affects the level of contrast between objects,” Josh said.

Josh received an iPhone 6S, iPad and a new laptop computer through the Vision Australia Further Education Bursary program.

“Reading is difficult. I use technology to enlarge text and change the contrast to make it easier to see,” he said.

With the employment workshop and his studies under control, Josh, an aspiring musician who plays the guitar and sings, is looking for part-time paid work in information technology. He’d also like to spend some time focusing on his musical goals.

“On the iPad and iPhone, I can quickly change the contrast to white text on a black background. It is really convenient and easy to use, especially in lectures. My new laptop is much faster and more reliable, so my study won’t be disrupted as it has been in the past.”

## Shifting ways of thinking

### Advocating together for change

Our community still faces many barriers, so it’s important that our clients have the tools and support they need to take on these challenges.

To help our clients navigate the education and welfare systems we published the self-advocacy resource ‘Early, Primary and Secondary Education’ and guides to the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and Aged Pension (Blind). We also conducted training with 16 community groups.

Nationally, we delivered systemic advocacy initiatives related to accessible voting: accessible banking, audio description services, tactile currency, employment and touchscreen technology.

### Equal access to technology

There is a growing trend towards the use of onscreen menus and touchscreens on telecommunications products, household appliances and IT equipment. Despite the availability of accessible touch screen technology, which is commonly used in smartphone devices, many products do not take advantage of this technology or have in-built accessibility features.

We’re raising awareness of this important issue through our public policy on Access to Equipment. In November 2015, we presented at the Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities.

### Breaking down information barriers

Less than 5% of print information is available in a format that can be accessed by people with print disabilities.

The Marrakesh Treaty enables organisations to share books across borders, effectively opening up a world of information for people who are blind or have low vision. Our advocacy work helped secure Australia’s ratification of the Treaty, which will come in to effect on 30 September 2016.

We continue to partner with Australian businesses and government to ensure their information – whether it’s printed or digital – is accessible to our community.

* 350,000 pages of material were converted into large print text, braille, audio, and electronic text
* 67 accessibility training workshops were delivered to public and private sector professionals across the country
* Our Document Accessibility Toolbar which helps users to make documents and information accessible was downloaded 1,368 times. The toolbar was launched at the NDIS New World Conference.

### Getting the job done

The workforce participation rate for people with disability was recorded as 54.9% in 2012, compared with 82.5% for the remainder of the population. It is a big concern.

Our research shows that education is critical for transitioning successfully into meaningful employment. It empowers students who are blind or have low vision with opportunity and choice.

It’s one of the reasons we started our 12-month Career Start graduate program. Now in its second year, the program enables participants to gain valuable training and work experience in a paid role. Both graduates from last year’s program went on to find meaningful paid employment.

So they are more job-ready, we also provided six job seekers with a 16-week work placement. This training was proudly funded and supported by the Queensland Government through its *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative.

* 107 job seekers were successfully placed
* 20 people were supported through our Jobs in Jeopardy program
* 14.48% of Vision Australia’s full time workforce is blind or has low vision

### Making your priorities, a priority

The 2016 federal election provided an opportunity to advocate to the leading political parties on the top five priorities that were identified by our clients: creating meaningful employment opportunities, ensuring quality education, supporting access to blindness and low vision services for seniors, mandating audio description on Australian free-to-air television and introducing accessible voting through an iVote-style system.

We secured written commitments from the four major parties, and minor parties, on these priorities and are now in a stronger position to continue lobbying Parliamentarians to make changes to related laws and programs.

### More bang for your buck

Identifying the different banknote denominations can be difficult for some members of our community.

Our research found that 61 per cent of people who are totally blind have trouble differentiating between the banknote denominations and nearly half of these people do not receive the right change on occasion. Also, 93 per cent of people who are blind or have low vision advised they would welcome a tactile feature on Australian banknotes.

Our advocacy efforts and the efforts of many others in our community have succeeded. On 1 September 2016, the first Australian banknote – the $5 note – will have a tactile feature.

But the work is not done. The banking system in Australia still has many accessibility issues. We continue to work closely with the big banks and the Australian Bankers Association to ensure our community is included.

