

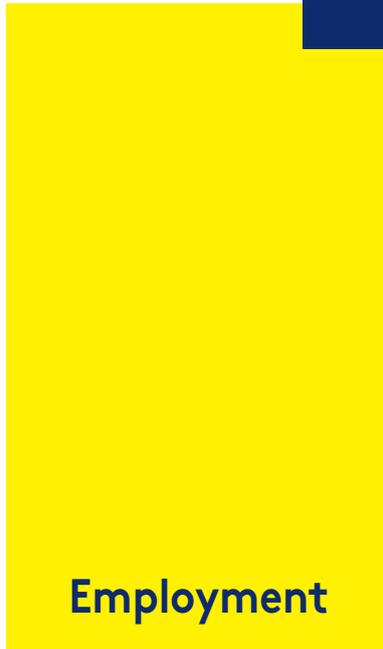
# Four pillars of success



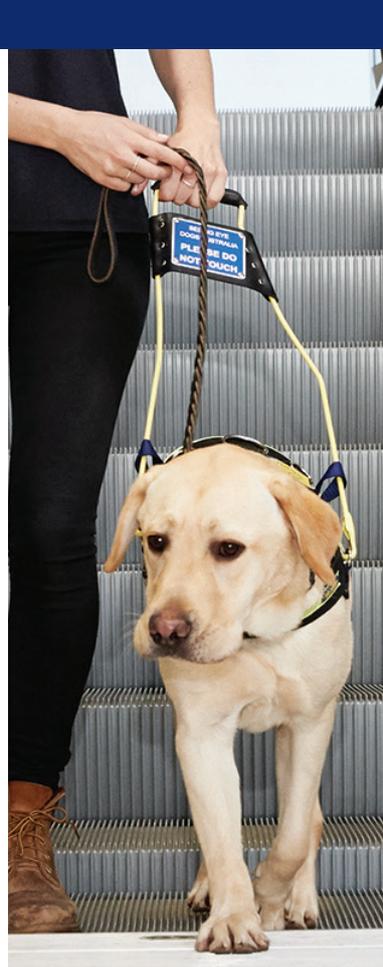
Annual Report 2018–19



Education



Employment



Independence



Social inclusion





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Design, layout and editing by Andrew Pegler Media

Reading braille image sourced from [brailleworks.com](http://brailleworks.com)

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# Message from the Chair and CEO

The past year has been a challenging one for Vision Australia, as the continued roll-out of individualised funding schemes sheds light on the future for our clients and the organisation.

As we have reported in previous years, we have been investing strategically in people, brand and technology in anticipation of a broader, more sophisticated market for the provision of services to Australians who are blind or have low vision.

It has become increasingly obvious that a different reality is emerging. Pressure within the NDIS, in particular, has meant that our clients often struggle to secure the packages they need with the services they want, funded in a way that covers our costs. We hope and expect that, over time, client needs and NDIS and MyAgedCare funding will converge, but, in the meantime, we must reluctantly acknowledge that we can sustainably support only a simpler model of the infrastructure we have built over the past five years. The deficit we are reporting in this Annual Report is part of this transition and is not something we take lightly.

While we continue the adjustment to this sustainable model, we recognise that our focus on Education, Employment, Independence and Social Inclusion remains the right framework to allow us to deliver on our mission.

We are innovating where we can make a real difference, and the ReadySET tool is helping our clients win better NDIS packages more smoothly. The importance of technology in the hands of our clients increases constantly, and the acquisition of Quantum has greatly increased the range and skills across our retail offering.



**Above : Ron Hooton, CEO (left) with Andrew Moffat, Chair (right).**

After a year of such challenges, it is even more important to acknowledge and thank our staff and volunteers including the Board. In particular, we farewell Heith Mackay-Cruise after six years of outstanding service as a Director, noting that Heith will continue his role as Chair of the Vision Australia Trust over the next year.

We acknowledge the efforts of all members of the Client Reference Group, whose insights and passion greatly assist the quality of our decision making.

Of course, without the support of our donors, we would not be here. It is thanks to their ongoing generosity that we are able to provide services, deliver programs and support people who are blind or have low vision.

