

Focus



Vision Australia
Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

Edition 1 – 2017



Exclusive

Mackenzie and
Tanya – an
inspiring story

In this edition of your Vision Australia supporter newsletter:

- Developing independence and leadership at Camp Joe
- How your support is helping clients achieve their goals
- Sharing our new look and feel with you



From Ron, to you

CEO Ron Hooton, with Australian Blind Cricket Team

Hello and welcome to the first edition of Focus for 2017. Over the past year, as always, many exciting things have been happening at Vision Australia, and we are excited to share them with you in these pages.

One of them is our new logo. I think it looks great and really captures the connection that we work so hard to build and maintain between our therapists, our clients, the community – and you, our valued donors.

I am always so proud when our clients achieve great things, thanks to your

generosity. Not surprisingly, this happens often. You can read about the recent win for all Australians who are blind or have low vision in the story about the new tactile \$5 banknote on page 4.

The “Career Start” graduate program is another area where your support gives our clients the opportunity to shine. This program was made possible thanks to a bequest from one of our long-time donors, Ian Paul, on his passing last year. Ian’s amazing generosity will ensure the graduate program will continue in perpetuity.

Thank you once again for your invaluable support. It’s only thanks to your help that we can offer people who are blind or have low vision the support they need to live the lives they choose.

Ron Hooton CEO

Become a Regular Donor

By joining our regular giving program **Live the Vision** you can be sure that no one who comes to Vision Australia faces vision loss alone.

You will help thousands of people with blindness or low vision, practically and emotionally. From the very young to the not-so-young, they can access services to help achieve their goals, including receiving support to achieve independence and social inclusion as well as education and employment.

Why support in this way?

Regular giving is so important because it provides Vision Australia the financial stability to plan ahead and dedicate funds into life-changing services.



Vision Australia client Sophie, aged 7

Your monthly ongoing donation is truly valuable and will make a lasting difference in the lives of those who are affected by vision loss every day.

Make your regular gift today and support people with vision loss, please call 1800 42 00 77. Thank you!

Developing employment skills at Camp Joe



In July 2016, 12 young clients with blindness or low vision, supported by the Vision Australia team, went on the trip of a lifetime to Camp Joe in Ontario, Canada.

The Lake Joseph Centre (or “Lake Joe”) is a fully accessible lakefront facility run by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. The trip is part of Vision Australia’s Leadership Development Program, which was established thanks to the donations of wonderful supporters.

The young adults, aged between 15 and 18, attended a range of sessions and workshops covering employment skills and everyday life tasks such as cooking.

The main focus of the trip was getting the group ‘workforce ready.’ It consisted of learning valuable employment skills including how to write a cover letter and a resume, and the importance of presentation and speaking skills at an interview. Participants put these new skills

into practice in mock interviews and were provided feedback on their presentation.

In addition, there were recreational sports like water-skiing, canoeing, and sailing. The group also travelled to Brock University in the small Canadian town of St Catherine’s and Georgian College in Barrie to experience life on campus and attend lectures on how to overcome the challenges they may face while studying or attending university.

The importance of learning to be independent and nurturing self-esteem was paramount for our clients, to reinforce that they can do anything they choose to do in life.

Last stop was a visit to the Niagara Falls where they went behind the falls and took a boat ride up to the top – an amazing way to end the trip before heading back home to Australia!

All the children told us how the trip really helped them increase their independence and confidence when spending time away from their families. Thank you for your support in making it possible for young people who are blind or have low vision to develop the life skills they need to achieve their dreams.

For more information, please call us on **1800 42 20 77** or email April, our Relationships Officer at april.wilkinson@visionaustralia.org



Camp Joe participants

Joel Finn • Josh Watson • James Battaglia • Alayna Campbell • Mia Armsworth • Tyler Beamish • Lillian Wang • Sana Amani • Amy Thompson • Kate Stevens • Micaela Schmitt • Jessica McKinnon

Above: The group in front of Niagara Falls

Left: Learning orientation and mobility skills at Camp Joe

The new tactile \$5 note



At the Vision Australia \$5 Presentation – Ally Lancaster (Connor’s mother); Connor McLeod and Ron Hooton, CEO Vision Australia.

Have you seen and used the new \$5 note yet? It now contains a tactile feature to help people who are blind or have low vision differentiate banknotes by touch and feel. There is now one raised dot on each side of the note so people who are blind or have low vision can feel the dot and identify that it is a \$5 note. Amazing!

