



Vision  
Australia

# The Volunteer Annual 2026



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## Message from the CEO

It gives me great pleasure to make my first contribution as Vision Australia CEO to the Volunteer Annual.

Having only been in the CEO position since last October, one of my priorities in that time has been learning about all the different groups of people that make our work of supporting the blind and low vision community possible.

It's been remarkable to learn more about our volunteer workforce and the fact that there are so many of you who selflessly give your time to Vision Australia, and by extension the wider blind and low vision community.

It's not only that there's more than 2,000 registered people who make up our volunteer workforce that is so impressive, but also the diverse skills our volunteers bring and the varied roles they perform across Vision Australia.

I've quickly come to find out that there's no Vision Australia department, team or location that doesn't benefit from the efforts of our volunteers.

Whether it's manning front desks and answering phones, caring for our Seeing Eye Dog puppies and breeding dogs, facilitating Telelink or other recreational programs, or providing audio description and bringing Vision

Australia Radio to air – there is simply no doubt Vision Australia couldn't provide the level of support people who are blind or have low vision deserve without our volunteers.

I know that all of us here including staff and clients are so grateful for the amazing contribution you make to the important mission of Vision Australia, which is why May is such an important month on our calendar.

National Volunteer Week will be celebrated across Vision Australia, but the entire month of May is our opportunity to say thank you for all you do. That thank you goes to all of our volunteers, from those who have joined our ranks recently, to those who will mark milestones of five, 10, 15 or even more years of service.

I hope you will enjoy this edition of the Volunteer Annual and the stories of difference you and your fellow volunteers make and I hope to continue meeting more of our amazing volunteers in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

**David Williamson**  
Vision Australia CEO



# A message from the Vision Australia Volunteer Partnerships team

Every year, our volunteers show us that volunteering is not just about what you give, but about the connection, purpose and impact that grows from it. Across Australia, volunteers continue to play a vital role in strengthening communities and supporting people who are blind or have low vision to live the lives they choose. In 2026, recognised globally as the United Nations International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, that contribution feels more important than ever.

Throughout the past year, we have seen volunteers step forward in ways that are thoughtful, flexible and deeply human. Whether it's through long standing commitments or first time involvement, each volunteer brings something unique. Some give time weekly, others seasonally or for specific moments, and all of it matters. This year's theme reminds us that volunteering doesn't look one way; it evolves with our lives, our capacity and our passions.

What continues to inspire us is the sense of purpose our volunteers speak about. The quiet pride in helping someone feel connected, the joy of learning something new, the confidence that comes from contributing to something bigger than ourselves. Volunteering at Vision Australia is not only about service; it is about belonging, growth and shared impact.

This edition of the Volunteer Annual celebrates those stories, the moments large and small that demonstrate how volunteering helps build more inclusive, connected and sustainable communities. It also extends an invitation: to reflect on what volunteering means to you, and how this year might be your year to continue, grow or begin that journey.

To every volunteer who has walked alongside us, whether for many years or just recently, thank you. Your time, care and commitment make a lasting difference, and we are proud to support you as part of the Vision Australia community.

With sincere thanks,

**Anastasia and Pam**

Volunteer Partnerships Leads / Volunteer Partnerships Coordinators

# A year of volunteering. A year of impact.

Our volunteers continue to be a powerful force behind Vision Australia's work, showing every day what is possible when people give their time, skills and heart to support others.

Throughout 2025-2026, volunteers have contributed in ways that extend far beyond hours logged. They have

strengthened connections, increased accessibility, supported independence and helped create inclusive experiences for people who are blind or have low vision across Australia. From quiet, behind the scenes support to highly visible community engagement, their impact is felt in countless meaningful moments.

Over the past year, more than 1,869 active volunteers shared their time and talents across Vision Australia, supporting a wide range of programs and services nationwide. Each contribution, whether regular or occasional, local or remote, has played a role in delivering positive outcomes for our clients, teams and communities.

We are especially grateful for the depth of experience within our volunteer community. In 2026, 63 volunteers have reached 10 or more years of service, with 6 volunteers marking an extraordinary 30 years or more of commitment. Their long term dedication reflects a strong sense of purpose and connection to our mission, and we thank them sincerely for the legacy they continue to build.



**10,100+**  
Back-office hours



**41,153+**  
Client services hours



**2,098+**  
Fundraising hours



**33,168+**  
Vision Australia Radio  
hours



**3,098,641+**  
Seeing Eye Dogs  
hours

**3,185,160+**  
total hours!

# The Volunteer of the Year Award 2025

And the winner was .....

## Marilyn Barclay

### - Audio Description

We proudly recognise Marilyn Barclay, whose voice and presence have touched countless lives across Vision Australia's services. Marilyn's extraordinary contribution spans radio, book narration, theatre and online content, enriching the experiences of people who are blind or have low vision in meaningful and lasting ways.

Another much loved aspect of Marilyn's work is her contribution to Seeing Eye Dog videos, where she brings the puppies to life by lending them playful, characterful voices. These videos are used for fundraising, and our regular donors especially love them, a testament to Marilyn's creativity, warmth and ability to connect with audiences in memorable ways.

Her dedication, agility and deeply person centred approach truly embody Vision Australia's values, inspiring excellence through her professionalism, warmth, humour and heart. This year, Marilyn also



Photo of Volunteer Marilyn and Michael, Manager Audio Description Service.

celebrates 10 years with Vision Australia, marking a decade of outstanding service and commitment.

We thank Marilyn for her remarkable contributions and for being such a valued, respected and inspiring member of the Vision Australia community.

# Celebrating our volunteers at Dandenong (VIC)

Recently, our Dandenong site came together to celebrate the incredible contributions of two much valued volunteers, Joy and Marian.

The celebration was made even more special as it also coincided with Marian's 80th birthday. To mark the occasion, a birthday cake was organised and shared, bringing volunteers and clients together in a moment of genuine connection and joy.

As part of the celebration, both Joy and Marian were acknowledged with a small token of appreciation,

including a candle, a box of chocolates, and a handwritten thank you card. Volunteers and clients were invited to contribute a few personal words to the card, alongside a message of thanks and appreciation on behalf of Vision Australia.

The heartfelt messages reflected the impact Joy and Marian have had through their time, care, and commitment. Both volunteers shared how touched they were by the recognition, expressing that the gesture made them feel truly valued and special.

Photos from the celebration capture the warmth and joy of the day.



# Meet Pauline, a volunteer from Albury (VIC)

## Pauline – Administration Volunteer, Albury

If you visit the Albury office, you're likely to be welcomed by Pauline, one of our much valued Administration Volunteers. Pauline has been volunteering with Vision Australia for six years and is a trusted and familiar face within the Albury team.

In her role, Pauline coordinates client appointments to ensure people receive the services they need. She enjoys the meaningful conversations this involves and is known for her friendly, calm, and helpful approach. Pauline also supports a wide range of administrative tasks and assists as a volunteer driver for team members when required.

Pauline says volunteering has been a rewarding experience, providing her with a sense of purpose and connection since retiring. Being part of the Albury team has also become an important social outlet for her.

## Staff feedback

"We look forward to Pauline coming in to work with us on Mondays and Wednesdays. Pauline's experience in administration is invaluable as she supports our team in a variety of tasks such as efficiently scheduling appointments, completing documentation for client files and answering calls. Pauline is also an integral part of providing services as a volunteer driver for team members when required."

Pauline's dedication and warmth make a real difference every day, and we're grateful to have her as part of the Vision Australia community."

- Katrina

# Meet Stephen, a volunteer from Bendigo (VIC)

## Stephen – Volunteer Driver, Bendigo

For the past three years, Stephen has been volunteering as a driver with Vision Australia in Bendigo, playing a vital role in helping clients stay connected to activities and social programs.

Stephen safely transports clients between their homes and the Bendigo Centre, ensuring each journey is comfortable and welcoming. His friendly nature and easy humour help put people at ease, turning everyday trips into enjoyable experiences.

Beyond driving, Stephen also shares his love of music with the community. By encouraging his bandmates to perform for clients, he has helped create moments of joy that are appreciated by everyone involved.

