

Vision Australia Annual Report 2014-15

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Accessibility

Our Annual Report is available in standard print text, large print text, braille, audio and DAISY formats, and accessible digital formats. Contact us on 1300 84 74 66 to order a copy in your preferred format or visit our website www.visionaustralia.org

Hazel Hockley

Vision Australia client and member of Waverley City Archers, is good at hitting the bullseye. She is aiming to represent Australia in the World Para Archery Championships in Germany, August 2015.

Why we exist

To support people who are blind or have low vision live the life they choose.

How we deliver

The way we work with people and interact with each other is driven by our values: person-centred, accountable, collaborative, commercially focused and agile.

What we do

We work collaboratively with people who are blind or have low vision, their families and other providers, to empower them to achieve their goals.

A message from our Chair and CEO

Positioning the blindness and low vision community at the centre of everything we do will define our future success. This year, a number of significant achievements, and a continued focus on change, steered our organisation in this direction.

Critical to building a lifelong positive partnership with people who are blind or have low vision is a strong understanding of their needs, and responding to these needs with high-quality services and supports. To maximise this understanding, our Board endorsed the formation of a new Client Reference Group. The members of this group, who will be recruited next financial year, will come from diverse backgrounds, live across Australia, and be skilled or experienced in matters related to blindness or low vision. The information they share with us will guide meaningful and relevant services and supports, over the long-term.

We know that to be relevant, we need to be where our clients are. To strengthen our presence along the East Coast, our front-line operations were realigned into a new regional service structure. In each region, teams are developing close relationships with organisations – such as optometrists and aged care facilities – that support people who have vision-related needs, and local communities, to encourage people to choose Vision Australia for whatever supports they need.

Being relevant also involves providing supports that our community needs, in a timely manner. There is an ever growing demand for our highly-trained Seeing Eye Dogs to support people to remain independent. From our new state-of-the-art breeding centre and kennels we significantly increased the number of dogs we breed and train. This success is one of the first steps towards reducing the waiting time for a Seeing Eye Dog to six months.

We acknowledge that technology is increasingly becoming a critical enabler for our front-line staff to deliver excellent client service, while driving business performance.

We invested in new technology that will ultimately connect our financial, customer and service systems. The integrated system will meet our organisational requirements over the next five to ten years and will provide an array of benefits. With a wealth of information about a client at their fingertips, our front-line staff can make informed decisions about that client's care and deliver personalised services that suit their needs. We can also turn our attention to creating a more mobile workforce due to the online accessibility of the system, and with real-time information, our business decisions will be well informed.

Our success this year has been made possible through the efforts of our staff, whom we thank.

We congratulate the team of 38 staff who graduated from our new Leadership Development Program. Developed with Swinburne University, the program supports our staff to deliver our person-centred approach and drive strategic change

initiatives. It will also help to create a diverse team of future thought leaders who are engaged in moving our organisation forward, and we can't wait to meet the team who will join next year's program.

This investment in staff was just one of a number of actions that led to us being awarded the Voice Project's 2015 Change Challenge Award – from a pool of over 760 applicants. The Award recognises teams and organisations that have created measurable and meaningful change in employee engagement, work practices and business outcomes. The award reflects the significant improvements that our team has made over the past two years.

We would also like to thank the Vision Australia Board who delivered robust leadership and governance and guided us through a year of considerable change and strong performance. We fondly farewelled Professor Jan Lovie-Kitchin who retired after seven years' dedicated service to our organisation and community. It was, however, our great pleasure to welcome Dr Sharon Bentley who brings more than two decades of experience delivering optometric care, and an extensive research background in vision-related fields.

Finally, recognition must also be given to the thousands of donors and volunteers, as well as the corporate partners, businesses, organisations and government that support us. Your generosity contributes greatly to the work we do and makes an invaluable difference to our community.

In the year ahead, we will focus on three key areas: continuing to create and deliver services that meet a person's needs and place them at the centre of their own care; investing in leading technology that enables high-quality service delivery; and, nurturing our next generation of leaders who will drive positive change.

Dr Kevin Murfitt, Chair, Vision Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Murfitt', written in a cursive style.

Ron Hooton, CEO, Vision Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Hooton', written in a cursive style.

Cody Butler, Brisbane

Cody is just like any other 12-year-old boy. He enjoys going to the beach, riding a tandem mountain bike and playing Wii.

Cody has Leber's Congenital Amaurosis and is blind. We have been a constant support in Cody's life since he was six months old, working with him and his family to find the best way to do the things that Cody wants to do.

"Cody enjoys his one-on-one and group sessions with the Vision Australia team because they make learning fun, interesting and positive. They talk through situations and use role playing scenarios and reward systems to draw on Cody's strengths and set him up for success," says Karen, Cody's Mum.

Earlier this year, their family decided that they would like to go to the theatre, an exciting first for Cody.

Cody doesn't receive the visual cues that help sighted people to adapt their behaviour to the environment around them. In a setting, such as live theatre, these cues include the audience sitting still and remaining quiet during a performance.

To make this outing a success, we supported their family by suggesting that they do a practice run at home before the big day.

"We spent some time at home pretending that we were at the theatre. We had to sit on the sofa quietly and not move. I had a great time on the day and can't wait to go to the theatre again," says Cody.

