

Focus



Vision
Australia

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

150+
years of vision

Issue 1, 2021

Thank you!

Your support is
making a difference
to kids like
Cem.

BOARD DRAW



Thank You!

Dear friend,

At this very time last year, still in the full flush of optimism for the new year of 2020, none of us could have imagined what lay ahead.

Something as small as a virus would lay siege to the whole world, not just here in Australia.

The illness, and loss of lives, the impact on our livelihoods, as well as the unpredictability and uncertainty - affected us all. The year 2020 was unlike any other but signs of a pandemic recovery across our nation are now evident.

What the past year has shown us is that the resilience of the human spirit should never be underestimated and I am extremely grateful to you, and to all of our donors and supporters who have been unwavering in their support. And I am particularly proud of our Vision Australia team for their continued dedication and commitment.

Life provides us with 'fair weather friends' and 'friends for all seasons.'

We had no expectations, but it's 'friends for all seasons' like you, who kept us buoyed up, giving us the motivation and the means to find innovative ways to keep turning your generosity into action.

Even bad situations can have positive outcomes. Our Telehealth services, boosted significantly during the pandemic, are now a vital part of our client outreach and you'll see more on this on page 4 and 5.

Whilst you can never be thanked enough for your support, my sincere hope is that anyone needing our services in the coming year can continue to rely on your generosity.

With best wishes,

Ron Hooton
CEO Vision Australia

Remember Cem?

Since we first introduced Cem to you, this courageous little boy has come a long way, making great strides even through the pandemic. I know how happy you'll be to hear this.

Leo, Cem's Vision Australia's occupational therapist, is thrilled with Cem's progress which continued last year using videoconferencing.

Always incorporating fun and interesting activities, Leo added yoga into the mix. And both Cem and Leo enjoy the descriptive names of an animal for each pose, like downward facing dog, stretching cat and climbing monkey.

When outdoor activities were curtailed, there were fewer opportunities for goalball, but Cem and his best buddy, cousin Efe, have made up for it with plenty of reading and indoor games.

Whilst we can, and always will, say 'Thank you!' for supporting Cem and other children like him, it's the continued progress we can see and report that's your true reward.



Cem (right) with his cousin, Efe



A Message of Appreciation to You from the Kendrick Family

Melissa was 20 weeks into her pregnancy and the joyful anticipation of a second son, Sean.

Then a scan revealed the shocking news that Sean's eyes hadn't developed, and that he would be born blind.

Distraught though Melissa and her husband, Darren, were, Melissa was quick to seek help through a doctor and an introduction to an early intervention unit. A further therapist group and a mother's group led the family to Vision Australia when Sean was 12 months old.

Once he joined our Vision Australia family, Sean quickly adapted to crawling and then walking, his confidence growing day by day.

Sean is now a 15 year old who enjoys all the usual 'cool' teenage interests. Top of his list is sport: goalball, blind cricket and triathlons, as well as swimming and athletics. Music is also a big love, especially rock 'n' roll, which has led to him playing the drums, both in and outside school.

Determined and outgoing with a great sense of humour, Sean is growing into a young man willing to give anything a go.

So what kind of help has Sean received along the way?

It's been extensive, including physio, occupational and speech therapy. For cross-country and triathlons as well as open water swimming he has a guide and a tether. And cycling is done on a tandem bike.

Sean uses the Vision Connect app. With his interest in technology he was encouraged to call Vision Australia to set it up himself. Now using JAWS, he's learning the computer keyboard shortcuts, and moving into tables and excel with a screenreader. At school he uses a laptop and has learnt touch typing.

The Kendricks' message to you is this:

'As a family, we would like to sincerely thank Vision Australia supporters who make donations to help fund services for adults and children who are blind, like Sean, or have low vision. Your support helps promote their confidence, self-esteem and opportunities on which to build. We are indebted to you!'

Thank you so much!

'How far away is that building?'

'How high is that step?'

The answers can now be sourced using Telehealth services.

Questions like these are usually answered when our clients work one on one and face to face with our Orientation and Mobility instructors.

But when COVID-19 brought its community restrictions, we had to find different ways of answering those questions. Adapting our approach and using available technology allowed us to keep operating during the pandemic.



