

Focus



Vision
Australia

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

150+

years of vision

Issue 1, 2023

**You've made a world
of difference for
children like Daisy.**

(See page 3.)



Thank you!

Your support is
making a difference
to kids like Daisy.

Thank you



Friendship is important in all phases of life, from those early playful times as children, through to the beautiful long-term friendships and companionship we enjoy as older adults.

That's why your friendship is so beautiful to all of us at Vision Australia. We feel so fortunate to have you by our side, through thick and thin, and we are grateful you are with us to support people who are blind or have low vision, no matter where they are in their lives.

You are there for children like Daisy and Raphael, who are just starting out and learning to navigate the world, as well as those who need support as their vision changes in later life, and want to continue to enjoy their independence.

Your support is inspirational, and your gift of kindness is extraordinary. Thank you for everything you do to help change lives.

With best wishes.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Hooton".

Ron Hooton
CEO Vision Australia

You're helping Renee change lives

Renee's role as an orthoptist working with Vision Australia is to help people understand the level and functionality of their vision. It's an important first step in living the life they choose – and as her passion is helping people, this gives her great joy.

Renee meets people at all ages and stages of their blindness or low vision and it's her job to help people live independently and get back to doing things they love most.

Continuing to read small print items such as newspapers, mail and prescriptions are some of the biggest pain points she encounters – and then there are some people who simply want to read a good paperback.

While you may imagine Renee's toolkit involves some very high-tech equipment (and it does), sometimes a simple adjustment to lighting can make a huge difference for someone who has low vision.

'I love working with clients on their reading goals and trialling different magnifiers, lighting and other tools to enhance their remaining vision. This means they can get back to doing what they love and keep their independence in the home.'

It's those moments of helping clients to be able to continue with their passions, such as reading, arts, crafts, whatever the case may be, that drive Renee every day – and we thank you for the part you play, helping Renee to bring support and fulfilment to so many people.



Jude can't wait for Tuesdays

After losing her vision unexpectedly in 1999, Jude found herself in darkness – but her connection with Vision Australia gave her a whole new beginning. Thanks to the incredible kindness of friends like you, people like Jude can get the specialised support they need.

Jude started out with cane training, then discovered Telelink – our phone-based peer support program – which she found was a huge benefit for her.

Now 22 years later, Jude is still finding Vision Australia services that help her stay independent and do what she loves. She's even achieving life goals she once thought impossible.

Jude found learning braille quite daunting, but that changed when she met her teacher, Karen from Vision Australia. Jude now finds herself counting down the days until her weekly lesson. 'I can't wait for Tuesdays now,' Jude says.



In a brilliant twist, Jude now even has the confidence and skill to compose her own original works – short stories and even music in braille!

'I honestly don't think I'd be able to function as a person without Vision Australia,' she said. 'I'm so grateful to every supporter who is committed to helping people like me!'

Thank you for all you do to support people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.

Thank you – so much.

What a wonderful world for Daisy

We were simply overwhelmed by the kind response from our wonderful supporters to the story of little Daisy.

Your outpouring of generosity will ensure children like Daisy continue to receive all the specialised support they need – and help mums like Louisa, too.

Four-year-old Daisy lives with about 30% vision in her left eye, and 50% in her right. With the right support and early intervention, Daisy is flourishing and eager to learn more skills that will give her the independence she needs.

Her world is opening up to new possibilities every day, especially as she approaches going to school! 'Daisy's confidence increases every day, and it makes me so proud. I want to thank every person who

donates to Vision Australia, for helping my little girl live a full and wonderful life! We are so happy and grateful to have you in our lives,' says Louisa.

Thank you for making a world of difference for children like Daisy who are blind or have low vision.



New beginnings for Raphael

When Raphael was born, everyone just assumed he had very fair hair – but after six months, he was diagnosed with albinism and nystagmus.

It was a real shock to his parents Francesca and Andrew, who knew very little about the challenges that come with low vision. Fortunately, they were quickly connected with Vision Australia, which provided encouragement and opened their minds to the support they could provide to Raphael in his early years of development.

Within just one month, Raphael had been tested, prescribed a pair of glasses, and commenced weekly sessions to improve his development.

With such aids and equipment, his vision range increased from 10cm in front of his face to 30cm within a few months, and there have been further exciting changes for Raphael over time.



FEELIX Library Kits help bring stories to life for children like Raphael.

There have also been significant improvements in his vocabulary and expression through language with the assistance of Vision Australia. He loves our FEELIX Library kits and playing with LEGO Braille Bricks!