"With Vision Australia by my son's side, I am sure he will mature into a confident, capable, happy and independent young man, who will be determined to succeed no matter what he chooses to do with his life." Karen, Cody's Mum.

About us

We are proud to support the blindness and low vision community across Australia. We work with people of all ages and life stages, and circumstances, to develop creative solutions so that they can do what they want to do in life.

These solutions may draw on one, or many, of our services and supports including low vision clinics; advice, equipment and training for independent living; orientation and mobility services; alternative format information production; Seeing Eye Dogs; library services; technology advice, equipment and training; employment services; and advocacy support.

We also help to connect people all around the country through our telephone support and peer programs – whether they live close by to each other, speak the same language or share a similar interest such as footy tipping or crosswords. These programs, as well as those we run from our offices, support and connect people to make new friends, and share ideas and experiences.

And we're on the air with Vision Australia Radio. Through nine community radio stations across Victoria, southern New South Wales and Adelaide, plus digital stations in Melbourne and Adelaide, listeners can tune in to a diverse program of information, news, and specialist topics, seven days a week.

Vision Australia provides services to more than 27,500 clients from 28 Vision Australia centres in Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia; 30 clinics; and through outreach programs in the Northern Territory and Tasmania.

The following table shows the number of clients using our services in each state across Australia:

Service type	ACT	NSW	VIC	SA	TAS	WA	NT	QLD
Vision Australia clients	420	6,268	7,697	17	21	5	37	2,989
Working Seeing Eye Dogs	7	41	80	6	8	29	1	41
Library Service Clients	225	4,712	4,744	463	430	261	44	2,743

Radio: A monthly average of approximately 190,000 listeners tune into Vision Australia Radio across all areas including Melbourne, regional Victoria, southern NSW and Adelaide.

The year in review

Extending the quality, quantity and reach of our services

We are always seeking to enhance the way we deliver quality services and supports to our community.

Fit for the new funding future

We continue to work with the people who live in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) trial areas – the Barwon area in Victoria, the Hunter Region in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory – to maximise the outcomes of their participant plans.

Heading west, we began supporting people in the NDIS trial in the Perth Hills area and joined the Western Australian Government's NDIS My Way trial in the Lower South West, and Cockburn and Kwinana.

To ensure that people from our community who are eligible for the NDIS receive the support they need, we worked with the National Disability Insurance Agency to develop a comprehensive and consistent assessment tool to evaluate a person's needs. We also advocated to the Agency to ensure that participant plans provide adequate supports, including Seeing Eye Dogs.

The lessons learnt from our NDIS trial sites are guiding the way we deliver services to our community and have prepared us well for My Aged Care, the Australian Government's new way of delivering aged care services for seniors.

Infographics

- 200 People choose to receive services from us as part of their NDIS participant plan.
- 4 The number of NDIS trial sites we are active in.
- 1st Seeing Eye Dog to be funded by the NDIS in the Hunter Region NDIS trial.

We strongly support the introduction of My Aged Care which is already live in three local government areas in Victoria. It also launched in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland on 1 July 2015 and other states and territories will follow in the years ahead.

Already, we are working in partnership with three of the thirteen lead operators engaged by the Australian Government to assess seniors in their home and identify their aged care-related needs.

As a member of the National Aged Care Alliance, we also influenced the inclusion and value of vision-related supports in the My Aged Care reforms so that people, aged over 65, from our community receive the vision-related assistance they need.

Infographics

- 87.6 per cent of our clients are either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall way that we support them.
- 105,665 The number of hours we worked with our senior clients who live throughout Australia.

Being where people need us

Our clients live everywhere, from small country towns to regional and capital cities. We support them wherever they are.

Along the East Coast, our teams are delivering services to communities through 18 newly defined regional zones. In each zone, front-line staff are getting to know and work with the organisations and people in their local communities to support their specific needs.

We want to reach people at times and on days that suit them without the need for them to travel. We have previously led a consortium that pioneered the use of video-conferencing technology as a tool to support people who live in non-metropolitan and regional areas. We are using our experience with this technology to deliver more information and training, to more people, in their homes. Our teams are also sharing video content of clients so that together, they can provide advice on how best to support that person, without the need to see them, in person, multiple times.

As well as gaining a foothold in the digital space, we are being smart about how we expand our physical presence to support people across Australia.

Infographics

- 1 New satellite office opened in the cohealth facility at the Laverton Community Hub, in Hobsons Bay, south of Melbourne.
- 2 Memorandum of Understanding signed with Aboriginal Health Services to deliver monthly low vision services, at their sites, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast.
- 170 The number of children we supported through our outreach program, as far north as Weipa, and west to Mt Isa and remote communities including Gumbulunya and Millingimbi in the Northern Territory.

Participating in everyday life

We support our community to live an inclusive and full life, so that they can do what they want to do and love – whether it's cooking their favourite meal, going to university, enjoying a hobby or being part of their local community.

Enjoying independence

We support people to stay independent by advising on living with low vision, recommending appropriate equipment and technology, and providing training.

Infographics

- 29,043 Hours of training delivered to support people to access and use helpful technology and tools including computers and devices, and software and apps.
- 52,244 Hours spent assessing and training people to maintain daily living skills.
- 32,009 Hours growing people's confidence and skills in getting out and about safely by training them to use a white cane.