Stephen describes volunteering as extremely rewarding, especially knowing he can brighten someone's day.

# Celebrating our volunteers across Victoria East and regional recreation groups

Across the Victoria East and Regional team, five recreation groups continue to offer connection, purpose, and joy for people who are blind or have low vision. At the heart of each of these programs are our dedicated volunteers, whose commitment helps make every session welcoming, inclusive, and meaningful

Whether supporting social groups, craft sessions, outings, or activity based programs, volunteers bring energy, kindness, and practical support that help each group run smoothly. Their involvement ensures clients feel confident, welcomed, and able to participate fully in the activities that matter to them.

**Within these five programs, volunteers play a vital role by:**

- Guiding clients during walks, outings, and community based activities, supporting safe and independent participation.
- Assisting with crafts, puzzles, games, and hands on activities so clients can engage at their own pace.
- Reading aloud, sharing conversation, and fostering social connection, which is a core part of what makes these groups so meaningful.
- Supporting with refreshments, group set up, and coordination to ensure each session feels welcoming and well supported.

The impact of this support is felt every week, as volunteers work alongside staff to deliver safe, engaging, and high quality experiences for clients.

A recent example of this care and dedication was seen at one of our Hallam Recreation Group sessions, where volunteers went above and beyond to celebrate client Vola's 100th birthday. The group marked the milestone with cakes, balloons, a gold birthday sash, shared food, and plenty of smiles while creating a joyful and memorable celebration for Vola and everyone involved. It was a beautiful reflection of the thoughtfulness, effort, and community spirit our volunteers bring to every session.

## Staff feedback

“Our volunteers bring far more than practical assistance. They bring positivity, companionship, reliability, and a genuine commitment to helping people live the life they choose. Their involvement in recreation programs is a powerful example of how volunteers help shape a more inclusive community.”

**- Grant, Regional Client Lead – Victoria East and Regional**

To each of the volunteers supporting the five recreation groups across Victoria East and Regional: thank you. Your time, energy, and compassion make these groups possible. You help create spaces where clients feel connected, confident, and valued and for that, we are deeply grateful.



Photo of the Hallam team of staff, volunteers, and clients

# Welcoming faces at Kooyong (VIC): Our volunteer reception hosts

At Vision Australia's Kooyong site, one of several locations supported by Volunteer Reception Hosts across the organisation, these volunteers play a vital role in creating a welcoming and supportive first point of contact for clients, visitors, staff and volunteers. With 13 dedicated volunteers rostered Monday to Friday while the business is open, the Kooyong team ensures the reception desk is consistently staffed, friendly, and responsive.

Volunteer Reception Hosts support a wide range of daily activities, from greeting clients and visitors to directing enquiries, assisting with wayfinding, and connecting people with the right services and teams. Many visitors come to Kooyong seeking products, library services or support for themselves or someone they care for. Reception volunteers help ensure every person feels welcomed, listened to, and supported from the moment they arrive.

The role is varied and people focused, often involving collaboration with Client Services, the library, the shop, and other teams across the site. For clients who are blind or have low vision, reception volunteers may also provide guidance and assistance, helping create a safe, respectful, and positive experience.

Our Volunteer Reception Hosts at Kooyong are an essential part of the site's daily operations. Their reliability, professionalism, and warmth help ensure that everyone who walks through the doors feels welcome, supported, and confident accessing Vision Australia's services. We are deeply grateful for the time, care, and commitment they bring to this important role.

## Volunteer feedback

“I have been volunteering at Vision Australia since July 2025, and I particularly enjoy the welcoming atmosphere. When I started here, I was given a tour and welcomed by friendly staff. I really enjoy making a valuable contribution to the community, especially knowing that I am helping our clients who are blind or have low vision.”

“When I need advice, there is always someone to lend a hand. My supervisor is very helpful and knowledgeable across the organisation, and the shop staff are always close by too. People often come to the Kooyong site looking for products or library services, such as E-readers and audiobooks, so I also work closely with the library team. Every day is different.”

“Many clients arrive with a friend, relative, or carer, and sometimes I assist by guiding clients who are vision impaired. I make sure people feel they are receiving a high level of service and that they are being listened to.”

“This role has made me feel that my contribution is valued. I am offering my time in the hope it helps others, while also using my professional skills in customer service and reception duties. I regularly liaise with colleagues across different departments, which makes the role both rewarding and engaging.”

**- Donna**

# Celebrating 25 years of community connection: Northern Beaches Vision Impaired Group (NSW)

In September 2000, Music by Madonna topped the ARIA charts, Cathy Freeman lit the Olympic torch at the Sydney Olympic Games, the GST was introduced and the Northern Beaches Vision Impaired Group held its very first meeting.

Twenty-five years on, the volunteer-run group recently celebrated a milestone that honours not just longevity, but the power of community, connection and commitment to people who are blind or have low vision across Sydney's Northern Beaches.

The celebration recognised a quarter-century of unwavering support, friendship and advocacy, and shone a special spotlight on Maureen, a volunteer of more than 20 years, alongside the group's long-term partner Dee Why RSL and its long standing President. It was a moment 25 years in the making.

Representing Vision Australia, Anabella (Philanthropy Lead – NSW, ACT, WA) attended the celebration and spoke of being genuinely taken aback by the depth of connection and care evident within the group. She highlighted the way Vision Australia volunteer Maureen works seamlessly alongside members and community partners to create a safe, supportive and engaging environment where people who are blind or have low vision can truly thrive.

Maureen is not only treasured by the group, but she is also considered family. Members regularly speak of relying on her can do attitude, strong organisational and advocacy skills, and her non judgemental support during challenging times.

Maureen is a glowing endorsement of what a community group volunteer should be for its members. These highly capable volunteers are often defined by their problem solving abilities and their capacity to seamlessly identify what needs to be done to support blind and low vision members to live their best lives.

They are muses, relationship builders and, most of all, trailblazers. Maureen is exceptional in all of these attributes.

On the eve of National Volunteer Week, Vision Australia is proud to acknowledge and celebrate exceptional volunteers like Maureen, people who knit together community partners and members of the blind and low vision community in perfect harmony, day in and day out, for the good of all.

Volunteers are the foundation of our mission, working in partnership with people who are blind or have low vision to live the life of their choosing. We simply couldn't do it without the dedication, generosity and passion of each and every one of you.

**Reflections from the team – Jordan,  
Volunteer Partnerships Coordinator**



Photos from the celebration

# Finding purpose through volunteering:

## Reina's story

Volunteers across Vision Australia bring diverse experiences, skills, and perspectives to our teams. In Client Services at the Robina office (QLD), Administration Support Volunteer Reina has contributed not only her time and enthusiasm, but also her passion for learning, connection, and inclusion. Reina shares her volunteering journey and the personal impact it has had during her time studying in Australia.

### Reina's story

My name is Reina, and I am from Japan. I am an international student studying a Master of Marketing (Professional) at Bond University in Queensland. This is my final semester, and I will complete my degree in June 2026.

Since arriving in Australia, I have been looking for a part time job while also joining activities I wanted to try at Bond University, including Judo, choir, and other clubs. In March 2025, I experienced a concussion during Judo training and, while recovering, I was still searching for work and opportunities to gain marketing experience. During this time, I realised I was not able to manage the responsibilities of a part time job due to ongoing post concussion symptoms.

Instead, I decided to focus on gaining marketing experience through volunteering. I came across Vision

Australia's marketing volunteer roles advertised on Seek, which immediately interested me.

Back in Japan, my home was close to a braille library, and I often saw guide dogs and people who were blind or had low vision. This exposure sparked my interest in volunteering with Vision Australia.

From July 2025, I began volunteering at expos and shopping centre pop up events to help increase awareness of Vision Australia's activities and products. I also had the opportunity to speak with clients visiting Vision Australia at the Robina office on the Gold Coast.

At the same time, from May 2025, I was participating in events, workshops, and volunteering opportunities at Bond University, which helped me meet new people. Some of my peers were studying occupational therapy and were

curious about the volunteer work I was doing with Vision Australia and why I chose this organisation.