### Going places

Many people in our community rely on public transport, especially taxis, to get around. Following numerous submissions and campaigning by Vision Australia the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme in NSW was lifted from $30 to $60.

### Pass the remote

Watching television is part of Australian culture. But our community needs audio-described content to enjoy this past-time. By lobbying the Government we secured an extension of the audio description trial on ABC iview.

## Connecting with the community

### Vision Australia’s Carols by Candlelight

* Nearly $1.38M was raised – thank you Australia
* Ticket sales increased by 13% from the previous year
* Donations increased by 16%
* Media exposure increased by 28% from the previous year

### Open Days

* Open Day events were held in Brisbane, Newcastle and at our Seeing Eye Dog facility in Kensington
* 3,631 visitors joined us
* 92% of attendees in Brisbane and 87% of attendees in Newcastle were satisfied with the events

### Client story: Sarah Hocking, Standing by your side

In nine months, Sarah Hocking got married, gave birth to her first child, and became blind.

The 28-year-old, who is a primary school teacher, realised her vision was deteriorating about three weeks before giving birth to son Archer.

“I noticed the whiteboard blurring a bit, and the kids were picking up on things when I was reading to them,” she said. “I didn’t think anything of it. I just put it down to being tired and my pregnancy.”

She and husband Cameron started to worry when the features of the newsreaders’ faces on television were no longer identifiable.

“I got sent for a CT scan about midnight and was woken up with the results of that about three in the morning.”

The scan revealed three benign tumours in Sarah’s brain, two of which were on her optic nerve. Archer was born by emergency caesarean within hours. Nine days later, Sarah underwent more than seven hours of brain surgery. Two tumours were removed and Sarah was at first hopeful of keeping her sight, but then it started to deteriorate rapidly.

Two events mark the start of Sarah’s recovery: her mother’s arrival, and her first appointment with Vision Australia.

“I'm forever thankful to Vision Australia for standing by my side. I would have been lost without them,” she said.

Fast-track one year later and Sarah is now training for a half marathon, running her own blog, giving media interviews and busily chasing after her on-the-go toddler. In time, Sarah hopes to be matched with a Seeing Eye Dog.

# An army of dedicated volunteers

We couldn’t achieve such great outcomes for our clients without the dedication of our volunteers.

Whether it’s reading the news headlines, caring for our Seeing Eye Dog puppies, or preparing reading material for our library members.

We thank you all.

* 2,653 active volunteers supported us in the last year
* 39 volunteers were recognised for 20, 25, 30 or 35 years of service
* 814 volunteers supported our radio network, delivering over 213 hours of content

**Page image**: Hong Mei Qiao is a volunteer narrator with our library service. Here she is narrating the Chinese magazine *Du zhe wen zhai*. This year, around 65,000 newspapers and magazines were downloaded by library members.

# Client story: Lizzey D’Sylva-Clark, Burton, SA

Lizzey D’Sylva-Clark, 22, has been blind since birth. A vivacious and ambitious young lady, she regularly volunteers at Radio Adelaide as an on-air presenter and hopes to work in the radio industry one day.

She is passionate about music. She has sung since she was six years old and played the piano since she was nine. She is also a keen sportswoman and rides tandem with a cycling club, competing in the women’s national and state championships every year.

When Lizzey moved to Adelaide, she decided to apply for a Seeing Eye Dog to help her get around faster, safely and on her own. Vision Australia matched her with Lacey. They spent three weeks getting to know each other and training with one of our instructors, Greer.

Lacey has changed Lizzey’s life, helping her overcome her fears and giving her the confidence to become completely independent.

“I remember saying, ‘I will not ever, ever walk on a train platform by myself', but now I have Lacey I am not scared anymore.”

For Lizzey, her Labrador Lacey has allowed her to move more quickly and navigate obstacles. Lacey is also trained to use her own initiative to stop at roads and navigate train platforms to move Lizzey out of the path of danger.

“As soon as I met Lacey I thought: ‘This is my dog, she is an extension of me, she is like me.’ I knew straight away this was the dog for me, there was no hesitation. Ever since then, I’ve just embraced her with open arms and we’ve been a great team together.”

# Performance against our Strategic Plan

The past 12 months saw further transformational progress against the five priorities in our Strategic Plan.