Growing connections across Australia

We deliver a range of activities and structures that enable our community to create social and peer networks so that they can share their experiences, learn from each other and stay in touch.

Infographics

- 57 Local Client Groups meet regularly.
- 3,051 Telelink® telephone support group sessions were held over 18,635 hours.
- 425 Clients participated in 49 Quality Living Programs

Keeping the pages turning

Our national library service supports people to continue enjoying reading – whether it's the local news or the latest best seller.

Infographics

- 734,114 Audio and braille titles issued.
- 104,979 Newspapers and magazines downloaded.
- 7,719 Podcasts downloaded.
- 3,000 Daisy players converted from CD to 3G devices reducing CD production by more than 50 per cent.

Opening up the possibilities

We support children through all the major milestones in their life, from birth to their first steps, starting school to finding their first after-school job, and leaving home.

Infographics

- 19,924 hours spent supporting children in their early years.

- 26,817 hours spent supporting young children in their primary school years.
- 20,521 hours spent supporting older children in their high school years.

And, once people reach adulthood, through a range of programs we support them to achieve specific goals including learning and earning.

Infographics

- 29 Tertiary students provided with technology and training through our Further Education Bursary Program to support them to succeed in their chosen studies.
- 2 Graduates employed through our Post-Graduate Program to give them real-life work experience at Vision Australia and get job-ready for their next role.
- 14,008 Hours supporting people with employment-related issues to improve our community's involvement in the workforce.

Accessing arts and culture

Theatre-goers, who are blind or have low vision, were drawn into the on-stage excitement at *The Lion King* in Melbourne and *the Rocky Horror Picture Show* in Sydney.

For the first time, these productions were supported by new audio description equipment that provides a live description of actions and other visual aspects of on-stage activity, instead of a pre-recorded commentary. The equipment was proudly developed by us.

But not everyone wants to just sit in the crowd. We joined up with that National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) in Sydney to run a drama workshop and give people from our community the opportunity to express their creative side. Following the workshop, a new drama group, the Vision Impaired Drama Society, was formed and continues to be run by Sue-Ann Hanson, one of our valued volunteers.

James Griffiths, regional Victoria

James, who was born fully sighted, hasn't let blindness stop him from living independently and following his passions.

James, aged 33, began to lose his vision in his early 20's when his eyes haemorrhaged due to Diabetic Retinopathy. Subsequently, James has had detached retinas in both eyes and two years ago, was diagnosed with cataracts. He is now almost totally blind with only a tiny amount of light perception in his right eye.

With James' input, we suggested simple home modifications to make independent living easier, such as applying tactile features on his television remote control, washing machine and stove top knobs.

After receiving orientation and mobility training from us, James, a long cane user, is now confident travelling on the train. He regularly takes the train to Melbourne's CBD, to participate in Wellington City Council's Leadership Plus Advocacy Program.

"Through the program I am learning how to promote the human rights of people living with disability. Eventually I would like to become an advocate for this community," says James.

James is also one of our valued Indigenous support peers helping people who participate in our Quality Living Groups. A peer, like James, is often further along their journey of vision loss, and so is able to talk about this with experience and insight.

"Some people in the groups are inquisitive, some are withheld. The groups run for eight weeks at a time, and by the end everyone's talkative," says James proudly.

Learning to grow his confidence with computers is next on James' to-do list.

"I plan on receiving the right technology training from Vision Australia. I want to pursue a meaningful career and being computer literate will increase my ability to compete in the workforce." James Griffiths.

Making a difference

Our advocacy service is provided on an individual and national level to assist people who are blind, have low vision, or are deafblind, to address or eliminate barriers to participation in the community.

We work closely with government and a range of organisations that provide services such as transport, banking, communications and education to positively influence how these groups meet our community's needs.

Standing by your side

More than half of the people who responded to a Vision Australia survey feel they are being short changed on occasion. The survey also revealed that over sixty per cent of people with severe to total blindness have trouble differentiating between banknotes.

We have worked with the blindness and low vision community for many years to advocate for tactile features on Australian banknotes. In late 2014, around 100 Vision Australia clients were involved in consultations and research undertaken by the Reserve Bank of Australia, strengthening the case for their introduction.

As part of our ongoing efforts, we joined 12-year-old Connor Mc Leod's discrimination complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission. Connor had already started a change.org petition with more than 56,000 supporters calling for action on accessibility features on currency.

"Sometimes we have to push for change to make things accessible and inclusive. We shouldn't just give up. I didn't and I'm so glad that the Reserve Bank of Australia listened," says Connor.

In February, the Reserve Bank of Australia announced that tactile features will be incorporated in the upcoming re-design of Australian banknotes. To ensure that they work for our community, we partnered with the Reserve Bank of Australia again to test various tactile styles.

Connor's efforts, as well as our own, have contributed to the new suite of banknotes being launched in the not-too-distant future.

We whole-heartedly congratulate Connor on the leadership he has shown to drive change on a matter that is important, not just to him, but the community who are blind or have low vision.

On the money

Vision Australia has a long history of working with the banking sector to make banking and transacting accessible for our community.