In January 2026, I received an email from my volunteer coordinator at Vision Australia asking for support to promote volunteer opportunities for physiotherapy and occupational therapy students at Bond University. As this was under a different faculty, I contacted the Career Development Centre to help identify the right person to connect Vision Australia Robina with Bond University.

More recently, a friend of mine who is studying occupational therapy told me she was interested in volunteering at Vision Australia after hearing about my experience last year, and I was able to introduce her to the team.

Volunteering with an organisation is not just about gaining experience or meeting people. Your Volunteer Partnerships Coordinator may also give you the opportunity to discover abilities that were previously hidden within you.

## Staff feedback

“Reina’s volunteering journey is a wonderful example of how purpose, curiosity, and connection can come together through volunteering. Her willingness to step forward, learn, and build relationships has had a positive impact not only within the Robina office, but also through the connections she has helped create with Bond University. Reina brings warmth and genuine care to everything she does, and it has been a pleasure to see her confidence and contribution grow over time.”

Reina’s volunteering experience reflects the many ways volunteers contribute to Vision Australia through curiosity, collaboration, and a genuine desire to make a difference. Her involvement highlights how volunteering can support personal growth while strengthening connections across teams, communities, and learning institutions. The skills, insight, and enthusiasm Reina brings to the Robina office are deeply valued, along with the positive impact she continues to make through her contribution.”

**- Shell, Volunteer Partnerships Coordinator**

# Celebrating our Quality Living Program peer volunteers

## Reflections from the team – Nemoy, Emotional and Social Support Programs Lead

Our Quality Living Peer Volunteers play a vital role in creating connection, understanding, and support for people living with vision loss. Through shared experience, compassion, and commitment, they help shape spaces where clients feel safe, heard, and empowered.

As we celebrate Volunteer Week, we take a moment to recognise and celebrate our extraordinary Quality Living Peer Volunteers and the meaningful impact made throughout the year.

Each of you brings something unique and special to the Vision Australia community as a Peer Volunteer. You offer not only your time, but your compassion, life experience, and deep care for others when you say yes to a Quality Living Peer Volunteer opportunity. We know the work you do within the Quality Living program is nothing short of life changing. Because of your involvement, we know our clients feel understood, heard, valued and most importantly not alone as they navigate life with vision loss.

We know your contribution goes far beyond showing up for group sessions. You take the time to stay across compliance requirements, thoughtfully respond to requests from Coordinators, and reflect on how best to support the clients in your groups. We know you're often thinking about others in quiet, behind-the-scenes ways and it all matters. Your support creates a safe and welcoming environment where people can share their stories, feel empowered, and build confidence. Whether you're offering encouragement, sharing your own experience, or simply being present, you're making a real difference with clients, and it shows.

So, on behalf of the entire Vision Australia organisation, the Quality Living Team, and the clients whose lives you help shape, we want to say a heartfelt thank you. Thank you for the time you've given so generously. Thank you for believing in the power of peer support and connection. And thank you for helping to make this program the supportive, transformative space that it is. We're so grateful to have you as part of the Vision Australia Team.

# Voices of Volunteering: Celebrating the impact of giving back

Late last year, we officially launched **Voices of Volunteering**, Vision Australia Radio's newest podcast series.

This three episode series shines a spotlight on the power of volunteering in aged care. Through the voices of everyday Australians, the podcast explores how small acts of kindness and meaningful connection can make a profound difference in the lives of older people and why giving back is just as rewarding for volunteers as it is for those they support.

The series was proudly hosted by our very own Jordan, Volunteer Partnerships Coordinator, who interviewed Vision Australia volunteers and helped bring these powerful stories to life.



Voices of Volunteering is a celebration of compassion, community and the enduring impact of volunteers who support older Australians, reminding us that even the smallest actions can create lasting change.

**Listen to the podcast here:**

<https://omny.fm/shows/voices-of-volunteering/>.

## Staff feedback

"Voices of Volunteering gives space to the everyday moments that often go unseen. The conversations, connections and quiet acts of kindness that make such a meaningful difference in aged care. It's a privilege to help share the voices of volunteers and older people whose stories remind us why giving back matters so much."

**- Jordan, Volunteer Partnerships Coordinator**

# Feelix Children's Library: Made possible by volunteers, built for young readers

The Feelix Library is supported by a dedicated group of volunteers who play a vital role in connecting children and young people with print disabilities to high quality literacy resources.

Each week, our volunteers return to the library to clean, refresh and carefully select new Storybook kits to send out to Feelix members. They also support the ongoing growth of our collection by helping add new literacy and learning resources, ensuring materials remain engaging, inclusive and relevant.

Recently, volunteers have assisted in expanding our decodable readers collection by creating reusable worksheets to accompany these kits. These resources are designed to support literacy development for children and young people with print disabilities, including dyslexia, and provide families with practical tools to support learning at home.

## Reflections from the team – Kate, Coordinator, Children and Young People Library Collections & Operations

A much loved feature of the Storybook kits is the tactile handbooks, all of which are crafted by our volunteers from scratch. Volunteers adapt each story using a range of textures, shapes and colours to bring the books to life through touch and sound. They also regularly update and repair the handbooks to ensure Feelix members continue to receive high quality resources.

These tactile handbooks allow blind and low vision children, and their families, to engage with stories in a meaningful and inclusive way. They have become a treasured element of the Storybook kits and are deeply appreciated by the families who receive them.

Volunteering with an organisation is not just about gaining experience or meeting people. Your Volunteer Partnerships Coordinator may also give you the opportunity to discover abilities that were previously hidden within you.

## Client feedback

"We love your kits - a lot of thought and care go into them."

"The kit is beautifully put together. We loved being able to listen to the story. Thank you for making reading so enjoyable and inclusive."

"He enjoyed this book. He especially liked turning the pages to match the story with the little 'touch and feel' book."

"It was so exciting for him to get his special delivery."

"Thank you so much for your service - he loves getting his Felix library book."

"Thanks so much for putting these together for kids like mine."

- **Anonymous**

## Staff feedback

"I was a volunteer in the Felix Library for eight months before stepping into my current role, and it was an incredibly rewarding experience. I learnt so much about creating literacy resources for children with a print disability and the importance of libraries in children's learning."

"Now that I am in a different role, I can clearly see the impact volunteers have on the Felix Library. They help us produce literacy resources and send kits out to families at a much faster rate than we could otherwise, while also contributing unique and creative ideas. We truly couldn't do it without them."

- **Hanna, Coordinator, Children and Young People Library Events & Partnerships**

## Staff feedback

“Our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. The time, energy and compassion they give so generously never go unnoticed. Because of their commitment, we can provide the high level of service our community relies on, strengthening the blind and low vision community every single day.”

“Their willingness to lend a hand, often quietly and without expectation of recognition, creates meaningful and lasting change in the lives of so many children and families. We are deeply grateful to every volunteer who chooses to give their time to help Feelix Library grow and make a positive impact.”

**- Kim, Library Officer**



Photos of volunteer Nikita putting her crafty skills into action behind the scenes

# Making music accessible: Volunteering with Transcription Services

Transcribers and proofreaders provide direct support to Vision Australia's workforce by volunteering with the Transcription Services team, helping produce Braille music documents that open access to learning and creativity.

Through their work, volunteers help people who are blind or have low vision access music in Braille, supporting rehearsals, study at school or university, and private music teaching. Their contribution plays a meaningful role in ensuring music remains accessible, inclusive and enriching.

One such volunteer is Kay, whose work as a music reader and proofreader has helped bring countless pieces of music to life in Braille.



**Reflections from the team – Jane, National Service Delivery Lead**

## Volunteer spotlight: Kay

### What volunteering means to me

Kay doesn't see her role as "just volunteering".

"Obviously I'm not paid, so I am a volunteer, but it feels much more like being part of a team. Jordie is amazing to work with and we feed off each other. It's never a chore and I love every minute of the time we work together."

That sense of connection and shared purpose is what keeps Kay coming back week after week.

### A typical volunteering session

These days, Kay and Jordie work together remotely over the phone, a rhythm that's both structured and collaborative.

Kay reads the printed music aloud in precise detail, while Jordie transcribes it into Braille. Then Jordie reads the Braille back, and Kay checks it against the original score.