The following pages contain a summary of the outcomes we achieved against each of these priorities, this year.

**Page image**: Neslihan Sari, 33, lost her right eye at a young age and has very limited vision in her left eye due to glaucoma. Last year, she secured her first full-time job as a paralegal at Public Transport Victoria, with our support.

## Strategic Plan Objective 1: Introduce new personalised services reflecting individual goals and choice

* Every client has been appointed a primary service provider. Together, they make decisions about the individual’s support, adding services and supports as needed, based on their goals.
* Fifteen Regional Practice Leaders were appointed to support and lead best practice and ensure compliance with industry standards.
* To reinforce a person-centred model of service and culture, person-centred principles have been incorporated into staff recruitment, induction, training and performance plans.

### Looking ahead

Clients will continue to provide insights to develop and improve services and supports that will enable them to reach their goals and aspirations.

## Strategic Plan Objective 2: Market our personalised services so referrers and clients know exactly what we do

* We’re adapting to the new competitive landscape created by the NDIS and MAC through a number of initiatives.
* We:
  + Signed new partnerships that offer opportunities for referrals, co-location and partnered service delivery. These partnerships include Australian Hearing, European Eyeware and general practitioners.
  + Developed business prospects with fee-for-service training in the aged care market.
  + Created a 360 degree view of the local demographics, population profile, competitors and infrastructure for each Vision Australia office.
  + Tracked our website visitor journeys and adapted our site to ensure they can easily find the information they need.
  + Appointed a Chief Marketing Officer and a Communications Director to develop brand awareness and position Vision Australia as a credible authority in the disability sector.

### Looking ahead

We’re developing Local Area Marketing plans to establish relationships and professionally market our services in distinct geographical areas.

## Strategic Plan Objective 3: Create new business systems and processes so staff can provide great service

* Client service productivity has lifted from 47.13% to 64.86%, against a target of 65%.
* To provide a better service to clients and improve operational efficiency a new client management system was launched. Accessible and available through mobile technology, the system enables our front-line staff to be more effective and efficient when delivering services out in the community.
* The launch of a new financial management system that provides real-time budget information is enabling more stringent monitoring and management of our finances.

### Looking ahead

Soon, clients will be able to manage their own appointments and information using Salesforce, our new Client Management System.

## Strategic Plan Objective 4: Advocate for social reform using evidence and a human rights approach.

* A Program of Engagement, including a new portfolio-based Client Reference Group, was launched to encourage open conversation with the blindness and low vision community and ultimately, improve the way we support them.
* More blindness and low vision service types will be funded through My Aged Care due to the successful negotiation of a new ‘specialist service’ category.
* Through our advocacy efforts, and the efforts of others in our community, the new generation of Australian banknotes will have a tactile feature. Read page 18 to learn more about this achievement.

### Looking ahead

Building the capacity of our clients and providing them with self-advocacy tools will enable them to advocate of their own behalf. We will also continue to monitor the political environment and respond to the big issues that affect our community.

## Strategic Plan Objective 5: Shift leadership and workforce culture to client focus, integrity, professionalism, respect.

* The Swinburne University Leadership Development Program was completed by another 20 staff who have five management-style projects ready to be implemented in the new financial year.
* Goal setting has been embedded in our culture. Senior leaders have successfully undergone leadership and coaching training to support their teams to set goals and in turn, support our clients to set goals.
* Volunteers supporting Peer Support and Telelink programs are highly valued team members and are now receiving regular training and development opportunities.

### Looking ahead

Supporting our clients with high quality service, when and where they need us will be driven by flexible work practices and ongoing investment in professional development and transdisciplinary training for our staff.

# Client story: Barry Watts, Tallarook, Victoria

Imagine waking up one morning to find that you had no vision in one eye and only very little vision remaining in the other. For Barry Watts, 83, this became a reality when he suffered a stroke overnight.

That was almost two years ago. With the support of Vision Australia’s Assist woodworking program at our centre in Kensington, Melbourne Barry is able to carry on pursuing his interests.

Barry was already somewhat familiar with working with timber. The woodworking program however, offered an opportunity to explore some new techniques.