We are excited to have secured an initiative with the sector and the Australian Bankers Association to review the Banking Industry Standards on Accessibility. This

significant policy change will improve service, technology, and infrastructure accessibility and improve the banking experience for our community.

Telling the whole story

In February, we launched the Tell the Whole Story campaign in a bid to get the Commonwealth Government to put audio description on Australian television so it can be enjoyed by our community.

As part of the campaign, we met with the Minister for Communications, Malcolm Turnbull. We also launched complaints with the Human Rights Commission against a number of commercial television networks to get audio description on free-to-air and paid television.

Further progress has been made in relation to getting audio description on Australian television, with the launch of the ABC's audio description trial on their catch-up service, iview.

In the first three months of the trial, over 20,000 views have been achieved and we are working closely with the ABC to positively influence the trial. However, our long-term goal is to achieve accessible, and real-time, audio described programming on Australian broadcast television.

Infographics

- 86 The percentage of respondents to a Vision Australia survey who want audio description made available on Australian television because it gives the full TV experience.
- 14 The minimum number of hours of audio-described television we are asking for per week, as part of our complaint.

Counting every vote

Infographics

- 3 Our advocacy endeavours gave our community a greater voice at this many state elections this year.
- 8-fold Increase in voters from our community who used iVote in the NSW election.
- 1st Time electronic voting was made available in Queensland election history.

Making information accessible

We work with organisations to get their information – whether it's printed or digital – out to our community.

Infographics

- 365,000 Pages of material converted into large print text, braille, audio, and electronic text.

- 1,200 Professionals educated on accessibility theory and practice.
- 250 Digital projects consulted on to improve the adoption of accessibility standards.
- \$34,158 Awarded by The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), to us, to develop an accessible document creation tool.

Connecting with the community

Across Australia, the community play an important role in supporting people who are blind or have low vision, whether it's helping us to raise funds or caring for our enthusiastic Seeing Eye Dog Puppies.

Infographics

Annual Bendigo Easter Egg Hunt

- \$26,000 Profit raised and invested in local services.
- 85,000 Easter eggs hunted.
- 1st Time a Youth Egg Hunt time slot was introduced to give teenagers the chance to chase chocolate.

Myer Gift Wrap program

- \$63,000 Profit generated to provide services and supports across Australia.
- 18 Stores in Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory participated.
- 735 Volunteers donated over 10,000 hours of their time.

Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight

- Nearly \$750,000 profit achieved and invested in supporting children who are blind or have low vision.
- 77th Year.
- 2.4M Viewers.
- Trended on Facebook and Twitter.

Making our tails wag

Our Seeing Eye Dogs support people who are blind or have low vision to be independent and mobile by becoming their 'eyes'. Every dog costs tens of thousands of dollars and needs two years of intensive training before they are matched with their new owner.

Our wonderful Seeing Eye Dog Puppy carers, like Jodie, corporate partners, businesses and donors make a real difference in helping us to create a six-legged partnership between a person and their dog.

Jodie has provided a loving home to eight of our puppies, over an eight-year period. In that time, she has also cared for countless other puppies on a temporary basis and now looks after two of our breeding dogs – Jenna and Quita.

"I have been able to experience the joys of helping a puppy grow up. It's wonderful to see them go on to provide companionship, mobility and confidence to a person who is blind," says Jodie.

Making sure our dogs are fit and healthy keeps their training and release program on track. A generous donor kindly funded a new X-ray machine that our veterinary team use to complete comprehensive examinations of our dogs. With accurate information on hand, we can treat our dogs faster and reduce recovery and training down-time.

Through The Pet Foundation, Petbarn stores across Australia collected over \$455,000 on our behalf. These generous donations will sponsor thirteen puppies as they train to become Seeing Eye Dogs.

Infographic

- 250 Seeing Eye Dog Puppy carers.

We'd also like to thank everyone who opens their doors to our puppies and dogs.

Infographic

- 55% Our research shows that this is the per cent of people who have been denied access to a public place while out with their Seeing Eye Dog or Seeing Eye Dog Puppy despite legislation allowing them to be there.

We launched a public education campaign to make sure that the door is always open to our puppies and dogs, and their handlers, and will continue to work with state governments on this critical access issue.

Recognising our volunteers

We would like to extend a very special thank you to our volunteers, who donate a great deal of their time and skills and do so with humanity and enthusiasm.

Our volunteers perform a diverse range of jobs. They read the news headlines on our radio station; transport people to day programs and appointments; care for Seeing Eye Dog Puppies; help out with recreational activities; support our administration staff; and get reading material to our library members on time.

We are extremely thankful for your continuing support.

Infographic

- 2,600 Active volunteers support us each month.
- 30,000 Hours of local content aired over our radio network.
- 641,585 Total hours contributed by our volunteers.

The Lenehan family

Five years ago, Debbie Lenehan made the choice to donate her time to Vision Australia.

“Vision Australia has been such a great support to me during my journey with vision loss, and I wanted to help others in the same situation,” says Debbie, who has Bull’s Eye Maculopathy and Retinitis Pigmentosa.

Since then, volunteering has become a family affair.

Debbie and her husband, Ashley, help to run one of our Local Client Groups, supporting the community who are blind or have low vision and live in Brisbane’s Bayside. Together they help out at the many events we hold and Ashley also drives people to our Maroochydore office, on the Sunshine Coast.