"I can see the music but know nothing about Braille. Jordie knows everything about Braille but can't see the music. We put our two halves together to make a whole. In this way music becomes available to those without sight - something that is important to me. I like that I help to make music accessible as music is, and always

has been, such an important part of my life."

They "tag team" the process, alternating roles and taking breaks when the intensity demands it.

### What I love most

For Kay, it's the people and the purpose.

"I look forward to my Thursdays with Jordie. We work hard but laugh a lot too. It feels very purposeful."

### What inspired me to start

Kay has always been involved in volunteering, particularly through music. Her journey with Vision Australia began after a chance conversation in 2017.

"I started volunteering with a string orchestra on Saturday mornings when I was still at school and Uni playing piano reductions of concerto scores with a wonderful student string orchestra to fill in all the missing brass/wind/percussion parts. While my children were at kinder and school there were always committees. Soon after my youngest finished school, a friend mentioned VA were looking for someone to read music. I had no idea what that meant, but I thought I'd investigate and I haven't looked back."

## **Skills I use most**

Kay's background as a music teacher, lecturer and examiner has been invaluable.

"You need to know what matters on the page and what doesn't. There are so many symbols and terms in music, and that knowledge really helps."

Clear communication is also key, especially when distinguishing between musical notes over the phone.

## **A moment that stayed with me**

One moment stands out above all others.

"The first time I saw someone singing while reading Braille music, running their hands over the pages, that's when it really hit me what we were part of."

It was a powerful reminder of the real world impact of her work.

## **Why volunteering matters**

"There are so many things that simply wouldn't happen without volunteers. If we're lucky enough to have the time, contributing is just part of life."

Kay also hopes others understand that volunteering doesn't have to be overwhelming.

"I think many people have a fear that volunteering will restrict them or take over their life. It does not need to. The volunteer sets the rules. My work with the team is very flexible. I go away on holidays and leave them in the lurch, but they accept me when I come back. If I ever can't do sessions, I just give warning and they find someone else, so it is no burden for me. Giving notice is the important thing. But more importantly I don't like to miss my time working with the team. I have even worked while I've been visiting my son in New York because I didn't want to miss our sessions. I enjoy them too much. I definitely get more back than I give."

Volunteers like Kay play an essential role in making music accessible to people who are blind or have low vision. Their skills, time and commitment quietly transform lives, one piece of music at a time.

## Staff spotlight: Jordie

Behind every Braille music score is a powerful collaboration between staff and volunteers. For Jordie, Music Transcriber at Vision Australia, volunteers are not just part of the process, they are essential to making her work possible.

### Working in partnership with volunteers

As a blind music transcriber, Jordie relies heavily on highly skilled volunteer copyholders to help convert printed music into Braille.

Volunteers dictate musical scores in a very specific and structured way, allowing Jordie to transcribe the music directly into the Duxbury Braille Translation Program. Using a refreshable Braille display and screen reader speech output, Jordie checks and refines the transcription as it's created.

Together, they work across a wide range of music formats. For example:

- Piano music is transcribed bar by bar, starting with the right hand, then the left
- Vocal music is transcribed by brailleing a line of lyrics followed by the corresponding music line

Over many years, blind transcribers have developed a specialised

language and set of abbreviations to streamline this process. Once transcription is complete, Jordie and the volunteer proofread the score together, checking it carefully against the original printed music.

While this work was once done face to face, since 2020 Jordie and her volunteers now collaborate remotely over the phone, with music scores shared via email.

### The volunteers she works with

On the two days Jordie works each week, she typically works with four volunteers, with others joining on a fortnightly or occasional basis. In total, she currently collaborates with around eight active volunteers, with several more staying in touch and filling in as needed.

### The difference volunteers make

"My role would not be possible without my wonderful volunteers," Jordie says.

"They make it feasible for me to transcribe and proofread music as a team. Together, we work out the most user friendly way to render scores for blind musicians to the highest possible standard."

Volunteers support Jordie by dictating music, identifying repeated sections for efficiency, working across multiple clefs and notation systems, and adapting to many different musical styles and formats.

### **Skills and qualities volunteers bring**

Jordie's volunteers come from a wide range of musical backgrounds, including music teachers, orchestral conductors, AMEB examiners and university lecturers. Their depth of musical knowledge and experience across instruments is critical to the work.

Some volunteers have even taken the initiative to learn Braille themselves, a gesture Jordie deeply appreciates.

"They have taught me a great deal too," she says.

### **What makes a great volunteer**

Flexibility and a willingness to learn are key.

"My volunteers constantly adapt as we change our approach to make the work faster or easier. I'm continually impressed by their ability to tackle complex material, from orchestral scores to theory textbooks, and rise to every challenge."

### **Why people volunteer**

Many volunteers are motivated by knowing their work will benefit another musician somewhere in

Australia, whether that's a blind choral conductor, a university student or a singer preparing for a performance.

"It's a great feeling for all of us to see a Braille music score we've transcribed being used in a live performance."

### **A legacy of connection**

For Jordie, volunteering is also about continuity and community. At just 15, she completed work experience with legendary music transcriber Dorothy Hamilton, who continued transcribing music for Vision Australia until the age of 97. Through Dorothy, Jordie witnessed the deep bonds that form between transcribers and volunteers, friendships that lasted decades and extended well beyond the workplace.

Now, Jordie shares that same experience with her own volunteers. Her longest serving volunteer has worked with her for 20 years, another for 15, and many have become lifelong friends who have shared in each other's lives and milestones.

"Most of all, we all still value the work we do every week for our musician friends around Australia."

# The year in Audio Production

Over the past 12 months, volunteer narrators and proofreaders assisted in the creation of 1,263 hours of audio content for our clients. This included 58 audiobooks and 109 magazines for the library, and 71 personal support recordings for individual users.

**Reflections from the team – Robert, Senior Audio Producer**

## Volunteer feedback

“I have been a volunteer book narrator at Vision Australia for more than 10 years now - I can't believe it has been that long! I have found it to be a really rewarding experience, and very much enjoy my sessions in the studio. When I thought of volunteering, I imagined being part of a team and chatting while carrying out tasks together but narrating a book couldn't be further from that! I go into the studio on my own for several hours and sometimes don't speak to anyone at all. However, it is a wonderful mindful experience and so satisfying to know that at the end of it all there is a book that can be enjoyed by someone with low vision. I plan to keep going for many more years!”

**- Sally**

“Many people love books and reading and I'm certainly one of them. To be able to share that enjoyment of books by narrating them for others is both a privilege and a pleasure!”

**- Marilyn**

“Love my time working as a Vision Australia volunteer recording magazines and other materials. It is so satisfying to hear back from V.A. clients who access and enjoy these recordings.”

**- Kris**

## Volunteer feedback

"I absolutely love volunteering at Vision Australia. Accessibility to the written word is of huge importance to me, and it is an honour and a joy to sit in the studio every week and narrate for our clients. I've just reached the milestone of a decade here and look forward to many more years to come."

- **Marcie**

"My wife Marissa has been narrating for Vision Australia since around 2005, so I was familiar with what the job entailed. When I started planning for retirement last year, I thought that joining her would be a great thing to do with my time. I have found it interesting and have had some great discussions with Robert, my boss, and Marissa about the books I have read and the sometimes tricky task of transforming the written word to the spoken word."

- **Russell**

"As a new volunteer in the audiobook narration team, I appreciate the professional surroundings, the conversations with fellow narrators and those who work in the production department. The producer is endlessly patient with my stumbling attempts to manage the recording system, and so I am equipped to do what I love doing most – reading books aloud for the benefit of others. It's a privilege to be able to contribute in a small way to the lives of those who depend on Vision Australia."

- **Tim**

# Meet your Vision Australia Library Narrators

2025 saw the introduction of the online programme Meet Your Vision Australia Library Narrators. Popular narrators Marilyn, Richard and Victoria were interviewed by our Library Community Engagement Coordinator Maureen. After reading a book excerpt for our listeners, these narrators opened up about their performance backgrounds, how they came to be narrating for Vision Australia, and the challenges they face in producing an audiobook for the Vision Australia audience.

