

Focus



Vision
Australia

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

150+
years of vision

Issue 2, 2022



Thank you!
for changing
lives!

**Harvey – from
then to now!**

(See page 2.)



A special thank you from Ron

Most people are exhausted by COVID-19. But I'd like to suggest that through all the hard times of the pandemic, something special shines through for me.

That something special is realising the importance of family and friends. They are the ones who have held us together through the anxiety, illness, disruption, and losses of the pandemic.

Every Vision Australia supporter, like you, is considered to be a member of our Vision Australia family. And I'd like to say that not only have you constantly been in our thoughts, but we continue to wish the very best for you.

I'd also like to thank you for continuing to give people who are blind or have low vision your support during the pandemic.

You've made so many differences. Thank you.

Ron Hooton
CEO Vision Australia

Harvey – from then to now

When Harvey was diagnosed as a baby with ocular albinism and declared legally blind, his mum's head was filled with whirling questions:

'Will he be able to go to school? How will he learn to read? Will he be able to make friends and play with them? How will he find his way around, and cross roads? Will he ever be able to work? Will Harvey be happy?'

Thanks to your donations, children like Harvey who are blind or have low vision can reach their milestones; learn daily living skills for social interaction and personal care; receive speech therapy; and be trained with the latest technology in order to read and write.

Harvey is now a happy, cheeky and energetic five year old, and is thriving at school.

We're so grateful to all our supporters who care about children like Harvey.

Thank you for helping children who are blind or have low vision to be ready for their next challenge.





Helen is back to independent living, thanks to kindness like yours

Whenever you send your gift to Vision Australia, you have no idea who may be helped by your kindness. So it's a privilege and a joy to introduce you to Helen, and thanks to donors like you for making a positive difference in the lives of people like Helen.

Helen was fiercely independent until 18 months ago when the impact of her diagnosis of macular degeneration made her give up her driver's licence. This was a massive blow, especially not being able to visit her grandkids. She also found herself needing help with the simplest tasks.

Then friends like you came to Helen's rescue through Vision Australia. Orientation and mobility sessions have enabled Helen to travel independently in her local area. She's also had occupational therapy to make her home more accessible to her. Then add apps like Seeing AI for reading labels and Soundscape for directions, and Helen is again good to go.

You can take pride in the determination of Ambrose



It happened overnight!

University student Ambrose woke up on the morning of one of his major engineering exams, with severe and disorientating loss of vision in one eye.

At age 19, Ambrose was diagnosed with Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy, the same condition as three of his brothers who he could lean on for advice and support. Two failed subjects later, and declared legally blind, Ambrose put a pause on uni. But not for long – because Ambrose was determined to continue his studies.

Switching to a less visually heavy Bachelor of Business Economics at Queensland University of Technology, Ambrose also received the help of friends like you. Through kindness like yours, our Vision Australia Education Bursary could provide Ambrose with a JAWS 2022 screen reader licence for his coursework, a Victor Trek GPS, and a media player to help him get around campus.

Whether he qualifies for a career as a business analyst, giving financial advice or working for the government in Treasury, Ambrose won't disappoint you for believing in him, and helping him achieve his goals in life.

Your generosity means people of all ages have access to life-changing support and services in their homes and communities. Thank you!



'There was something different about Daisy'

These were the words of mum Louisa within weeks of Daisy's birth.

Like every parent bringing their new born home, they're filled with dreams for the future of their child.

The difference that Louisa noticed was in Daisy's eyes. They weren't focusing properly, consistently pointing towards her nose.

At first misdiagnosed, the reality is that Daisy's optic nerve hasn't fully developed as a result of optic nerve hypoplasia. She also lives with nystagmus (involuntary movement of the eye).

Now three and a half years old, Daisy has 30-50 percent vision in her left eye, and around 50 percent in her right eye.

Louisa's dreams for Daisy's future turned to concern. She asked herself, 'Would she meet her developmental milestones? Could she attend a mainstream school?'

Knowing that Daisy needed extra support, Louisa approached the NDIS who

suggested Vision Australia. Under the wrong impression that resources were for people who were completely blind, and not wanting to take away from them, we were able to tell Louisa that Daisy met the criteria for our services.

Fast forward to today. Courtney, a Vision Australia occupational therapist keeps Daisy on track with her developmental milestones and helping her enjoy the childhood alongside her peers and by making everyday tasks easier for her.

Far from those first days of noticing that something was different about Daisy, Louisa's hopes and dreams for her daughter have been restored.

Louisa said that they've been blessed by having access to the therapy Daisy needs to learn to use the vision that she has.

We couldn't agree more - 'blessed by you' in your generous support of Vision Australia's services. Your donations make the difference for children like Daisy who are blind or have low vision. You simply can't ever be thanked enough.