We thank all of you, our members, as we navigate through this period of transition, and look forward to working with you to support those who need us.



**Andrew Moffat**  
Chair  
Vision Australia



**Ron Hooton**  
CEO  
Vision Australia

## Guided by clients

**Our mission is to support people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.**

Clients are at the centre of everything we do. They are the reason we exist. That's why we're committed to building a lifelong positive partnership with people who are blind or have low vision.

We develop a deep understanding of each client and their family, learning what they hope to achieve in life – such as attaining an education, gaining meaningful employment, participating in activities they enjoy, or living confidently and independently.

We also engage with our community as a whole. We've engaged through research into how we can better link education with job readiness. We have listened to the views of puppy carers about our dog training program. We have also developed new tools to measure what we do and offer clients structured ways to provide feedback early on, during and after they use our services and supports.

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

# 2018–19 highlights

Participants in our new nine-month youth leadership program – Learn, Engage, Act, Perform (LEAP) – joined 200 young leaders from across Australia at a four-day leadership camp. It was a great opportunity for them to connect with each other and share common experiences.



Children who are blind or have low vision, their families and the wider community look for hundreds of thousands of Easter eggs at the annual Vision Australia Bendigo Easter Egg Hunt.

Moving away from CDs at the end of 2018, our Library introduced clients to the new and exclusive Envoy Connect audio player. The solar powered device features a huge memory yet fits easily in the palm of your hand and, best of all, it's extremely affordable.



Vision Australia Chief Executive Officer Ron Hooton, with Board member Bill Jolley and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg inspecting the new \$50 note at Vision Australia's Kooyong Centre. The \$50 note became the third Australian banknote to include tactile features.



Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs hold their inaugural Puppyhood to Partnership event, celebrating the matching of Seeing Eye Dogs with their handlers. From left to right, handlers Claire, Mark, Debra and Jennifer and their Seeing Eye Dogs Willow, Miller, Royce and Jemma.



Adventurer, Nick Gleeson, receiving a Vision Australia Award. The awards honour those who help to make a substantial difference through their commitment to Vision Australia's mission to ensure people who are blind or have low vision can live the life they choose. Other Vision Australia Award winners were long-standing Queensland volunteers, Debbie and Ashley Lenehan, the Black and White Committee, and Carols by Candlelight performers, singer Sylvie Paladino, and the National Boys Choir.

Then Governor General Peter Cosgrove and Chair of the Board, Andrew Moffat with Jennifer Smith, Refurbishment Project Manager at the opening of the refurbished Kooyong site.



Thousands of people again flocked to the Sidney Myer Music Bowl for the 81st Vision Australia Carols by Candlelight. This Christmas Eve tradition raises funds to support services for children who are blind or have low vision and their families.



# 2018–19 in numbers

**25,435**

Vision Australia clients received

**392,816**

hours of service

**2,857**

Volunteers

**1.13m** Volunteer hours

**15.4%**

of employees are blind or have low vision

**96%**

Client satisfaction

**12,139**

Clients accessed library services

**70,000**

Print pages converted into accessible formats:

- 107,000 to braille
- 10,000 to e-text
- 5,000 to large print
- 2,050 to tactual graphics

**55,674**

Pairs of glasses and vision aids funded by NSW Spectacles Program

**730,719**

Books, magazines, newspapers and podcasts circulated

**3,300**

audio hours produced from 78,300 pages of printed materials

**2,224**

Children received

**49,716**

hours of service

**+9.1**

Employee net promoter score

**153** Live audio described performances

# Education

## **A strong education is essential for a more successful journey through life**

Vision Australia's four priority areas are closely aligned across the organisation, but nowhere more than in our services for children, young adults and their families. We've worked hard to deepen our understanding of our younger clients and their families.

This year, we've been setting the foundations for an enhanced service for children, youth and families built around the principles of the Expanded Core Curriculum and employability. Based on extensive consultation and expert contemporary thinking, our future services will focus on building the life skills of children and young adults that enable meaningful community participation and, for many, employment.