Thanks to the volunteers who gave their time to participate in these events, and the listeners who tuned in (and submitted questions) to help make these discussions such a rousing success!



Photo of staff Maureen, Library Community Engagement Coordinator, with Volunteer Richard

## Client feedback

The programmes were much appreciated by our listeners. Here are a sample of comments that we've received:

"Wonderful to see and hear Marilyn - fascinating to watch her actually reading!"

"The prose in the book chosen by the narrator to read was beautiful and I really enjoyed getting an insight into the narrating process."

"I liked the easy chatter and the different questions. It's such an interesting look into something so different. Thank you."

"The narrator read pages from one of my favourite authors. The narration was excellent. Questions and discussions by members and librarian were very interesting and entertaining. The narrator was able to articulate and reflect my feelings about narration and listening to audiobooks. It was great."

"Richard's narration was excellent and he did well at explaining the importance of narrating the book beforehand."

"I enjoyed seeing the face behind the voice and I think a pleasant voice is always great on a book, especially if it actually fits the character that you're reading or listening to. I loved it."

"I liked learning Victoria's story about her life, how she came to VA, her employment/volunteering history, her book reading, the questions that were asked and their answers."

"As well as the excellent content, this session really took me back in time. As a former RVIB/VA employee and longtime user of the Library, I knew all the people referred to and remember how books used to be recorded. Thank you, Maureen and Victoria, for a lovely listen today."

"A relaxed yet informative session. It felt like friends chatting which was nice."

## Audio description in action

Audio Description provides people who are blind or who have low vision with meaningful access to the visual world of live theatre. Through clear, vivid and carefully timed narration, key visual elements of a performance are conveyed to ensure audiences can fully engage with the storytelling on stage.

Highly trained Vision Australia Audio Describers deliver live commentary that succinctly describes transitions, facial expressions, gestures, costumes, sets, lighting changes and significant stage action. Description is woven seamlessly into natural pauses in dialogue, preserving the rhythm and integrity of the performance while enhancing the audience experience.

Audio Description is transmitted live via discreet receivers collected by patrons upon arrival at the theatre. Tickets to Audio Described performances are booked through the relevant ticketing agent, with the Audio Description Service requested at the time of purchase to ensure a receiver is allocated.

In the past 12 months, the Audio Description Service at Vision Australia has delivered 124 audio described performances across 22 different theatres throughout

Australia, each with its own unique layout, technical configuration and backstage challenges. From heritage proscenium stages to contemporary black box venues, every space requires adaptation and technical precision.

Behind each performance lies extensive preparation. Audio Describers invest many hours preparing for a single production, typically undertaking up to four separate visits to the theatre to preview the show. Preparation includes working meticulously from scripts, reviewing archival video where available, attending rehearsals, confirming sightlines and identifying key visual moments that will require description. Describers navigate tight spaces in theatre lofts and the depths of backstage areas to ensure optimal transmission and positioning, often working long evenings that conclude at 11pm or later.

Collectively, the service has accumulated over 6,000 volunteer hours this year alone, an extraordinary contribution reflecting both the expertise and dedication of our volunteers.

This year, we are especially proud to celebrate Audio Describer Marilyn Barclay, recipient of an Ovation Award

in recognition of her outstanding contribution to accessible arts.

Marylin's professionalism, depth of preparation and commitment to excellence exemplify the standard of the Audio Description Service. Her

achievement recognises not only her individual dedication, but the collective effort required to ensure live performance is accessible, inclusive and enriching for all audiences.

## Reflections from the team – Michael, Manager Audio Description Services

### Staff feedback

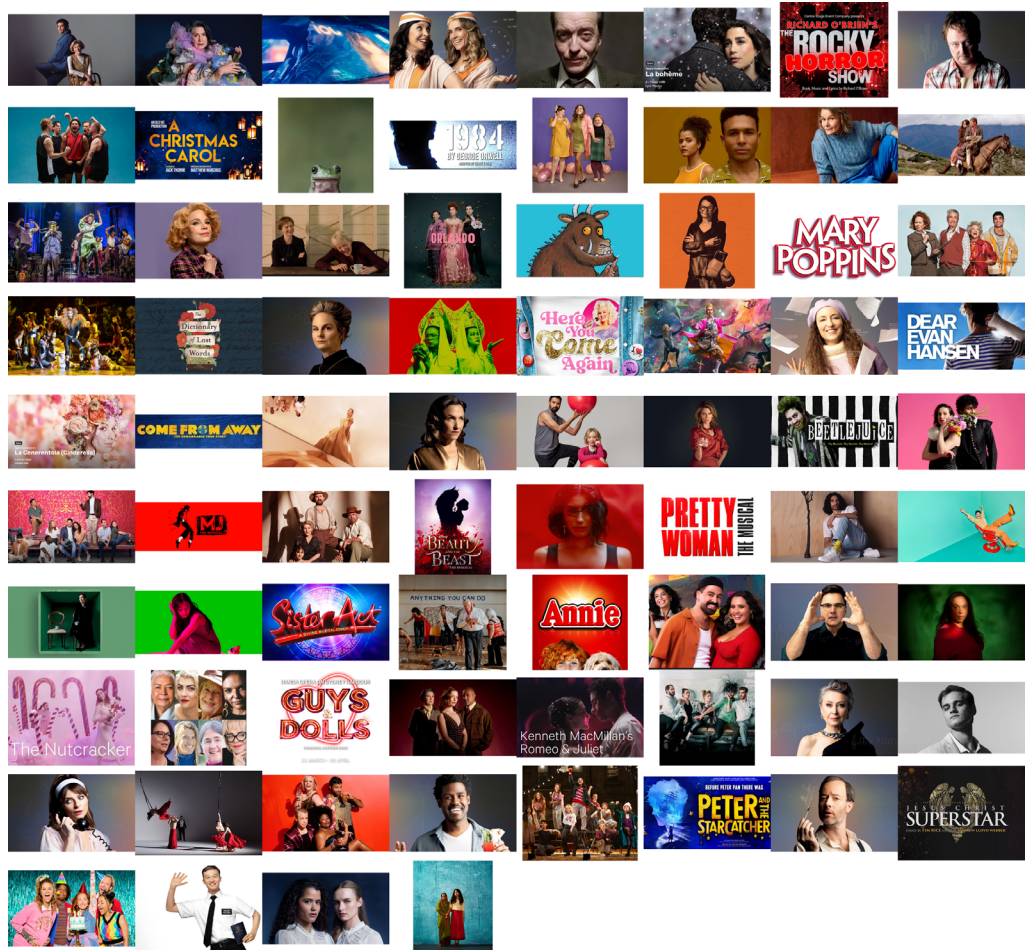
"Luke and I attended Cluedo yesterday in Melbourne. The Vision Australia team were fabulous. Luke really enjoyed himself... I took a headset myself to experience what he was experiencing with the AD which was an interesting way to learn and be in his shoes. Thanks for organising these... I've been telling Luke to do AD for years (he has been very resistant but now he is a convert!)"

"We wanted to send you and the VA team a big thank you for this joyful experience. Being able to take part in the tactile tour beforehand made a huge difference. It offered such a rich, hands-on way to understand the world of the show before it even began. We truly appreciate the cast and crew for sharing their space pre-show to allow this story to be inclusive. The audio description throughout the performance was excellent. Clear, detailed, and seamlessly woven into the action without being distracting. Big shout out to Tash and Mary they are amazing!"

"The tour, show and notes were fantastic. The tactile tour and absolute highlight. She (name redacted) said "I saw the street sellers cart during the performance" having been up close to it, she could use the vision she has (and her Irisvision) and she could work it out, plus she was orientated to where it was onstage during the tour and also by (you) the amazing audio describers. She would have likely totally missed this otherwise. We were also talking on the way home how good it was to know what the music box looked like up closely and the wigs and tiaras. Having the props and costume crew share their love of the work they do was informative and delightful. We felt very special and really appreciated the time and generosity of everyone involved."



Photos of some of the Audio Describer Volunteers and plays audio described.