The experience of having a close family member, who not only has low vision but gives the gift of their time, has steered son Markus in the same direction.

“Markus volunteered as a sighted guide for an interstate family, some of whom have low vision, when they visited the theme parks on the Gold Coast. As Markus is so used to describing things to me, he was able to easily describe the park and the different rides. He really made the day memorable for them,” says Debbie proudly.

Markus also helps out with our regular cooking classes and day programs.

“Lots of people have done lots of things for me throughout my life. It’s nice to give back and help out where I can,” says Markus.

“I get a lot of joy out of volunteering. I have met lots of people and made new friends and connections. I’ve also enjoyed lots of different experiences that I probably wouldn’t have come across, if I didn’t give my time.” Markus Lenehan.

Our performance against our Strategic Plan

In 2014, we set ourselves a new five-year direction.

We changed the way we were doing things and we acknowledge that we will need to keep changing. People are living longer; technological developments are enabling us to support and engage with people in a personalised way; the policy environment is shifting rapidly; and increasingly, people can exercise greater choice about how they live their lives.

We are actively working on five strategic priorities until the end of 2018. These priorities will allow us to take advantage of the opportunities these changes present so that we can continue to support our community and create a commercially-sustainable future for our organisation.

The following pages contain a summary of the outcomes we achieved against each of these priorities this year.

Strategic Plan Objective 1: Introduce new personalised services reflecting individual goals and choice

- A new regional service structure that encourages a local community focus and flexibility in the way, and where services are delivered, was implemented.
- Within this structure, local managers were appointed to reform practices, build services to attract more clients, and promote quality outcomes to referrers and the broader local community in which they operate.
- Our intake process was updated so that the first available service is now scheduled for a client rather than wait-listing the client for a service provider to contact them.
- Significant progress was made towards introducing a clinical governance system to support the supervision of professional service and quality outcomes.

Looking ahead

We will continue to instil the principles of person-centredness in everything we do. From creating processes, to launching services, or recruiting or training staff, the needs of our community will guide our business decisions and actions.

Strategic Plan Objective 2: Market our personalised services so referrers and clients know exactly what we do

- To aid referrals a new marketing campaign Low Vision High Hopes was piloted in the NDIS trial areas of the Australian Capital Territory and the Hunter Region, as well as on the Gold Coast in Queensland.
- As part of the campaign we hosted an information evening that attracted high-calibre referrers and raised awareness of Vision Australia amongst the medical community. Presentations by representatives from the Bionic Vision Australia consortium were delivered at our Kooyong office and streamed live to our offices in Canberra, Newcastle and Robina in Queensland.
- Service Engagement Consultants were engaged in the NDIS trial areas of Barwon, the Hunter Region and the Australian Capital Territory to build strong local relationships with National Disability Insurance Agency staff and support clients to navigate the NDIS to improve their outcomes.
- Using the lessons learnt from the pilot campaign, a new approach is underway that will maintain a local focus and build on our point of difference and value proposition.

Looking ahead

We will continue to support our front-line service delivery teams to develop local relationships and professionally market our services to grow the number of people we support.

Strategic Plan Objective 3: Create new business systems and processes so staff can provide great service

- A new financial system that will improve processes across the organisation and introduce greater efficiency and automation was delivered, and will launch in July 2015.
- We began the process of procuring a new client management system that will support staff productivity, focus on outcome-based measurements and improve our clients' experience. The system will be rolled out in the 2017 financial year.
- An Information Architecture that describes a three-year roadmap for the redevelopment of our IT systems was developed.
- Measurement capabilities were built and a range of new measures were set. Productivity measures will support our front-line service delivery staff to efficiently deliver quality outcomes to clients.

Looking ahead

We will continue to focus on implementing the client management system and our technology roadmap, and building a back office service approach grounded in measurement and person-centredness.

Strategic Plan Objective 4: Advocate for social reform using evidence and a human rights approach.

- We improved the way that we connect with our community so that we can hear from a more diverse range of clients, using a broader range of tools that suit their needs. This has included the redesign of our client consultation and engagement framework.
- Self-advocacy workshops on education, employment, and access to goods and services were held. In addition, self-advocacy tool kits were developed so that clients can better represent their own political and social needs, with our support, where required.
- At a strategic level, we fostered strong relationships with government and continued to lobby on major issues, in particular, the future shape of the NDIS, the introduction of My Aged Care, and individualised funding arrangements.
- A new direct-to-client feedback model that encourages an open conversation and the opportunity to adjust services and supports with considered responses from clients and their support networks, was developed and will be implemented by the end of 2015.

Looking ahead

We will continue to build the advocacy capability of our clients and staff, influence the roll-out of the NDIS and My Aged Care, and push for better employment outcomes for our community.

Strategic Plan Objective 5: Shift leadership and workforce culture to client focus, integrity, professionalism, respect.