Tiffany is one of our Orientation and Mobility specialists, with 20 years of experience.

Very important to Tiffany is the rapport and trust that she can build with her clients when learning new skills. She has proven that this can successfully be developed either on the phone or using Zoom. And one of the discovered benefits of Telehealth is that it has allowed our clients' families to be part of the training sessions which is an added advantage.



Whilst it can't cover everything, much can still be achieved via the Telehealth. This newfound capability is now a permanent part of will help Vision Australia continue to provide remotely.



Kelsey trains Vision Australia clients how to maintain a high level of independence when out and about.

She teaches white cane techniques and skills, travel skills and how to use public transport, maps & understanding directions, and orientation to different routes. Adapting how she works, and using Telehealth, Kelsey and her colleagues have been able to continue supporting their clients through what's been a challenging time.



Maruthi is a regional Orientation and Mobility specialist.

Based in Albury, New South Wales, he's often had to travel long distances to provide his service. Ahead of the introduction of Telehealth, Maruthi started using the telephone and WhatsApp with clients some years ago. So he was more than ready to meet the challenges of COVID-19, also adding Zoom to his 'toolbox' of white cane training methods covering techniques for use, strategies for preventing falls and training for people wanting to move about safely and independently at home and beyond.



long distance convenience of our services that **your generosity**

Thank you!



'Good to meet you'

Ronnie, his wife, Lily, and their staff Cora, Agnes & Hana.

As a supporter of Vision Australia, you keep company with many other exceptionally like-minded people.

Optometrist Ronnie Lui who, together with his wife, Lily Wu, owns and works in their suburban Brisbane practice, Focus Eyecare Studio.

Ronnie and Lily are really excited about making a difference by changing the lives of people who are blind or have low vision. To do this, they've committed to giving a significant gift every year for the next ten years.

Ronnie's career in eye care keeps everything related to eyesight very close to his heart, especially the people affected.

So when he called us recently to say that his intention was for his business to contribute financially to Vision Australia, we invited him on a tour of our Coorparoo offices in Brisbane. It was, shall we say, 'an eye opener.'

Asked about his motivation for giving such a high level of support, Ronnie's answer was very straightforward:

'I believe you should work hard in life, and once you are satisfied with what you have achieved, you should give back to society.'

I arrived in Australia in 1982 as an overseas student. And coming from a poor family in Hong Kong, I had to do part time work to sustain myself whilst

studying for my professional degree as an optometrist. I chose Optometry because it gave me the opportunity to interact with and help people every day.

This 'every day' type of helping is what inspires me to give. It's real and immediate now, and it makes me so happy to do this.'

Should you meet up with Ronnie, there will be no shortage of conversation besides your common interest in helping people who are blind or have low vision.

Ronnie is also a qualified naturopath, a gemologist, and has his second master's degree in training and development. In addition to these achievements he is currently researching for his PhD in vocational education (Griffith University).

Asked if he had a message for his fellow supporters, Ronnie's reply was:

'Make your contribution as a warm greeting from your heart - nothing is too small or too big.'

If, like Ronnie and Lily, you'd like to discuss a way your generosity can make a profound impact on those living with blindness or low vision, please do not hesitate to contact us at philanthropy@visionaustralia.org

Message from CEO, Ron Hooton:



This year we are re-launching our Iris Circle Bequest Society with the purpose of acknowledging people who have included a Gift in their Will to sustain the future operations of Vision Australia, so we can continue to serve those in need.

So what is the Iris Circle Bequest Society?

This circle is a passionate group of Vision Australia supporters who have graciously informed us of their intention to leave a gift in their Will to support the continuation of our services to those who are blind or have low vision into the future.

It doesn't matter how large or how modest the amount, nor do we need to know the details from our Iris Circle supporters - we will just be delighted to be able to recognise you as one of this special group.

We would much prefer to know the wonderful people who plan to help us this way and be able to celebrate their support during their lifetime, than simply receive an anonymous gift without the ability to thank you.

If you have already made a Gift in your Will or are considering doing so, please contact us on 1800 422 077 or giw@visionaustralia.org

...And on behalf of the board, staff, volunteers and our entire Vision Australia family...