# Voices that connect our community

## Vision Australia Radio – Melbourne

### Reflections from the team – Marilyn, Coordinator of Volunteers Radio

In the past 12 months, over 100 Vision Australia Radio volunteers in Kooyong continued to be at the heart of accessible broadcasting in Melbourne, playing a pivotal role in ensuring that people who are blind, have low vision, or experience print disability remained informed, connected, and represented. Their contributions span program production, reading services, technical operations, community engagement, and on air presentation. Volunteers provide the skills and time that make it possible for the network to deliver inclusive, real time information to audiences who rely on it daily.

### Award-Winning Volunteer Excellence in 2025

2025 was an exceptional year marked by national recognition for the Melbourne-based volunteers, staff and contributors at the Community Broadcasting Awards. Vision Australia Radio achieved significant recognition, with multiple Melbourne-connected volunteers and programs recognised, demonstrating excellence in accessible and community-driven media. This was demonstrated in the win for Excellence in Special Events & Outside Broadcasting for the Midsumma Carnival Day 2025 live broadcast, a vibrant volunteer-supported production celebrating inclusion and diversity.

### Strengthening Community Connection

VAR's volunteer-led programs strengthened Melbourne's social fabric by:

- Providing vital access to news, current affairs, sport, culture, and creative writing for people who can't access print media.
- Amplifying lived experience voices, ensuring stories of people with disability are heard and valued.
- Supporting major community events, such as Midsumma Festival through inclusive outside broadcasts and as a media partner of the Brimbank Writers and Readers Festival, Rising Festival and the ATSA Independent Living Expo.
- Building confidence, purpose, and connection among volunteers themselves, many of whom describe the station as a meaningful community that values their contribution.

# Vision Australia Radio – Regional

## Reflections from the team – Patz, VA Radio Regional Coordinator of Volunteers

Across the regional studios of Albury, Bendigo, Shepparton and Geelong, 2025 has been a year defined by commitment, adaptability, and steady contribution.

We are currently supported by a remarkable cohort of 156 volunteers across these regional locations, collectively contributing more than 400 hours of service per week to produce 48 hours of on-air content. This ongoing dedication ensures that Vision Australia Radio continues to provide accessible information to our listeners, day in and day out.

This year also brought significant change, as publishers accelerated the move to digital production. In response, Vision Australia Radio began rolling out online reading across regional studios. Our trailblazers in Shepparton, led the digital revolution following the sudden end of hard copy newspapers, with volunteers responding with professionalism and determination. Their willingness to embrace new technology and adapt quickly has set a strong benchmark for others as the rollout continues. This same team was once again recognised by the Greater Shepparton Regional Council at its annual Volunteer Recognition Awards, an

acknowledgement of their ongoing contribution to the community.



Photo of Volunteer Meryl from Shepparton on the new digital online reading project

Regional volunteers have also broadened their contribution, stepping into additional production roles across a growing range of programs. This includes Time of Your Life and Inside Voice, which was nominated for a CBAA Award for Best News and Current Affairs Program, an achievement that reflects the quality and commitment of those involved. Volunteers have also played a key role in conducting interesting interviews, enriching the depth and relevance of our content.



Photo of some of the Shepparton VAR Volunteer Team

A special mention must also go to our experienced volunteers, who play a vital role in training and supporting new volunteers across the various roles within our studios. This peer-to-peer support is essential to our success in the regionals and is greatly appreciated.

Beyond programming, volunteers continue to support the Vision Australia Radio through fundraising, sponsorship promotions and by delivering valuable community service announcements, helping to keep their local communities informed and connected.



Photo of Volunteer Presenter Trainee – Elizabeth in Geelong

As we look ahead, our growing listenership, as reflected in the McNair Survey 2025 demonstrates the ongoing relevance and reach of our service. This continued growth is a direct result of the commitment, adaptability and skill of our regional volunteers, who remain central to everything we do.

## Annual Volunteer Recognition Awards at Greater Shepparton

Each year, Greater Shepparton City Council hosts its Annual Volunteer Recognition Awards, celebrating the outstanding contributions of volunteers across the region. Nominations are received from throughout the community in four categories: Young Volunteer, Adult Volunteer, Volunteer Team, and Long Serving Volunteer.

Last year, the Vision Australia Radio team was proud to be nominated alongside many other champion teams. While they did not take home an award on the night, the nomination itself was warmly received. Team members expressed their gratitude and appreciation for being recognised for their ongoing dedication and commitment.

The evening also featured a guest appearance from local AFLW superstar Grace Egan. Grace shared her story of growing up in the Shepparton area, her journey through the AFLW ranks, and highlights from her football career. Her reflections were both inspiring and deeply connected to the local community.

Beyond the formal presentations, the event provided a valuable opportunity for the Vision Australia Radio team to come together, chat, and catch up. With radio broadcasting often involving just two people in the studio at a time, evenings like this allow the wider team to connect in person, strengthening relationships and celebrating shared achievements.

Overall, the night served as a meaningful reminder of the important role volunteers play in the community and offered a chance for the Vision Australia Radio team to be acknowledged for their ongoing service and passion.



### The moments that matter

One of the great privileges of working with volunteers at Vision Australia Radio is witnessing the generosity, passion, and dedication people bring to the service. Every day, volunteers give their time so that others can remain connected to the world around them through accessible news, information, and conversation. It is work that quietly but powerfully broadens the reach of Vision Australia Radio and strengthens the connection we have with our listeners.



Alongside the many positive moments that come with coordinating volunteers, there are also times that remind us just how significant these roles and relationships can become over time.

This year, we said goodbye to several valued and long standing volunteers. Each had contributed many hours to reading the news and supporting the service Vision Australia Radio provides. For many volunteers, the role is not only about the task itself, but about being part of a team and contributing to something meaningful.

At one recent service, it was shared how proud a volunteer was of their role with Vision Australia Radio. It was also noted that the friendships formed through volunteering were deeply important to them, and that they hoped their work had helped members of the blind and low vision community stay informed and connected. Reflections like these stay with you.

For those of us who coordinate and work alongside volunteers, moments like this highlight that Vision Australia Radio is more than a broadcasting service. Over time, it becomes a community, one where volunteers work together regularly, often over many years, forming strong and lasting connections.

The impact of these connections is felt not only when we lose volunteers who have passed away, but also when valued members of the team move away, retire, or step back after many years of service. Bonds are built through reliability, shared shifts, and countless conversations. When familiar voices and faces are no longer part of the weekly routine, that absence is felt across the team.

As a Volunteer Coordinator, this year has served as a personal reminder not to let the busy nature of our work rush past the moments that matter most. The chats at volunteer recognition events, the conversations before or after a shift, and the quick catch ups in the hallway or prep room, these small interactions are often the most meaningful parts of our work together.

Volunteering is about service, but it is also about connection.

Volunteers give a significant amount of their time to Vision Australia Radio, helping ensure the service continues to reach listeners who rely on it. Their contribution supports not only the broadcast itself, but also the sense of teamwork and community that develops within the volunteer group.

The events of this year have been a reminder to pause occasionally, to have a conversation with fellow volunteers, and to appreciate the relationships that grow through this shared work. These moments, while simple, are often the ones that matter most.

# Vision Australia Radio – Adelaide

## Reflections from the team – Guillaume, Coordinator of Volunteers Radio

The team of volunteers is as strong as ever in Adelaide, currently standing at over 100 individuals, together producing 60 hours of on-air content every week.

Of course, producing quality radio requires a lot of behind-the-scenes preparation before turning the studio microphones on. In the last 12 months, Adelaide volunteers have donated a staggering 11,500 hours of their time to producing radio content. The yearly top 20 'leader board' of volunteer hours is nothing short of astounding too, with numbers ranging from 170 individual hours to a breathtaking 720 hours for one volunteer!

A recent McNair Institute survey shows that the audience continues to grow, with an estimated 69,000 weekly listeners in Adelaide alone. And volunteers' voices are also heard far and wide, across the national Vision Australia Radio network, as well as on many other community radio stations in every state through the Community Radio Network (CRN) and RPH Radio Reading Network. All this is testimony to the high quality of the content volunteers produce and their unwavering commitment to improving the lives of people with a print disability everywhere.