Today Raphael is even attending a mainstream kindergarten, and the Vision Australia team has made several visits to ensure the grounds are fully accessible and staff know how to help Raphael succeed.

Mum Francesca has become a passionate advocate for Raphael and for Vision Australia services and often speaks at ophthalmologist conferences to share her son's story. She says Raphael's successes are a testament to the hard work of Vision Australia.

Your support means the world to many other children like Raphael – thank you!

Supporting and empowering a lifetime of independence



While many Australians welcome the slower pace as they enter their older years, it does come with an increased likelihood of sight loss.

One in 16 Australians experience loss of sight between 70-79, a figure that increases to one in 10 between the ages of 80-89, and sadly reaches one in seven affected over the age of 90.

With such figures impacting every older Australian, with their own eyesight or that of their friends, Vision Australia is proud to offer an optometry clinic dedicated to supporting Australians over the age of 65.

As part of Vision Australia's commitment to support and empower a lifetime of independence for Australians who are blind or have low vision, the launch of our new Low Vision Optometry Clinic is an exciting step towards supporting our senior citizens.

Designed to provide direct and timely access to older Australians, the new clinic will help increase safety in independence so that the impact of loss of eyesight – including falls, broken bones, and a decrease in emotional wellbeing – may be lessened.

About our Low Vision Optometry Clinic

Clients visiting the clinic will benefit from:

- A consultation with an optometrist to provide a comprehensive low vision eye assessment – covered by Medicare
- Education about their current eyesight and support from the moment they leave the clinic, all in one visit
- An evaluation of current lenses, along with a discussion of further optical aids that may be paired with glasses
- Access to our Vision Store with the latest technology in specialised low vision support aids and equipment – such as magnifiers, adaptive homewares etc.
- An introduction to Vision Australia's restorative and reablement services

Available in Victoria in our Kooyong office, the establishment of this clinic has been made possible by the generosity of Vision Australia donors and supporters, like you, and we hope it can lead to services such as this being made available in other key locations across Australia in time.

Know someone who may benefit?

We encourage our supporters and family members who have noticed a decline in their vision to take advantage of this new service.

To hear more or to book your appointment, give our friendly team a call on 1300 84 74 66.

Leo and Ann: Celebrating a quarter of a century of philanthropy

Our special friends Leo and Ann are so committed to making a difference, Vision Australia has become a core part of their lives.

For almost 25 years, Leo and Ann have shown their compassion and care in so many ways, we've almost lost count! The philanthropic pair have shown unwavering loyalty, dedicating considerable funds to improving quality of life for people who are blind or have low vision. It's something they can't imagine not doing, and at Vision Australia, we can't imagine life without them either.

Among some of Leo and Ann's proudest contributions is their support of the Vision Australia Further Education Bursary – a program that provides tertiary students with specialised equipment. With the right tools in place, students who are blind or have low vision can enjoy the benefits of tertiary education. With qualifications under their belt, a world of opportunity awaits them.

We've benefited from their generous support for many of Vision Australia's general services, ensuring people who are blind or have low vision are able to maintain independence at home,



succeed in education and work and connect with family, friends and their community.

In more recent years, they have chosen to put their support behind our children's services through Carols by Candlelight.

The event recently celebrated an amazing 85 years of supporting people who are blind or have low vision!

'Carols' is particularly special for Leo and Ann, who fondly remember attending the event with their three very young children in the late 1960s, when they lived in Melbourne. They love to watch it each year when they are home.

Our sincerest thanks to Leo and Ann for always being there when we needed them, over so many years.



Would you like to follow in Leo and Ann's footsteps and make a real difference, too?

Simply contact the Philanthropy team at philanthropy@visionaustralia.org or phone 1300 847 466. We'd love to chat with you!

'I'm grateful for the opportunities Vision Australia has given me.' – Tony

When his late father required full-time care following the onset of a progressively debilitating illness, Vision Australia Volunteer Tony left his gardening business in 2005 to become his Dad's dedicated carer.