So far Barry has produced chopping boards, bench seats, jewellery boxes and a wine rack.

“The program is designed to build people’s confidence and give them skills they can take home and use in their own projects,” said Vision Australia Instructor, Brett Behan.

The woodworking shop is equipped with a variety of adapted tools, such as talking tape measures to make it possible for people who are blind or have low vision to get involved.

Barry travels to the woodworking program each week by train from his home in Tallarook.

“I was originally a carpenter by trade and worked on things like houses and buildings. I hadn’t really had much experience with joinery and making smaller things,” Barry said.

# Thanking our donors

We are sincerely grateful that you have chosen to support us.

Your support means more people who are blind or have low vision are reaching the goals and aspirations they have chosen for life.

* 100,000+ donors gave to Vision Australia and Seeing Eye Dogs Australia
* $51.6M total donations and gifts in wills received

Meet the wonderful individuals, businesses and organisations that have supported us by giving over $10,000 this year, as well as our corporate partners, and Fundraising and Friends of Vision Australia Committees.

Page image: “Vision Australia has been there for our whole family. With their help, my husband and I have the right advice and tools to support our girls, Chloe, 11 and Scarlett, two to reach their milestones and goals,” Trisha Ross.

### Gifts in wills

Estate of the Late Mr Eric Hyam Abrahams

Estate of the Late Mr Stephen William Andrews

Estate of the Late Ms Olive Vera Ashcroft

Estate of the Late Ms Marie Isabel Bennett

Estate of the Late Mrs Mavis Aitken Bethke

Estate of the Late Elvia May Beves

Estate of the Late Joyce Gwendolyn Black

Estate of the Late Denise Irene Booth

Estate of the Late Mr Herbert Born

Estate of the Late Mrs Ida Joyce Bourke

Estate of the Late Mr William Malcolm Bradford

Estate of the Late Marie Howe Breckenridge

Estate of the Late Mrs Muriel May Broad

Estate of the Late Mr Kenneth Brown

Estate of the Late Mary Jane Burges

Estate of the Late Dorothy Helen Burne

Estate of the Late Grace Eugenie Cameron

Estate of the Late Mr Raymond Douglas Chant

Estate of the Late Shirley Alison Chapman

Estate of the Late Mr Robertson Chick

Estate of the Late Mrs Mary Louise Clugston

Estate of the Late Denise Cobcroft

Estate of the Late Ausilio Confalonieri

Estate of the Late Edward Cook

Estate of the Late Mr Robert Clarence Cumming

Estate of the Late Mary Josephine Curteis

Estate of the Late Mrs Jean Elizabeth Daley

Estate of the Late Dorothy May Davies

Estate of the Late Margaret Robina Dott

Estate of the Late Dorothy Eleanor Downey

Estate of the Late John H Dugdale

Estate of the Late Mrs Isabelle Iris Endersbee

Estate of the Late Mr Ralph Erickson

Estate of Robert John Finlay

Estate of the Late Mr Warwick Jeffrey Flecknoe

Estate of the Late Mr George Edward Foster

Estate of the Late Mrs Margaret W Fraser

Estate of the Late Mr Charles Frederick Freeman

Estate of the Late Mr Brian Edwin French

Estate of the Late Helen Elizabeth Gadsden

Estate of the Late Mr George Gibson

Estate of the Late George Eliot Gilchrist

Estate of the Late Ms Coline Mary Gollan

Estate of the Late Mr Godfrey Barrington Goodere

Estate of the Late Ms Joyce Alison Gunnis

Estate of the Late Kathleen Anne Habla

Estate of the Late Mr Kenneth George Halls

Estate of the Late Mr Trygve Halvorsen

Estate of the Late Mrs Joyce Harrower

Estate of the Late Mr William Robert Arnold Henderson

Estate of the Late Ms Cecile Ellen Higgs

Estate of the Late Mr Jack Hinton

Estate of the Late Mr James Bruce Horsley