This monumental success was achieved thanks to the persistence of teenager Connor, who has been blind since birth. The idea came to him when he received money as a gift but couldn’t tell what the amount was.

Connor set up a petition and joined forces with Vision Australia to successfully lobby the Human Rights Commission and Reserve Bank for three years to put a tactile feature on the \$5 note.

It’s your support that enables us to advocate on behalf of people who are blind or have low vision. To find out more about advocacy, please call **1300 84 74 66** or email advocacy@visionaustralia.org

With your support Quality Living Programs are changing lives

Imagine how you’d feel if you suddenly lost your vision? It happened recently to one of our Melbourne clients, Andy. At only 39 years of age, Andy experienced a massive cardiac arrest while playing golf that resulted in a major loss of sight.

Andy’s condition drastically affected his work and family life. But, after joining one of Vision Australia’s Quality Living Groups, his life was turned around. He’s now travelled overseas, is back playing golf and working full time in senior management.

Thanks to your generosity, the Quality Living Program offers clients a chance to share their experiences in a group setting. Participants discuss the emotional impact of their vision loss and look at the many solutions offered by our services.

“This group was more than I ever dreamt,” says Andy. “Initially I didn’t want to come, for reasons of embarrassment and lack of confidence, but it’s been amazing. I’ve been inspired by the courage shown by everyone, every week in the group as they move on with living their lives. It’s been the best two and a half hours of my week.”

“Not a day goes where I don’t remember what others in this group have said. When I’m faced with problems, I ask myself, how would they handle it?”

To support or to find out more about our Quality Living Groups, please call **1300 84 74 66**.

Supporting our clients to achieve their goals

Jack, aged 26, was declared legally blind halfway through his university degree. He received a bursary from Vision Australia made possible by your support, and successfully graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree. After landing a cadetship, he now works in marketing.

Q: How did you feel when you lost your vision?

I didn’t know anyone else who was blind and was unsure what steps I would need to take to complete university, so I decided to seek support.

Q: How did Vision Australia support you?

I attended adaptive technology classes and had mobility training to help me get to and from uni and use public transport safely.

Q: What would you like to say to our supporters?

Thank you for your support! Without it I would not have completed university, found employment and been as successful as I am now.



Jack hasn’t let his vision loss stop him from enjoying sports like soccer

Moving with the times

We’re really excited to share with you our new look and feel! We have refreshed our brand, including our logo, to better represent our connection to you.

Our new logo consists of three interlocking links and symbolises the connection we have to our clients, staff, and volunteers, and to our donors and the broader community.

The new brand tells the story of how we put our clients at the centre of everything we do and demonstrates our commitment to working with them to provide the services and support they need. It also expresses our gratitude to our donors who help to fund

programs that make a measurable difference in the lives of people with vision loss.

Our commitment to you and to our clients hasn’t changed – together we will continue to work as a team to support and make a difference to the lives of people who are blind or have low vision.

We thank you for joining us on this journey and for helping make this happen!

For more information, please call **1300 84 74 66**.



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Vision Australia client Santiago with mum Maria



Our creative clients share their work

Being blind or having low vision doesn't mean giving up on your passions – for many clients that includes painting and drawing. With your support, Vision Australia helps clients to live the life they choose and continue to take part in the activities they love.

The following images are part of the 2017 Vision Australia large print calendar created by our talented clients.

“Rainbow Fish” by Kathleen Buttler

Kathleen, who has diabetic retinopathy, has always enjoyed the beach and the ocean and takes regular trips to the coast from her home near Ballarat. It's this appreciation that inspired her painting of this colourful fish.



“Garden Friends” by Cathy Wade

Cathy has dabbled in painting since she was a teenager. She began to pick up the paintbrush more frequently around ten years ago when her vision deteriorated. “My two children were the inspiration behind Garden Friends.”



“The Sea of Life” by James Norquay

James took up painting and drawing at the age of 11 after he lost his vision to optical nerve damage caused by a brain tumour. Now 16, James would like to become a professional artist. “Art is one of my favourite subjects at school. It is a great outlet and allows me to express myself.”



“View from Moonlight Crag”

by Stella Stepheson

From a very young age, all Stella wanted to do was paint, play music, read, and write. A macular degeneration diagnosis prompted Stella to study at art school in South Australia and Queensland. Learning from prominent Australian artists, Stella's focus has been painting landscapes and plant life.