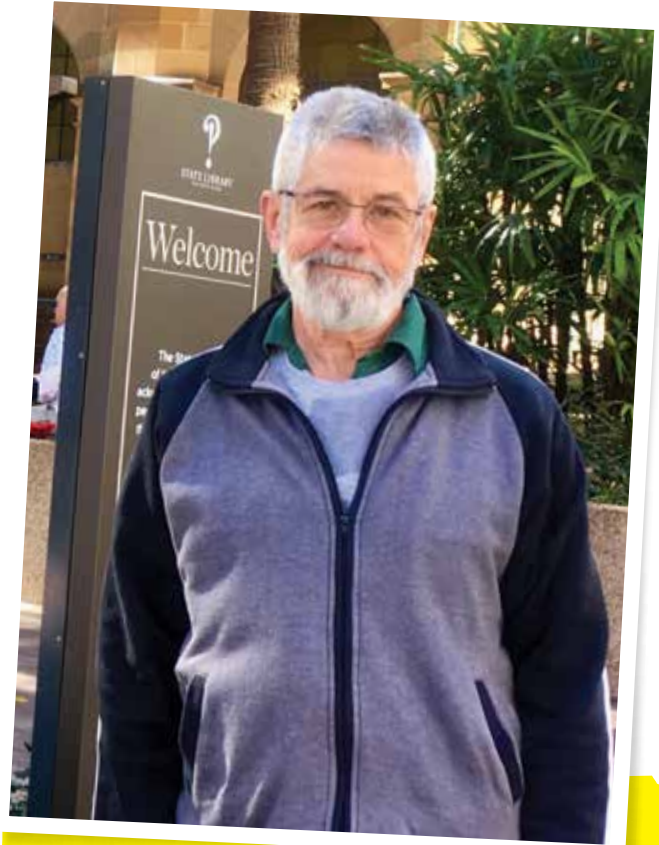
Following his father's passing in 2010, the isolation and lack of socialisation brought on by being an all-day carer caused Tony to take a step back from social activities. However, after hearing Vision Australia's Regional Manager, Client Services, Rolf Geerlings speak of his own experience of vision loss at a charity event in Enfield, everything changed for Tony.

'I was so impressed as I listened to Rolf share his story, I signed up to become a volunteer in the mail section at Vision Australia,' Tony recalled. With a new-found social outlet as a committed volunteer in a variety of roles, he met people and started going out again.

With a background in mechanical engineering, and up for a new mental challenge, Tony then learnt braille and operates a borrowed braille machine.

Born into a family with a heart for giving, Tony regards charities 'as part of my family' and has taken over his late father's charity portfolio.

'I thank Vision Australia because they gave me my life back,' Tony said. Tony has very generously included a Gift in Will to Vision Australia, with the instruction that it 'be used where it can do the BEST GOOD!'



We're hugely grateful for every Gift in Will gesture. If you'd like to know more about how you too could include a gift to Vision Australia in your Will or are interested in volunteering, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact our Gifts in Wills team by phone on **1800 422 077**, or email **giw@visionaustralia.org**



Brightest Carols yet!

The 85th Vision Australia Carols by Candlelight, presented by AAMI last month, was incredible, our brightest and most beautiful event yet.

It's hard to believe that after months of preparation, Carols by Candlelight is over, and we are already planning for 2023!

In celebration of another exceptional year, the goal for the year's festivities was to make it our brightest yet and to light up the lives of children we support, and with the help of people like you, we certainly achieved that. From the soaring voices of the performers and wonderfully talented musicians to the excited faces of children (and adults!) alike, Carols is a remarkable and much-loved tradition. We simply can't imagine Christmas without it.

Over the past 85 years, Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight has become an institution of Christmas magic, not to be missed by any Australian, no matter where they spend Christmas Eve.

So many supporters like you joined us on 24 December to light up Melbourne's Sidney Myer Music Bowl with your favourite carols, while making a final effort for fundraising to see out the successes of 2022.

'Carols' is the largest annual fundraiser for children's services, and we thank our presenting partner, AAMI for helping us spread Christmas cheer. We hope you have wonderful memories of our special 85th celebration and look forward to celebrating with you again this year!

What a year – thanks to you!

Every day, we are there to support people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose and achieve their goals, at home, in school and in their community.

Every year, we provide this support all over Australia – and we cannot do it without you.

Here are just some of the extraordinary outcomes we have achieved across the year thanks to your kind support.



212,042 hours of **service** delivered



29,857 hours given to **children and young people**



46,608 hours of **occupational therapy** delivered



56,814 hours of **recreation and community support**



24,719 hours of **assistive technology support**



18,292 hours of **Telelink conversations**



15,479 hours of **orientation and mobility training**



20% of **therapy services** delivered via telehealth

For more information call **1800 42 20 77** or visit www.visionaustralia.org/get-involved/ways-to-help