- Every staff member of Vision Australia has been introduced to the principles of person-centredness, sharing power with our clients and each other, through a whole-of-organisation training program. All new staff will receive this training.
- Our inaugural Leadership Development Program, created with Swinburne University, was launched. As part of the program, 38 staff from across the organisation delivered projects aligned to our Strategic Plan and will support the Leadership Team to drive ongoing change. Other staff will be invited to join the second program in the next financial year.
- Senior leaders were supported to gain qualifications in mentoring and coaching to build our leadership capacity and support the ongoing delivery of change initiatives.
- A new performance planning and appraisal approach that supports our workforce to maintain a results-driven, client-directed focus, in alignment with our values, was introduced.

Looking ahead

We will continue to build our workforce capability by demonstrating flexible working practices. We will also embed the principles of coaching and mentoring throughout our organisation to develop a supportive and experience-based way of learning and working together.

Marilyn Pursche, regional New South Wales

Before losing her sight three years ago, Marilyn Pursche had been an enthusiastic user of social media. She was often on Facebook and frequently used Skype to communicate with her family.

Marilyn, aged 73, lost her vision very suddenly and mysteriously. Doctors were unable to provide a diagnosis despite their extensive investigations. “They still don’t know why I went blind. The eyesight I have left is gradually fading. At the moment I can see ghostlike shadows and they are starting to fade,” says Marilyn.

A few months after losing her vision, Marilyn heard about Vision Australia through a friend and soon after, she made contact with us. We visited Marilyn at home and assessed her situation, to see how we could support her to keep doing the things she wanted to do.

Once we established Marilyn’s goals our team swung into action. They assessed which technologies could support her to keep connected and organised a spot for her with one of our Quality Living Groups.

Marilyn has already participated in two groups and says she would like to take part in a third group soon. “I enjoyed the groups, they were excellent. It’s good to talk to people with the same problem as you.”

Marilyn has also received technology training and now uses Dragon, a voice activated software, and Dolphin Guide, a screen reading software. This technology has allowed her to get back on her computer again. “I chat to my friends in South Australia on Facebook and my granddaughter sends me movies of my great granddaughter. I can hear her,” says Marilyn happily.

With our support, Marilyn is back doing many of the things she used to enjoy before she lost her sight.

Acknowledging our donors

We would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for the ongoing support of our donors.

There are so many good causes that need donations and we are grateful that you have chosen us.

Thanks to your generosity we are able to provide services and supports to people who are living with blindness and low vision. Your donations are vitally important in creating opportunities and assisting people to reach their goals, and live their lives the way they choose to.

Infographics

- 100,000+ Donors gave to Vision Australia and Seeing Eye Dogs Australia.
- \$41.8M Total donations and gifts in wills gratefully received.

Meet the wonderful individuals, businesses and organisations that have supported us by giving over \$10,000 this year, as well as our corporate partners and Fundraising and Friends of Vision Australia Committees.

Gifts in wills

Estate of the Late Dudley Barton Adams

Estate of the Late Helen Anderson

Estate of the Late Joyce Anderson

Estate of the Late Ronald Miles Anthony

Estate of the Late Olive Vera Ashcroft

Estate of the Late Emmanuel Attard

Estate of the Late Ruth Avery

Estate of the Late Waybrett James Avery

Estate of the Late John Russell Baxter

Estate of the Late John Bedwell

Estate of the Late Vallax Blackford

Estate of the Late Laurel Gwen Blackwell

Estate of the Late Miroslav Blaha

Estate of the Late Denise Irene Booth

Estate of the Late Katherine Booth

Estate of the Late Ivor Bowler

Estate of the Late Lorna Bradshaw

Estate of the Late Ann Bury

Estate of the Late Jean Butson

Estate of the Late Judith Mary Cahill
Estate of the Late Ann Margaret Campbell
Estate of the Late Joan Carver
Estate of the Late William Cassidy
Estate of the Late Eric Thomas Chater
Estate of the Late Joan Margaret Clerke
Estate of the Late Denise Cobcroft
Estate of the Late Margaret Cousin
Estate of the Late Anne Curtis
Estate of the Late Margaret Dott
Estate of the Late Dr John Harold Dugdale
Estate of the Late Shirley East
Estate of the Late Virginia Erwin
Estate of the Late Eleanor Ruth Farrands
Estate of the Late Dr Grantley William Fitzhardinge
Estate of the Late Gwenneth Ellen Francis
Estate of the Late Elizabeth Fraser
Estate of the Late Jean Fraser
Estate of the Late Helen Gadsden
Estate of the Late Edna Gillespie
Estate of the Late Elizabeth Gorman
Estate of the Late Sylvia Gower
Estate of the Late Edward Gray
Estate of the Late Cyril Ernest Gwatking
Estate of the Late Kathleen Anne Habla
Estate of the Late Veronica Hagarty
Estate of the Late Kenneth George Halls
Estate of the Late Ila Hanger
Estate of the Late Dr Robert Henderson
Estate of the Late Cornelis Hess
Estate of the Late Joyce Beatrice Hirst
Estate of the Late Ruth Hopgood
Estate of the Late Maurice George Isaacs
Estate of the Late Elva Joyce Jones
Estate of the Late David Kershaw