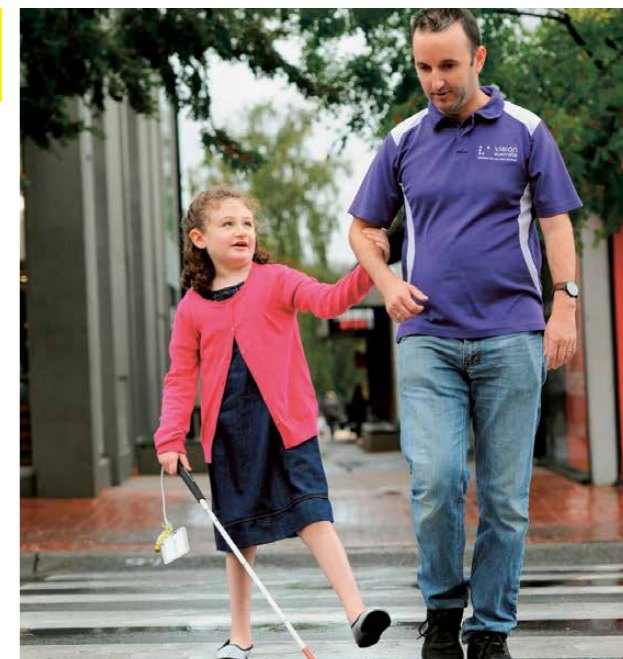


Tanya & Mackenzie

Mackenzie was diagnosed with a serious brain condition at just six weeks old. Doctors told mum, Tanya, her precious daughter may never be able to walk or speak – and that she was blind.

Seven years later Mackenzie has defied all the odds and has blossomed into a beautiful and outgoing eight-year-old. Tanya made the radical decision to provide intense therapy and home-schooling to Mackenzie for six months last year whilst travelling around Australia in a camper van to experience new things.

Together with the support of Vision Australia, Tanya has taught Mackenzie the essential daily living skills that she needs. Mackenzie is aiming towards attending a mainstream school in the near future.



Mackenzie with Vision Australia therapist Luke Price

To find out more and follow Tanya and Mackenzie's remarkable journey, head to Tanya's blog www.theroadunseen.com.



Beryl becomes a lifelong supporter

In 2002 Beryl was diagnosed with macular degeneration and by 2006, she was legally blind.

Beryl uses the DAISY reader to access audio books. She also uses a talking watch, talking scales and a talking thermometer provided through Vision Australia's Equipment Solutions which help her with day to day independent living.

Including a Gift in her Will

Charitable giving had always been part of Beryl's life. When her own condition alerted her to the needs of people living with blindness and low vision, she became a supporter of Vision Australia.

Will you join Beryl?

A gift in your Will, large or small, will make a real difference to the lives of the next generation of people living with blindness or low vision.

“I can't express how much the DAISY machine and audio books have helped me, as I missed being able to read so much. I have chosen to include a gift for Vision Australia in my Will so they will be able to continue to provide the wonderful help to others in my situation.”

For more information, please call 1800 42 20 77 or email Fiona, our Gifts in Wills manager, at fiona.jessiman@visionaustralia.org.


Above: Beryl has chosen to leave a gift to Vision Australia in her Will


To purchase this year's calendar, please call 1300 84 74 66 or head to www.visionaustralia.org/shop

Ways you can get involved

Vision Australia's mission is to support people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.


Thank you for making this possible!


 **Give a donation** – your gift will make a real difference and go towards providing vital services to those who need them most.

 **Become a Regular Donor** – join the **Live the Vision** program and your monthly regular gift will go towards supporting clients to live the life they choose.

 **Leave a Gift in your Will** – create a powerful legacy that will positively impact many people beyond your lifetime.

 **Sponsor a Seeing Eye Dog** – make a monthly regular donation towards the training and care of a puppy which will make a life-changing difference to people who are blind or have low vision.

 **Volunteer** – make friends and have fun while enjoying the sense of reward that comes from helping others.

 **Fundraise** – run your own event, hold a cake stall, enter a race, have fun and raise funds which will help provide support to Vision Australia.

Right: Vision Australia client Aston with mum Jackie and brother Byron



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For more information call **1800 42 20 77** or visit
www.visionaustralia.org/fundraising-and-volunteering