At the heart of our services, will be a forward-looking digital platform connecting families, therapists, educators, other stakeholders and, most importantly, young people themselves. It will assist people to anticipate the paths, opportunities and challenges ahead, and help them gain the vital skills we know will lead to Education, Employment, Independence, and Social Inclusion in the 21st Century.

## **School holiday fun**

There's always something to look forward to during school holidays at Vision Australia.

While it may seem like all fun and games, our teams always ensure plenty of educational activities are woven through events to ensure young clients are developing skills and learning.

In Newcastle, children aged between five and 18 and living with varying levels of blindness or low vision, jumped behind the wheel of a go-kart, thanks to a school holiday program offered by our Central Coast and Hunter region.

Following the go-karting, participants then took part in the 'Healthy Change Challenge', a Newcastle-based initiative aimed at supporting people with a disability to be better educated about health and wellbeing.



**Left : Young client, Noah, trying his hand at boxing as part of the 'Healthy Change Challenge' at a Central Coast and Hunter region school holiday program.**

Children between the ages of five and 10 in the Sydney South and South West Region had the opportunity to ride a horse with the help of a guide, and learn more about the equine industry.

Meanwhile, in Parramatta, enthusiastic eight to 10-year-olds joined us in the playroom as intern coding programmers. The group had loads of fun programming a robot named Dash, and attempting to navigate it through the maze and hit the target.

## Visiting schools

In Queensland, Vision Australia was awarded a renewed three-year contract to work with school children. Staff visited 570 students in 330 schools across the state this year; providing occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy, orientation and mobility services and access technology support.

## Further Education Bursary Program

In 2019, 20 tertiary students received bursaries for technology – monitors, Apple devices, smartphones, braille notetakers, access technology software, music production software – to assist their study. Bursary recipients were enrolled across courses ranging from Law, IT, Sports Science, Fitness and Health Science to Music, Education, Design and Medicine.

## Adult learning at tech days

Vision Australia is making it easier for our adult clients to learn about the latest technology that enables them to easily access information and entertainment, connect with loved ones and live more independently at home and out-and-about in the community.

David Woodbridge, Access Technology Adviser, hosted the first of the Tech Friday sessions in our Parramatta office. Following their popularity, more of our Access Technology Specialists followed suit with Tech Tuesdays commencing at our Sunshine, Victoria and Coorparoo, Queensland offices, and occasional events held in some of our other regions.

The information sessions showcase a different product each time, including mainstream technology with inbuilt accessibility features from the likes of Apple, Samsung and Google.

## How many fingers can I see?

### Amazing Artist Mia Armsworth

NSW Vision Australia client, Mia Armsworth, had her art featured in the 2019 ARTEXPRESS exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW. The prestigious annual exhibition showcases the best works of art from NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC) Visual Arts students.

Mia's work 'How many fingers can I see?' is a photo piece that uses deconstruction and collage to encourage people to reconsider their ideas about living with blindness or low vision.

Mia hopes it will "encourage people to step back and think a bit more about how they approach and behave around people who have a vision impairment".

Mia has rare North Carolina Macular Dystrophy which means she has

severely reduced central vision, no depth perception and struggles to focus on objects at a distance.

Diagnosed with the condition at age four, rather than allowing it to dampen her enthusiasm for art, she believes it's helped her gain a better understanding of her passion.

She's come to realise that, "everybody sees things differently and art allows us to depict that, and let other people interpret it themselves".

Mia moved to Melbourne earlier this year to study a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Arts) at RMIT, Melbourne.

"I think the idea of somebody with a vision impairment studying fine arts might seem strange to people at first, but I'm really excited about it", she said.

**Below : Mia standing next to her work at the Art Gallery of NSW.**



# Employment

We've been running innovative programs to both introduce our clients to the world of work and help develop the skills and qualities they need to find employment.

By continuing to foster a committed workforce, valuing volunteers, and offering clients mentoring, leadership programs, new resources, job seeking assistance, or even fashion advice; we're aiming to see more people achieve their employment goals. And, we've found better ways to measure how satisfied clients are with our services.

## Career sampler day

On 9 February 2019, Sydney's North and North West and Inner West and West regions held a 'Career Sampler' event.