Putting your generosity into Carolina's hands



'Knowing that Vision Australia's clients can have a life full of opportunities motivates me every day,' said Carolina, our orientation and mobility specialist.

Carolina's passion for orientation and mobility started at university where she studied a subject about orientation and mobility. From that small beginning, Carolina developed a passion for supporting people who are blind or have low vision, which has flourished into a career.

For 14 years Carolina has been helping Vision Australia's clients to achieve their mobility goals and precious independence.

Carolina identifies whether a client needs a mobility aid, teaches them how to navigate by using memory and their senses, mapping out a new route which may or may not include public transport, and the use of mobility apps.

Take a look at this picture of Carolina with a client, and read what she has to say:

'I'm working with Nick Gleeson in the picture. His goal was to be able to cross Lake Eyre on his own! To be able to achieve this, he learnt how to use a talking compass, and use the position of the sun to get orientated and increase his body awareness to be able to walk in a straight line. And yes, he achieved his goal - he did cross Lake Eyre!'

Carolina is passionate about supporting people who are blind or have low vision and her expertise, combined with your support, means she's got everything she needs to help our clients succeed.

Thank you for putting your generosity into Carolina's hands, where it's transformed into orientation and mobility skills for people who are blind or have low vision.



It was the smiles that made everything worthwhile

If you were a listener to Vision Australia Radio between 1987 to 1992, you'll remember Eve Lustig. Eve was the voice of 'The Eye Opener' radio program, and the first voice our community heard each morning.

During her time on Vision Australia Radio, Eve helped to create over 200 programs. When asked about the extent of her extraordinary volunteering, she said, 'The best part was the community feeling around all the centres. Everywhere you were welcomed with a smile'. Those smiles made everything worthwhile.

Vision Australia Radio has grown since those early days and now has 700,000 listeners each month. But one thing hasn't changed, and that's Eve's passion for helping people who are blind or have low vision.

This is her message to our clients: 'Make the most of the tried and true help that Vision Australia offers.

Find out how you can keep doing what you're able to do, or pick up again on the skills that you once had. Go for it!

In recognition of Eve's continued support of Vision Australia through a Gift in her Will, she received a certificate of appreciation at a recent Vision Australia Iris Circle event.

Eve is pictured here with our philanthropy staff member, Elise Flickinger.



Happy return of the Iris Circle Bequest Society events



We've really missed regular visits with our Gift in Will supporters during restrictions imposed by COVID-19.

Being able to say 'Thank You' in person and show our appreciation for their future gift commitments is important to us. Our Iris Circle Bequest Society events provide great opportunities to do just this. And when like-minded people get together, it makes for a lively occasion filled with information sharing, happy conversation and laughter.

Scattered nationwide, our Gift in Will supporters have their own unique stories and life journeys.

Earlier this year, we were privileged to share in the 105th birthday celebration of Beatrice 'Biddy' Abrahams, one of our most valued supporters. Biddy is a much loved resident of her retirement village and renowned for her energy and sense of fun.

Armed with mask and flowers, our Gifts in Will team member Tom Teale-Sinclair visited Biddy and initiated a congratulatory call from Ron Hooton, our CEO.

Biddy and her late husband, Eric, have been supporting people who are blind or have low vision since 1980. Together, they continued the Abrahams family culture of charity giving and kindness towards others. Both their Wills made a bequest to Vision Australia, entrusting us to decide how their gift would best be used. In addition to their endowment, their fundamental trust in Vision Australia's leadership is a gift in itself.

Your Will is not only an essential legal document. It may signify purposeful intent – your commitment to caring for your loved ones beyond your lifetime, as well as providing for others through a Gift in Will to a charity that is meaningful to you.



We're hugely grateful for every Gift in Will gesture. And if you'd like to know more about how you too could include a gift to Vision Australia in your Will (a gift which costs you nothing now), we would love to hear from you. Please contact our team by phone on 1800 422 077, or email giw@visionaustralia.org

All the fun of Family Day

It was a delight to recently welcome children and families to our Kooyong family day.

And it's an equal delight to share with you some captured moments of the day.

Not only did our visitors have the opportunity to find out more about Vision Australia's services to children who are blind or have low vision, the fun activities were something to behold – as you'll see in the photographs.

The kids gave their all into getting their

hands dirty with gardening, taking part in Junior Master Chef (with a therapist facilitating the cooking), learning the art of tactile book making, having sensory time with Felix library, and even getting behind the microphone in our Vision Australia Radio studios.

Family day was what it should be – fun for all.

Thanks to you for helping children who are blind or have low vision live the life they choose.



Ways to donate

 **Online:** visionaustralia.org/donate

 **Call:** 1800 42 20 77

 **Post:** Reply Paid 90505 Seven Hills NSW 2147