Estate of the Late Mr Daryl Giles Howard

Estate of the Late Ms Helen Margaret Hudson

Estate of the Late Ms Betty Madge Humphery

Estate of the Late Mr Russell William Hunter

Estate of the Late Mr Colin Ross Irvine

Estate of the Late Mr Alfred Richard James

Estate of the Late Alicia Goodhart Johnson

Estate of the Late Mrs Dulcie Therese Jones

Estate of the Late Mrs Glenys Ruth Kendall

Estate of the Late Frances Anne Lightley

Estate of the Late Alice Elizabeth Ruth Lowry

Estate of the Late Mr David Ronald Hamilton Macintyre

Estate of the Late Mrs Margaret Marion Macrae

Estate of the Late Edith Norah McCall

Estate of the Late Mrs Margaret Ann McLennan

Estate of the Late Joan Louise McMahen

Estate of the Late Mrs Lorna Mead

Estate of the Late Ms Valerie Ethel Miller

Estate of the Late Mrs Irma Irene Miller

Estate of the Late Mr Peter James Morris

Estate of the Late Laura Violet Muller

Estate of the Late Mr Herbert Fitzgerald Nardin

Estate of the Late Ms Edith Elwyn Neilson

Estate of the Late Helen Nolan

Estate of the Late Mr Les O'Keeffe

Estate of the Late Mr Colin Hetherington Oldham

Estate of the Late Mr William Frances O'Neill

Estate of the Late Lilian Pearl Orford

Estate of the Late Ms Valerie Heather Oswin

Estate of the Late Arthur David Percival

Estate of the Late Mr Peter Powell

Estate of the Late Ellie May Ribee

Estate of the Late Mrs Norma Lois Riley

Estate of the Late Mrs Dorothy May Rosenfeld

Estate of the Late Mr Graham Francis William Rule

Estate of the Late Barry Law Russell

Estate of the Late Anne Dallas Salvado

Estate of the Late Mrs Phyllis Betty Simpson

Estate of the Late Mrs June Vivienne Simpson

Estate of the Late Mr Bert Clifford Skinner

Estate of the Late Eric Charles Smith

Estate of the Late Leo Patrick Stakelum

Estate of the Late James Henry Stewart

Estate of the Late Kay Janet Fanny Stubbs

Estate of the Late Mr Henry Swankie

Estate of the Late Mr Harold Thomas Swanton

Estate of the Late Mr John Joseph Talbot

Estate of the Late Hydfryd Rae Thomas

Estate of the Late Mr Raymond John Threlfall

Estate of the Late Mr Kenneth Todd

Estate of the Late Ruby J K Tout

Estate of the Late Mrs Marcelle Olga Trenoweth

Estate of the Late Arthur Henry Tyrer

Estate of the Late E J Vaughan

Estate of the Late Mrs Kathleen Joyce Wade

Estate of the Late Alan Don Wienand

Estate of the Late Mrs Margaret Agnes Nevin Wills

Estate of the Late Mr Arthur Douglas Wilson

Estate of the Late Muriel Fraser Wittey

Estate of the Late Paul Wright

### Trusts and Foundations

Allen & Cecilia Tye Fund

Amy Irene Christina Ostberg Estate

Arthur Leonard Raper Charitable Trust

Bell Charitable Fund

Bill & Jean Henson Charitable Trust

Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation

Clifford Abbott Davidson Charitable Trust

Collier Charitable Fund

Commonwealth Bank Staff Community Fund

Danks Trust / Annie Danks Trust

David Allen Trust

Donovan-Johnston Memorial Trust

E C Blackwood Charitable Trust

Edith Jean Elizabeth Beggs Charitable Trust

Edith McTaggart Charitable Trust

Eric Crawford Memorial Fund

Estate of the Late Frederick John Banbury

Estate of Amy Elizabeth Bayne

Estate of A M Bissett

Estate of the Late Ella Kate Boyd

Estate of the Late Georgena Elizabeth Bradshaw

Estate of the Late Edna May Dacey

Estate of the Late William H Fernie

Estate of the Late Mona Isobel Paul

Estate of the Late Thomas James Malcolmson & Winifred Gleeson

Estate of E W Vicars-Foote

Estate of the Late Jane Williamson

Estate of the Late John Frederick Wright

Family Frank Foundation

Flora & Frank Leith Charitable Trust

Florance Hattersley Trust

Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies

Frank & Sybil Richardson Charitable Trust