In attendance were 70 people — mostly aged eight to 18; with parents, grandparents and a large contingent of vision support teachers.

A panel of experts, leaders in the blindness and low-vision community and a team of mentors, provided advice from a wealth of experience. Participants connected with adults who have established careers to hear insights about pathways to success.

## LEAP – Learn, Engage, Act and Perform

LEAP is our new nine-month youth leadership program. Aimed at 14–17 year olds, it's designed to help

build 'soft' employment skills like self-confidence, communication and leadership.

As part of LEAP, participants work with their Vision Australia primary service provider to identify employability skills such as an elevator pitch, vocal coaching and executing a fundraising plan. Professional mentoring and monthly webinars are also part of the program.

Participants also joined around 200 young leaders from across Australia at a four-day leadership camp in the mid-year school holidays. It was a great opportunity for them to connect with each other and share common experiences, such as overcoming barriers and working to reach their potential.

## Back to work

After 25 years out of the workforce raising her family, Jan came to our Kensington employment service for support.

We provided help in writing resumes and cover letters, conducted mock interviews, and delivered adaptive technology training and assistance with applying for roles.

Jan secured a role with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the benefits have been life changing. She's achieved financial independence, travels to and from work, and loves being an active member of the workforce.

## Graduate program going strong

We delivered another successful graduate program in 2018, with job placements at Channel 31, Bupa and WISE Employment. Two graduates secured ongoing roles; one at Vision Australia, the other with Bupa.

In 2019, we have another three graduates working in our fundraising, client services and communications areas.

## Cornerstone and VAMP

We launched Cornerstone, an online hub for young people.

Cornerstone offers skill development resources to help users achieve their employment goals.

We also introduced Vision Australia's Mentoring Program (VAMP), connecting young job seekers with professional mentors, who help them develop confidence and skills.

## Building Stronger Futures

Building Stronger Futures is a new employment program targeting young people. Ninety-nine people aged 15–25 from across the eastern seaboard have already participated, as well as some in Bendigo.

They attended intensive pre-employment workshops, received problem-solving skills and concentrated job search support. More than 50 per cent went on to engage in a new activity – employment, work experience or further study.

## Three day 'boot camp'

In May 2019, we ran a pre-employment 'boot camp' at our Barrett Street, Kensington VIC office focused primarily on encouraging confidence and motivation in older clients (aged 40+).

The interactive program focuses on developing skills needed for the workplace, using adaptive technology, and maintaining motivation.

## Dress for success

Melbourne's South East region employment services now offer clients styling and make-up support, including one outfit per year, to help them look and feel confident when attending interviews, starting a new role or actively looking for work.



Above : Jan loves her new job with the NDIA.

## A kickstart to Nic's career

### Vision Australia's graduate program gets Nic a job he loves

Nic Hoskins, age 24, could not be happier working for Bupa Health Insurance in Brisbane, Queensland.

When someone new starts in a customer facing role, Nic trains them on the company's products, the systems they'll use and the support they can expect.

A Vision Australia program, supported by the Bill and Jean Henson Charitable Trust, helped Nic get a job he loves.

When he left Griffith University with a Bachelor of Psychological Science, Nic like many graduates, had trouble finding work. Months later, a Queensland Health — Vision Australia initiative assisted him with an office traineeship. This position helped Nic get his confidence back and built his professional network, but he wanted more. Four months in, Nic learned he was one of three graduates chosen for Vision Australia's year-long Career Start program.

Nic started at Vision Australia in 2018. He helped the team prepare for the NDIS; talking to new clients about their needs and expectations. He also assisted clients accessing Vision Australia services through My Aged Care funding, to identify services that best suited their goals. Nic represented Vision Australia at several community events, including the Innovations and Aged Care Summit organised by Redland City Council.

A real highlight was flying down to Melbourne to participate in creating Vision Australia's RUOK365 strategy.

The two-day workshop looked at approaches to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of staff, clients and volunteers.

Then it was off to Bupa for the final three months where Nic's main task was to help Bupa provide extra support to call centre staff during peak times. Nic's hard work paid off. The internship is over but he's still at Bupa.