Another aspect of the Adelaide volunteer team worth noting is the high retention rate; when people join the friendly crew, they seem to never want to leave! In the last 12 months, 29 volunteers received a long-service award in Adelaide, including 10 volunteers celebrating their 10-year anniversary, 5 celebrating 15 years, 2 celebrating 20 years and two others celebrating each 25 and 35 years with Vision Australia.

## 2025 Adelaide Christmas Pageant Live Audio-description Broadcast

It is becoming a tradition that the local team have come to cherish. On Saturday 8th November 2025, Vision Australia Radio once again partnered with local not-for-profit organisations Access2Arts and Radio Adelaide to make last year's Christmas Pageant accessible to people who are blind or with low vision. Like previously, the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service welcomed the team on the second-floor balcony of the Wakefield Street fire station for a perfect advantage point, doubled with an allocated community area right in front, where people who are blind or with low vision could enjoy the atmosphere of the show with their family, with our audio-description broadcast matching their position.

Volunteer Matt, who hosted the program, also works full time yet still makes time to volunteer with Vision Australia. He reads The Conversation every Friday morning and regularly steps in to cover other programs whenever he can, often coming into the station early before heading off to work. Matt had big shoes to fill, following two years of this special broadcast being hosted by Vision Australia Radio stalwart Michael, and he did a fantastic job.

Young also joined the broadcast as a special guest. Matt was the glue that held it all together, keeping the broadcast dynamic throughout and, for the first time this year, reading out personal messages sent in by listeners via social media.



Photo of Volunteer Matt (left), Access2Arts CEO Rebecca (centre) and Volunteer Audio Describer Meg (right)



Photo of Volunteers, Matt (right) with Audio Describers Meg (left) and Kari (centre background)

Of course, the broadcast centred on two audio describers, Kari, joining for the third year in a row and Meg, who were given advance access to examine the floats, enabling them to deliver exceptionally rich and informed audio description. Access2Arts CEO Rebecca

Young also joined the broadcast as a special guest. Matt was the glue that held it all together, keeping the broadcast dynamic throughout and, for the first time this year, reading out personal messages sent in by listeners via social media.

The partnership with Radio Adelaide (also known as 5UV, Australia's first and longest-running community radio station, and the home of the original RPH broadcasts in Adelaide) continued to strengthen through this event. Once again, Radio Adelaide generously provided most of the equipment required for outside broadcasting and extended the audience reach by sharing the broadcast with Vision Australia on this occasion. With manager Indigo on site to ensure the audio feed also reached their transmitter, the Adelaide Christmas Pageant

live audio description special was broadcast simultaneously on both Vision Australia Radio and Radio Adelaide, across FM, AM, two digital radio frequencies, and two online audio streams (including various radio listening apps). In short, Vision Australia was hard to miss.

Missed it live? You can listen to the 2025 Adelaide Christmas Pageant audio-described broadcast online: <https://omny.fm/shows/interview-highlights/a-look-back-at-the-2025-adelaide-christmas-pageant>.

## Adelaide Volunteer Highlights

Every Vision Australia volunteer deserves their moment in the spotlight. However, with limited space in this publication, we're pleased to highlight a few volunteers who were recently recognised for their ongoing service to the community.

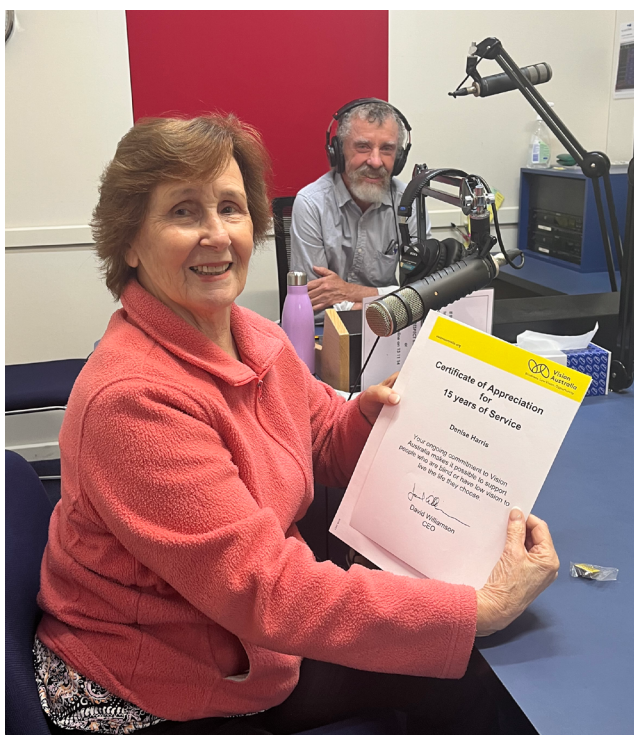


Photo of Volunteer Denise who receives her certificate for 15 years volunteering at Vision Australia Radio, photographed in our studio with National Press Volunteer co-host Brendan.



Photo of Volunteer Michelle in the Adelaide studio where she co-presents The Sunday Mail. Michelle was still a student when she started volunteering at Vision Australia Radio 20 years ago.



Photo of Volunteer Bev (National Press) receives her certificate for 25 years volunteering at Vision Australia Radio, handed to her by new volunteer Alan who joined Vision Australia only a few months ago and now co-presents The Guardian Weekly.



Photo of Volunteer Caroline receiving her certificate for 35 years volunteering at Vision Australia Radio, alongside her National Press volunteer co-hosts Dorothy and Chris, and Advertiser volunteer presenters John and Michael.

Peter will have been volunteering at Vision Australia Radio for 35 years in June. A highly regarded broadcaster and a cornerstone of the station, Peter produces and presents three weekly flagship Vision Australia Radio programs: Focal Point, Leisure Link, and Vision Extra. His incredible contribution was recognised nationally at the 2025 Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) Conference in Hobart, with his induction into the Community Broadcasting Honour Roll, a tribute to exceptional community individuals.

Ruth joined Vision Australia Radio two years ago to co-present our early morning Advertiser program. An international student from Ghana, Ruth's contribution to the community, which extends beyond her commitment with us, was recently recognised when she received both the StudyAdelaide 2025 Community Engagement Award and the prestigious International Student of the Year Award.



Photo of Volunteer Peter interviewing a representative of the Electoral Commission of South Australia (ECSA) during our special live-to-air broadcast at the ATSA Independent Living Expo in March this year.



Photo of Volunteer Ruth in the studios

# Vision Australia Radio – Perth

## Reflections from the team – Brigid, Coordinator of Volunteers Radio

### What happened at VA Radio Perth

Way out west, around 3,000 kilometres from Kooyong in Victoria (head office), another lively and dedicated band of VA Radio Volunteers is hard at work. From their home in the beautiful ABC Building in East Perth, almost 70 volunteers contribute more than 70 hours each week to broadcast, record, and produce the 12 programs that make up Perth’s local schedule as well as key contributions to the national VAR program guide.

### A bigger, brighter volunteer celebration year

Thanks to generous support from Lotterywest and Volunteering WA, our 2025 Volunteer Week celebrations were bigger than ever. The team hosted a cross organisation morning tea with Blind Sports WA, Bowls WA, Visually Impaired Bowlers, and volunteers from across their shared community sectors. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect, recognise contributions, and celebrate the spirit of volunteering in Western Australia.

In October 2025, it marked a major milestone, VA Radio Perth’s 10th Birthday. Past, present, and soon to be volunteers joined the local team for cake, conversation, and heartfelt reminiscing about the people, programs, and friendships that have shaped the past decade.

### Fundraising stars shine bright

Perth Radio Volunteers didn’t just shine on-air, they made their mark nationally by raising over \$14,000, securing 2nd place on the national fundraising leaderboard.

A special highlight came from Happy Pants and National News volunteer Kate, crowned Top Individual Fundraiser for the second year in a row. Kate and her family rallied support from London, Antarctica, and Perth, running a joyful, cash raising race that brought in vital funds to help keep our reading service running strong.



Photo of Kate (2nd from left) with fellow 100km team members Gemma, Damian and Kal

## New programs and growing talent

In December 2025, the team welcomed their newest program **Pet Talk**, expanding VAR's specialist offerings and bringing an enjoyable new topic to listeners. Congratulations to Lesley for developing the concept, preparing engaging content, and inspiring both new and existing volunteers to join the **Pet Talk** roster.