Frederick Shepherd Trust

Gregory Patrick & Marie Dolores Farrell Foundation

Grosvenor Foundation

Gwenneth Elsie Miller Charitable Trust

Hardie Family Bequest

Henry James Francis Estate

Ian McLeod & Madge Duncan Perpetual Charitable Trust

J O & J R Wicking Trust

Janet Calder MacKenzie Charitable Trust

John & Laurine Proud Family Estate Trust

Kel & Rosie Day Foundation

Lady Proud Foundation

Leslie Francis Gill Trust

Lily Maude Payne Charitable Trust

Lionel R V Spencer Fund

Lola Poynton Memorial Fund

Marjorie Scott Trust

Marrich Charitable Foundation

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation

Oscar William Eschenhagen Edwards Trust

Philandron Foundation

Russell McKimmin Charitable Trust

Russell Vontom Charitable Trust

Scott Family Bequest -Trust

Skipper-Jacobs Charitable Trust

STAF - Judith De Garrood Donation

The Benjamin Slome Charitable Foundation

The Curavis Fund

The Edith Kemp Memorial Trust Fund

The Elliott Family Trust

The Granger Charitable Foundation

The Howard Glover Perpetual Charitable Trust

The Kemvan Trust

The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust

The Muffin Foundation

The Orloff Family Charitable Trust

The Profield Foundation

The Sally Sinisoff Trust Fund

The William Mansel Higgins & Dorothy Higgins Charitable Trust

Urquhart Charitable Fund

William Andrew Bon Charitable Trust

### Individuals

Mrs L Barnett

Mrs J Barton

Mrs P Brown

Mr D & Mrs A Craig

Mr D & Mrs I Dalrymple

Mr K Edwards

Mr A Eger

Mr A Excell

Miss J Farrell

Ms D Graff & Mr F Wyss

Dr B Mezo

Miss A Miller

Mrs J Overbeek

Mr G Painton

Estate of the Late Mr Andrew Ian Paul

Mr J Robbins

Mrs M Roberts

Mr P & Mrs S Rosen

Mr B J Royle

Ms L, Mr P & Mr A Savage

Mr M Schroder

Mrs A Shaw

Miss J Sheridan

Mrs J Smith

Mr D & Mrs V Solomon

Mr R Sweaney

Mr K & Mrs A Thornton

Mrs R Yabsley

### Registered clubs

Canada Bay Club

### Businesses

Archibald's Leak Detection Services

J & J Holdings

Jetstar Airways

Petbarn Pty Ltd

T Rainsford Pty Ltd

U3A Kooyong Inc

### Corporate partners

Eastland

Royal Canin Australia

Woolworths Limited

### Fundraising and Friends of Vision Australia Committees

Boort Friends of Vision Australia

Cohuna Friends of Vision Australia

Coleraine Friends of Vision Australia

Cooma Friends of Vision Australia

Coorparoo Friends of Vision Australia

Cressy Friends of Vision Australia

Dubbo Black & White Committee of Vision Australia

Euroa Friends of Vision Australia

Gisborne Friends of Vision Australia

Glenthompson Friends of Vision Australia

Griffith Friends of Vision Australia

International Committee of Vision Australia

Kaniva Friends of Vision Australia

Kerang Friends of Vision Australia

Kiama and District Friends of Vision Australia

Kyneton Friends of Vision Australia

Leongatha Rose Show Committee

Maitland Black & White Committee of Vision Australia

Mentone/Mordialloc Friends of Vision Australia

Mudgee Black & White Committee of Vision Australia

Sea Lake Friends of Vision Australia

Skipton Friends of Vision Australia

Swan Hill Friends of Vision Australia

Taree and District Friends of Vision Australia

The Black & White Committee of Vision Australia

Wangaratta Friends of Vision Australia

Whoorel Friends of Vision Australia

Willaura Friends of Vision Australia

Yarrawonga Friends of Vision Australia

Yass Friends of Vision Australia

**Page image**: Mackenzie Savva, Ermington, New South Wales

Seven-year-old Mackenzie was born blind and is developmentally delayed. Mum, Tanya made the radical decision to provide intense therapy and home-schooling to Mackenzie for six months, whilst travelling around Australia in a campervan to experience new things. They departed in May 2016.