During the Career Start program, Nic was mentored by Vision Australia Paediatric Counsellor, Rebecca Kent. They talked about his career trajectory and Rebecca really helped Nic develop his professional skillset and mindset.

Nic is truly grateful for her support and that of his workmates, Linda, Julie Ann, Ann and Hayley.

He says, "If you're at uni, definitely look into Vision Australia's Career Start program. And if you get in, make the most of it. Take every opportunity."

**Below : Nic Hoskins in his role at Bupa Health Insurance.**



# Independence

We've been working hard on ways to help clients gain and build on their independence. From strengthening connections with other organisations, to creative uses of technology — right through to daily living skills like navigating transport, exercising and cooking.

From October 2018 to May 2019, nearly 200 people re-engaged with us to discover new technologies, aids and supports to improve independence and help them live the life they choose.

## Providing access to information

Ensuring people who are blind or have low vision have access to information is key to their independence.

This year Vision Australia's audio and transcription teams dispatched 3,200 master and copy requests to 355 clients, organisations and educational institutions.

- Our transcription team continues to be a leader in braille music. Thanks to the research and development of new software and production methods, they've converted more than 3,000 print pages into braille music this year.

- The team are also trialling and developing new methods for transcribing complex science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) material for university students. This year they converted more than 15,500 print pages of student material into braille, tactual and electronic text, for 27 universities around Australia.
- More than 100 Vision Australia clients used the Federal Government-funded, free personal support service. More than 15,000 print pages were converted into audio, braille, large print, or electronic text, including recipes, novels, labels, maps, children's books, music and instruction manuals.
- In partnership with Australia Post, we provided braille letters from Santa to young clients.



**Right : Reading braille – Vision Australia's transcription team make thousands of print pages available to blind or low-vision people.**

## Adam cooks up a storm

Since becoming totally blind 15 years ago, Adam Smith from the Murrumbidgee Hume region had not been able to cook or prepare a meal.

He recently participated in weekly cooking sessions, where he enjoyed his increasing independence. Before long, Adam met his goal of cooking a meal for himself and his family.