Thank you

Yes! I would like to make a life-changing gift of:

\$35 \$50 \$100 My choice \$.....

My payment method:

Please debit my credit card (details below)

Card type: Visa MasterCard AMEX Diners

Card no: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

Expiry: ____ / ____

Name on card:

Signature:

- OR -

Please find enclosed my cheque/money order payable to Vision Australia

My Details:

Title:

First name:

Surname:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Suburb:

State: Postcode:

Reference number (if known):

Please complete this coupon and return to the below address.

Send to Vision Australia Reply Paid 92038 KOORYONG VIC 3144, call 1800 42 20 77 or donate at www.visionaustralia.org.au/donate

Occasionally we allow like-minded organisations to contact our supporters. This helps us reach additional generous Australians willing to support our cause. If you do not wish to receive communications from other organisations, please cross this box .

Your donation will help fund the services Vision Australia offers, helping people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.

Please read our privacy statement overleaf. If you do not wish to receive further information about the work Vision Australia does in the community, please call 1800 42 20 77.

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Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

Thank you for making a difference.
Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.



Jackson Takes the LEAP: Learn, Engage, Act, Perform

One of the Vision Australia programs, LEAP, helps young people who are blind or have low vision to build leadership and business skills. Here, Jackson tells his story:



'I'm 17 years old, and my life changed five years ago when my sight suddenly deteriorated to the point of being legally blind. My family and I pushed on and I was lucky enough to regain a small bit of sight.

When working with Vision Australia in the LEAP program, one of the activities was to create a plan and develop a fundraiser for Vision Australia. I filled a glass jar with jellybeans and with the help of my aunty and, my mum, ran a competition on social media for people to guess the number of jellybeans.

I was pretty overwhelmed by how generous people can be - I raised \$2,030 against my goal of \$300!

My mum's cousin, Mark, proudly won the \$50 gift card, but was disappointed that COVID prevented him from also getting the whole jar of jellybeans, so we sent him a small bag with his prize.

I've really enjoyed the LEAP program. It's increased my confidence and has given me lots of tips for looking for a job. Now to find an employer who is willing to give a kid like me a chance.'



Transform someone's life!

\$35 can help towards orientation and mobility training so children can navigate their world safely and independently.

\$50 can help improve literacy and educational outcomes for children by providing the resources they need.

\$100 can help provide specialists to lead vital early intervention services.

Willow

If your way of supporting people who are blind or have low vision is through regular donations to Vision Australia, then you already know Willow very well.

You'll have received several letters from Willow and her mum, Jodie, thanking you for your regular gifts which have secured her progress.

Willow's uncontrolled rapid eye movement means that she has low vision, which makes ordinary everyday tasks such as fastening buttons or managing during meal times at the family table a challenge.

Regular gifts like yours can provide people like Willow with something as simple as brightly coloured forks and spoons and non-slip bowls, through to more complicated training in daily living skills.

Regular monthly gifts will also provide support to Willow as she starts school, allowing her to continuously grow in confidence and ability. Thank you.



PRIVACY STATEMENT:

Vision Australia respects your privacy and embraces the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs). We obtained your personal information from you directly. When you return this form to us, we collect your personal information so we can process your donation, and contact you again with information about us and our related entities, our services, our fundraising campaigns, and how you can support us again in the future. We may contact you by email, mail or telephone, and you can opt-out at any time.

You don't have to provide us with your personal information; however without it we are limited in how we interact with you.

Our Privacy Policy is available at www.visionaustralia.org/privacy, and contains important information about (i) how we collect and handle your personal information, (ii) how you can access and correct your personal information, and (iii) how you can make a privacy complaint. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact our privacy officer by email at info@visionaustralia.org, or call us on 1800 42 20 77.

Choosing to give regularly has two benefits:

- 1 Your regular support means that people who are blind or have low vision can count on services being available for them to draw on every month of the year.
- 2 It's also so easy – simply done through your bank or via your credit card, making it one less thing on your 'to do' list.

**If you haven't considered regular giving in the past, why not think about it today?
Call us on 1800 422 077 or visit visionaustralia.org/donate**