Vision Australia is supporting their ‘The Road Unseen’ journey, every step of the way, to assist in Mackenzie's developmental journey and help raise awareness in local communities of people who are blind or have low vision.

**Page image**: Jane Britt, Indooroopilly, Queensland

“I’ve had a lifetime involvement with Vision Australia. They’ve supported me to gain independence in my everyday life, by providing adaptive technology and visual aids for the home. They’ve also helped me achieve a successful pathway with my education, from primary school through to tertiary education, by helping my teachers understand my visual needs.

“With Vision Australia, I have learnt to read braille through distance education and have been involved in various Telelink groups. I’m now a proud member of Vision Australia’s Client Reference Group youth portfolio. I’m really enjoying helping Vision Australia work on the services they will offer to the future generation of the blindness and low vision community.”

# Financial performance

To support the blindness and low vision community across Australia do the things they want to do in life, we’re building an economically sustainable and secure organisation now, and for the future.

Managing and investing your money wisely enables us to do this job well.

An operational surplus has been achieved through the focused planning and execution of our corporate strategy, targeted fundraising efforts and responsible control of our investment portfolio. The surplus will be reinvested back into our organisation so we can continue to support the people we do now as well as reach out to a greater number of people in the blindness and low vision community.

The funds we receive have been directed to provide services and supports to our clients by focusing on two key financial priorities: growing revenue opportunities and actively managing our costs.

We achieved an overall growth of 10.6% in income from significant one-off bequests and legacies and have successfully managed the transition from block grants to NDIS funding. The financial impact of this transition has not been significant this year and is not expected to be substantial in the 2017 financial year. Our net assets remained steady at $210M due to positive returns on investments and income growth.

**Where our income comes from**

Delivering much-needed services and support to the blindness and low vision community would not be possible without the generosity of individuals, corporate partners, businesses, organisations and government. We thank you for your financial support.

A bar chart shows the following income categories: grant income, fundraising, bequests and logistics, investment income, other income.

**Where your money goes**

The majority of our income is invested in providing services and supports to help our clients live the life they choose. We continue to carefully manage our expenses and investments and look for new ways to be economically responsible.

A bar chart shows the following expenses categories: front-line services, fundraising, back office costs.

We couldn’t have achieved the strong results we did without the strategic guidance and governance of our Board and the committees that support the Board. Many of the members of our Board and committees are blind or have low vision. Their first-hand insights and extensive commercial experience continues to guide how we support our community’s needs and reach the goals set out in our strategic plan.

Our full financial statements are available in standard print text, large print text, braille, audio and DAISY formats, and accessible digital formats. Contact us on 1300 84 74 66 to order a copy in your preferred format or visit our website www.visionaustralia.org

# Connect with us

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Twitter @visionaustralia

Instagram visionaustralia

LinkedIn vision-australia

YouTube visionaustralia

**Seeing Eye Dogs Australia**

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info@seda.org.au

Facebook seeingeyedogs

Instagram seeingeyedogsaustralia

**Vision Australia Radio**

Vision Australia Radio reaches approximately 315,000\* listeners per month across Australia (\*Combined figures courtesy of McNair Ingenuity Research Pty Ltd April/ May/October 2011 and Ipsos Research Institute May 2014).

Tune into our radio stations on these frequencies. Vision Australia Radio is also broadcast over digital stations in Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide or via the Vision Australia Connect app.

**New South Wales**

Albury/Wodonga 101.7FM

**Victoria**

Bendigo 88.7FM

Geelong 99.5FM

Melbourne 1179AM

Mildura 107.5FM

Shepparton 100.1FM

Warragul 93.5FM

Warrnambool 94.5FM

**South Australia**

Adelaide 1197AM

**WA**

Perth 990AM

The Vision Australia Radio Network acknowledges the Australian Government’s financial support for this vital service via the Community Broadcasting Foundation, the advocacy and support of the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia and the on-going collaborative partnership with RPH Australia.

**Back cover image**: The degenerative eye condition, retinitis pigmentosa doesn’t stop June Smith from enjoying ballroom dance lessons at the MarShere Dance Studios.

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