Estate of the Late Robert Geoffrey Knight
Estate of the Late Estelle Olive Lambton
Estate of the Late Don Ingemann Larsen
Estate of the Late Olwyn Ethel Little
Estate of the Late Alice Elizabeth Ruth Lowry
Estate of the Late Franciska Macchioro
Estate of the Late Francesca Salisbury McCarthy
Estate of the Late Mercia Mead
Estate of the Late Bruce Moffat
Estate of the Late Kevin Monaghan
Estate of the Late Dorothy Moore
Estate of the Late Norma Jean Mussett
Estate of the Late Helen Newton
Estate of the Late Valerie Oswin
Estate of the Late Stanley Ernest Perigo
Estate of the Late Arthur Percival
Estate of the Late Dorothea Pericles
Estate of the Late Anne Pickering
Estate of the Late Dulcie Poole
Estate of the Late Enid Reid
Estate of the Late Jack Reid
Estate of the Late Sydney Richardson
Estate of the Late Cynthia Richter
Estate of the Late Allan John Rogers
Estate of the Late Laura Russell
Estate of the Late Ronald Samuel
Estate of the Late Elizabeth Scully
Estate of the Late Chana Siano
Estate of the Late Barbara Shearer
Estate of the Late Maria Slusar
Estate of the Late Joan Stanford
Estate of the Late Kay Janet Fanny Stubbs
Estate of the Late Thelma Tagg
Estate of the Late Lillian Thomas
Estate of the Late Frederick F P Thornton

Estate of the Late George W Thornton
Estate of the Late Ruby Tout
Estate of the Late Jenny Suze Troost
Estate of the Late Irene Twist
Estate of the Late Eric Vagg
Estate of the Late John Henry Edward Voss
Estate of the Late Paulica Walczak
Estate of the Late Raymond Watts
Estate of the Late Patricia Mary White
Estate of the Late Ellwyn Whitford
Estate of the Late Jane Williams
Estate of the Late Roderick Edward Williardt
Estate of the Late Margaret Wills
Estate of the Late Dorothy Witherspoon
Estate of the Late Paul Wright

Trusts and Foundations

Aged Persons Welfare Foundation
Allen & Cecilia Tye Fund
Amy Irene Christina Ostberg Estate
Arthur Leonard Raper Charitable Trust
Australian Communities Foundation
Baker Memorial Trust
Bell Charitable Fund
Bill and Jean Henson Charitable Trust
Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation
Clifford Abbott Davidson Charitable Trust
Collier Charitable Fund
Commonwealth Bank Staff Community Fund
David Allen Trust
E C Blackwood Charitable Trust
Eddy Dunn Endowment
Edith Jean Elizabeth Beggs Charitable Trust
Eric Crawford Memorial Fund
Estate of the Late Angela Lita Gittins
Estate of the Late E W Vicars-Foote

Estate of the Late Frederick John Banbury
Estate of the Late Georgina E Bradshaw
Estate of the Late Helene Todd
Estate of the Late Jane Williamson
Estate of the Late John Frederick Wright
Estate of the Late Kostantin Doku
Estate of the Late Thomas James Malcolmson and Winifred Gleeson
Estate of the Late William H Fernie
Flora and Frank Leith Charitable Trust
Florance Hattersley Trust
Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies
Frank and Sybil Richardson Charitable Trust
Gandel Foundation
Give Where You Live
Gregory Patrick and Marie Dolores Farrell Foundation
Grosvenor Foundation
Hardie Family Bequest
Henry James Francis Estate
The Herbert John Hinchey Charitable Trust
Ian McLeod and Madge Duncan Perpetual Charitable Trust
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QCF - Amy Florence Theobald Memorial Fund
QCF - Floroyol Seeing Eye Dogs Foundation
RACV Community Foundation
Russell Vontom Charitable Trust
Shepherd Trust
Skipper-Jacobs Charitable Trust
STAF - Judith De Garrood Donation
State Trustees Australia Foundation
The Benjamin Slome Charitable Foundation
The Edith Kemp Memorial Trust Fund
The Elliott Family Trust
The Fairbridge Foundation
The Howard Glover Perpetual Charitable Trust
The Kemvan Trust
The Lin Huddleston Charitable Foundation
The Marian and E.H. Flack Trust
The Muffin Foundation
The Orloff Family Charitable Trust
The Profield Foundation
The QBE Foundation
The William Mansel Higgins and Dorothy Higgins Charitable Trust
William Andrew Bon Charitable Trust
Woolworths Limited

Individuals

Mr William Barnett
Mrs Jeannie Barton
Ms Madge Chishall
Mr D and Mrs A Craig
Mr D and Mrs I Dalrymple
The Late Mrs Merle Duncan
Mr Andrew Eger

Mr Alan Excell
The Late Mrs Kathleen Excell
Miss Julia Farrell
Mr and Mrs Flannery
Mrs Hilary Hall
Mrs Patricia Ho
Mr D and Mrs S Kennard
Mrs Patricia McAlary
Miss Anita McKenzie
Dr Bela Mezo
Miss Ann Miller
The Late Mr Andrew Ian Paul
Mr Sigal Pilli
The Late Mrs Lois Renshaw
Mrs Mary Roberts
Mr Max Schroder
Mrs Adrienne Shaw
Miss Jane Sheridan
Mrs June F Smith
Mr Keith and Mrs Aya Thornton
Miss R Welsh
Mrs Robin Yabsley