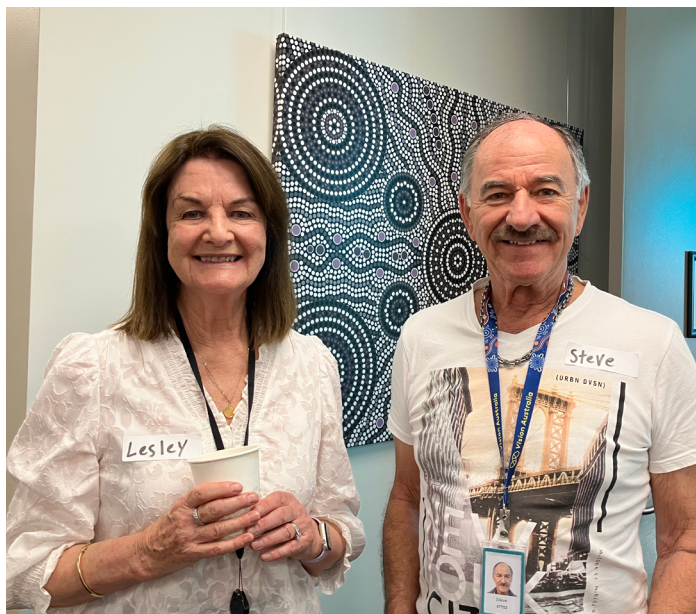


Photo of Pet Talk Program Coordinator Lesley with fellow Volunteer Steve



Photo of Lesley from second from left with fellow Volunteers Adrian, Sandra, Kerry and Veronica

The beloved Happy Pants team continued to delight young listeners through its unique educational programming. New volunteer writers Maddie, Kayla and Jeannie contributed fresh scripts throughout the year.

This was also the year the team officially welcomed the talented and creative Maddie as a regular on the Happy Pants team. Maddie, first joined VAR Radio as a work experience student, quickly discovering a passion and knack for radio. As a vision impaired young volunteer, Maddie is starting to spread her wings and has recently joined the Pet Talk team as well.



Photo of Volunteer Maddie

## Award-winning local programs

In **Plain Sight** continued its impressive run, sharing powerful stories of people making a positive impact in the disability and community sectors. In 2025, the program won national recognition, taking home the CBA Award for Best New Program. Congratulations to host Simon, past Producer Abby and new producer Andrew for their outstanding work.

The football focused program Reading the Play – All Things Footy also earned national acknowledgement, being named a finalist for The Troy Garner Award – Best Program: Sports at the 2025 CBA Awards. Huge congratulations to volunteers Emma, Kal, Les, Damian, and Rob for their hard work and passion.



Photo of Volunteers Andrew and Simon with their awards



Photo of Volunteers Les, Kal, Emma

A special shout out as well to Kal, recognised nationally as a finalist for the Outstanding Youth Contribution Award, celebrating the enthusiasm and dedication he brings to his many roles at VA Radio.

### Ongoing gratitude

We extend heartfelt thanks to every VA Radio Perth volunteer. Your commitment, energy, creativity, and generosity ensure this essential radio reading service remains relevant, vibrant, and on air. Deep gratitude is held for the time and care you bring to VA Radio each and every week.



Photo of Volunteer Kal

### Photos of the Vision Australia Radio Perth Volunteer team



# Seeing Eye Dogs

## **It takes a community**

There is no doubt, it takes a community to raise a Seeing Eye Dog.

Behind every Seeing Eye Dog that graduates and begins supporting someone who is blind or has low vision is a network of dedicated volunteers who contribute to that journey.

From the first experiences of a young puppy, through to the moment a dog meets their future handler, volunteers play a vital role in preparing dogs for their future partnerships.

We have over 20 different volunteer roles at Seeing Eye Dogs and an incredible cohort of more than 800 volunteers, and what makes our volunteer program so special is the strong sense of community across the many different roles.

Volunteers support the program in a variety of ways, and, while their tasks may differ, they are united by a shared purpose.

## **The role of puppy carers**

Our carers make up a large proportion of Seeing Eye Dogs volunteers and play a particularly important role.

They open their homes to puppies, helping them learn the foundations needed to grow into confident

and capable dog guides. Their commitment, patience, and dedication help shape the early experiences that are so important in a dog's development.

Just as importantly, volunteers in non-caring roles contribute significantly to the program. From administrative volunteers who call potential puppy carers, to those assisting within the kennel facility at the training headquarters and Puppy Centre in Kensington, to drivers transporting dogs to appointments or experienced carers who support others through our peer-to-peer support roster - every role contributes to the bigger picture.

## **Building an inclusive volunteer community**

We are proud to see an encouraging increase in members of the blind and low vision community volunteering within the onsite kennel facility in Kensington, Victoria.

To ensure we continue to foster an inclusive and supportive environment, these volunteers were invited to participate in a focus group to share their experiences and insights. The feedback highlighted many positive aspects of volunteering at Seeing Eye Dogs.

Volunteers described the environment as welcoming, inclusive, and supportive, noting that staff are friendly, non-judgmental, and treat volunteers as valued members of the team.

Many shared that volunteering with Seeing Eye Dogs has been a welcoming and life-changing experience, while also encouraging the organisation to continue focusing on accessibility so that people who are blind or have low vision can participate fully in volunteering opportunities.

As many of the blind and low vision volunteers are Seeing Eye Dog handlers themselves, they shared that they particularly enjoy the opportunity to engage with the dogs and observe the training process firsthand, but most importantly to give back to the program that has supported them.

### **Advice for future volunteers**

When asked what advice they would give to future volunteers, participants encouraged others to get involved and not be afraid to ask questions.

Their message was clear: there is truly something for everyone within

the volunteer program, whether you prefer a more hands-on role or a quieter way to contribute.

### **Looking ahead**

The continued dedication, insight, and generosity of our volunteers strengthen every part of the Seeing Eye Dogs program. Their contributions not only support the training of future dog guides but also help build a supportive community committed to improving the lives of people who are blind or have low vision.

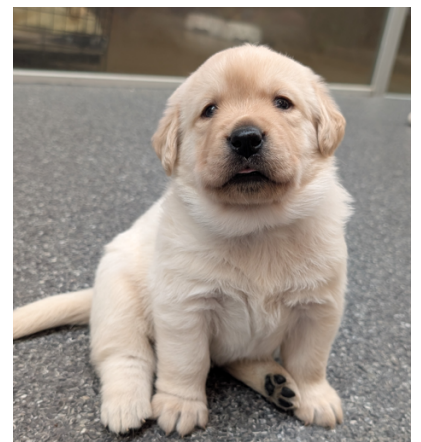
As a long-term volunteer and someone who works closely with this incredible cohort, I can say firsthand that their passion, dedication, and care fill my cup every day. Being part of their journey, seeing the difference they make, and sharing in their achievements is deeply inspiring.

Reflecting on the past year, volunteers are more than supporters of the program, they are an essential part of it, shaping the future of Seeing Eye Dogs and the life-changing partnerships that follow.

Their commitment reminds us that a strong, connected community is at the heart of every success.

### **Reflections from the team – Liv, Volunteer Partnerships Coordinator SED**

# Photos of volunteer puppy carers and Seeing Eye Dogs



# Thank you for reading

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Volunteer Annual and the opportunity to reflect on the many inspiring ways volunteers have contributed to Vision Australia throughout 2025-2026.

The stories shared within these pages highlight the dedication, generosity and impact of volunteers across our organisation. Your commitment continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people who are blind or have low vision, and we are sincerely grateful for the role you play in advancing our mission.

If you have a story, experience or moment you would like to share in a future edition, we would welcome hearing from you. Please contact your local Volunteer Partnerships Coordinator or the National Volunteer Partnerships Office at [volunteerservices@visionaustralia.org](mailto:volunteerservices@visionaustralia.org).

Thank you for being part of the Vision Australia volunteer community. We look forward to sharing more stories of impact in the year ahead.