Registered clubs

Cabra-Vale Ex-Serviceman's Club
Club Rivers
Dee Why RSL Club Limited

Businesses

Archibald's Leak Detection Services Pty Ltd
BMW Sydney Pty Ltd
Bracken Ridge Assembly
BWS
Dick Smith Foods Foundation
J & J Holdings
Myer Community Fund

Petbarn Pty Ltd

T Rainsford Pty Ltd

Corporate partners

Myer Pty Ltd

Royal Canin Australia

Woolworths Supermarkets

Fundraising and Friends of Vision Australia Committees

Boort Friends of Vision Australia

Cohuna Friends of Vision Australia

Coleraine Friends of Vision Australia

Cooma Monaro Friends of Vision Australia

Cressy Friends of Vision Australia

Dubbo Black and White Committee of Vision Australia

Euroa Friends of Vision Australia

Gisborne Friends of Vision Australia

Glenthompson Friends of Vision Australia

Griffith Friends of Vision Australia

International Committee of Vision Australia

Kaniva Friends of Vision Australia

Kerang Friends of Vision Australia

Kiama and District Friends of Vision Australia

Kyneton Friends of Vision Australia

Leongatha Rose Show Committee

Maitland Black and White Committee of Vision Australia

Mentone/Mordialloc Friends of Vision Australia

Mudgee Black and White Committee of Vision Australia

Sea Lake Friends of Vision Australia

Skipton Friends of Vision Australia

Swan Hill Friends of Vision Australia

The Black and White Committee of Vision Australia

Wangaratta Friends of Vision Australia

Whoorel Friends of Vision Australia

Willaura Friends of Vision Australia

Yass Friends of Vision Australia

“Our little girl loves playing music and singing, using her hot pink cane to explore the world, and scribbling on her braille machine. I’m so thankful for the generosity of supporters, like you, that make all this joy and happiness possible.” Jeanette Fawcett, Mum to four-year-old Kaylah.

“When my home situation changed recently, I realised that I needed to learn how to manage all sorts of daily tasks. That’s when I joined one of Vision Australia’s Quality Living Groups. Your support gives me the chance to lead a confident, independent life. Thanks so much. I can’t imagine many gifts that are more special than that.” Nicole Damarra.

Our financial performance

Every dollar that we receive counts.

We're managing and investing your money wisely today, to support our community and to create an economically sustainable and secure organisation for the future.

Through decisive management, targeted fundraising efforts and responsible control of our investment portfolio, we achieved an operational surplus for the third consecutive year.

This surplus will be reinvested, back into our organisation, so that we can continue to support the people we do now, and reach out to other people in our community, who may benefit from working in partnership with us.

This year, we continued to address two key financial priorities: growing revenue opportunities and actively managing our expenses. In doing so, we have been able to direct the maximum amount of funds to provide services and supports to people, on their journey with blindness and low vision.

Importantly, we achieved an overall growth of 11.5 per cent in government grants, of which, significant growth came through the NSW Spectacles Program. In addition, an improvement in investment income was achieved, despite the downward trend in the interest rate and general economic conditions.

We also continued to manage our costs, without impacting the way we support people, through a range of cost-related and efficiency initiatives.

The people we support have also benefited from the generosity of individuals, corporate partners, businesses, organisations and government across Australia. We thank you for your financial support which is critical in helping us deliver high-quality services and supports to more people, in more locations.

Where our money comes from (pie-chart)

- Government grants around 39%.
- Fundraising and bequests around 45%.
- Investment income around 6%.
- Other income including sales of goods and services and rental around 10%.

Our strong operational and financial performance has been achieved with the strategic guidance and governance of our Board, and the committees that support the Board.

Many of the members of our Board and committees are blind or have low vision. Their first-hand experience and insight continues to guide how we support our community's needs.

Collectively, their extensive commercial experience is driving our business to reach the goals that we set in our five-year plan, and will set our success in a commercially-focused future. Importantly, a number of individuals are also world-leading human rights and advocacy experts. They continue to seek a more inclusive future for our community at the highest levels, both domestically and internationally, including within the United Nations.

With continued guidance from our Board and committees, a strong financial foundation, and a clear business direction in place, we look forward to building on the momentum we established in this very successful year.

This summary provides a snapshot of our financial results so that you can better understand how we use what we have, to support people who are blind or have low vision, through all life stages and circumstances.

Our full financial statements are available in standard print text, large print text, braille, audio and DAISY formats, and accessible digital formats. Contact us on 1300 84 74 66 to order a copy in your preferred format or visit our website www.visionaustralia.org

How to connect with us

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Bendigo 88.7FM

Geelong 99.5FM

Melbourne 1179AM

Mildura 107.5FM

Shepparton 100.1FM

Warragul 93.5FM

Warrnambool 94.5FM

South Australia

Adelaide 1197AM

Thank you

To everyone who supported us, to support our community.

Your commitment and loyalty helped many people to achieve great successes in their lives.

We look forward to working with you again and growing a lifelong positive partnership.

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Unless otherwise stated, the information in this report has been compiled as at 30 June 2015. While every effort has been made to ensure that the report is accurate, Vision Australia Limited makes no warranty about its accuracy or completeness. To the extent permitted by law Vision Australia Limited, its directors, officers, employees and agents exclude all liability (whether in negligence or otherwise) for:

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