**Right : Adam cooks a meal for his family at home on the barbeque.**

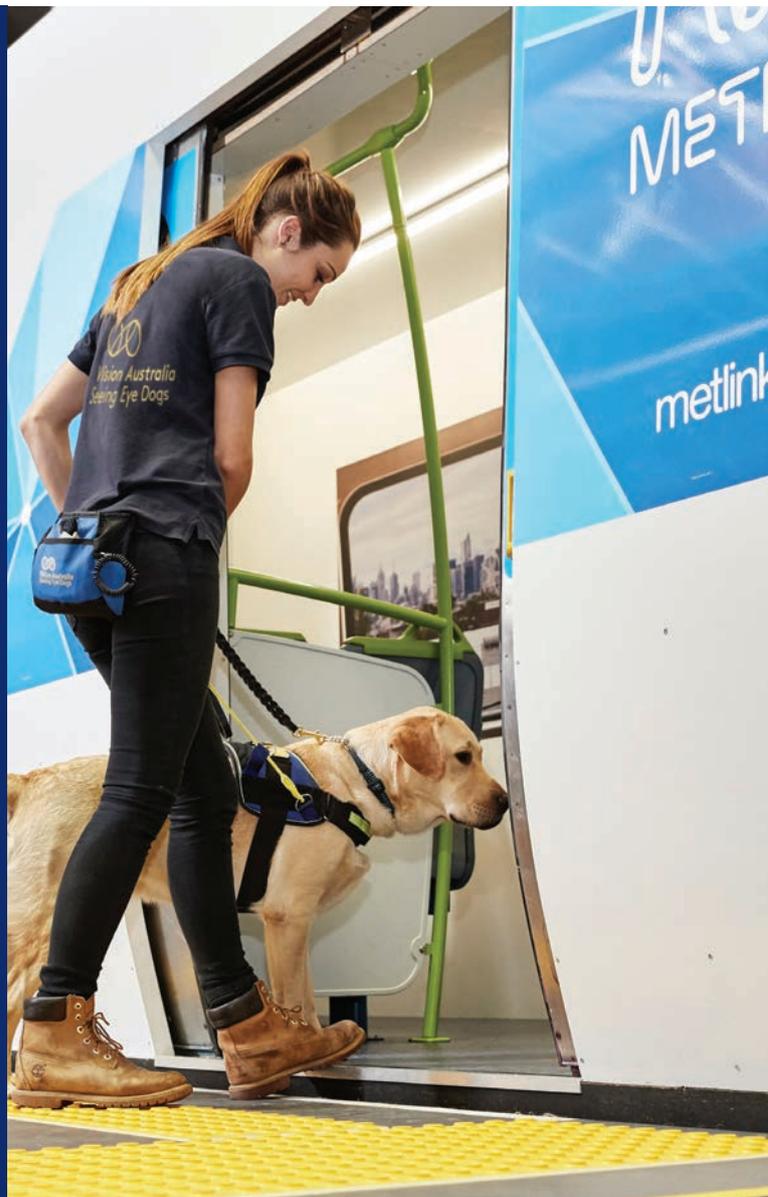


## Mobility Training Centre

Our world-class Leigh Garwood Mobility Training Centre is used throughout the entire learning life of our dogs, and by Vision Australia clients:

- It is used to teach young pups the foundations of becoming a Seeing Eye Dog, beginning with guiding and obedience training.
- We use it to teach more challenging concepts to both our dogs and clients. This includes navigating a railway platform and getting on and off a train, stairs and escalators, as well as off-leash recall.
- We host information sessions to recruit new puppy carers and train our volunteer puppy carers.
- It is also used as a controlled, safe environment for children and adults who are blind or have low vision to develop and practise their mobility skills.

**Right: A Seeing Eye Dog recruit with trainer, Carly, learns the art of getting on a train at the Leigh Garwood Mobility Centre.**





**Right : Vision Australia client, Norma, enjoys the help provided by staff at Vision Store.**

## Vision Store

Vision Australia is committed to providing blind and low vision community with a wide range of daily living aids and assistive technology to enable them to live the life they choose.

Technology is one of the most important ways we can level the playing field for clients, particularly in our priority areas of independence, employment, education and social inclusion.

And we don't just provide equipment; we combine it with expertise.

Our specialist team of retail staff, occupational therapists, orthoptists and other allied health practitioners, bring assistive equipment expertise and guidance to clients' homes, workplaces and communities. Our staff work with clients to find the best solution that supports them to make the best use of their remaining vision, or compensate for their blindness.

Having the support of knowledgeable staff is important for clients navigating the sheer volume of items available to them.

In fact, Vision Store is now a leading national supplier of around 2,000 blind and low vision products; from daily living aids — such as magnifiers, canes and kitchen aids — to mainstream technology like Apple, Google, Microsoft and Amazon.

Our most popular items include:

- Orcam and IrisVision wearable solutions
- Vision Australia large-print calendars
- Olitech large-button 3G phone
- Talking keyring clock
- Explore 8 handheld digital magnifier.

Vision Australia is an approved Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) provider for the Rehabilitation Appliances program, low vision clinics, allied health services and library services. This year we were proud to arrange support and Vision Store products to make the lives of more than 5,000 veterans easier.

Sale profits return to the Vision Australia community; supporting people who are blind or have low vision to regain and retain their independence.

### Key statistics

- **40,000 orders distributed nationally from our distribution centre and branch locations – up to 1,000 a week.**

## Be Connected

Vision Store is a partner of the Be Connected Program, an Australian government initiative committed to empowering everyone to thrive in our digital world. It aims to increase confidence, skills and online safety for older Australians.

From 15–21 October 2018, during the inaugural Get Online Week, we held more than 25 events for seniors who are blind or have low vision to #Try1Thing relating to the internet or technology, under the guidance of Vision Australia staff.

## A calendar date to remember

James Christie is one of the winners of the artwork calendar competition, with his painting set to appear in the 2020 Vision Australia calendar.

Titled 'Water View Wharf Workshop,' James took his inspiration for the painting from one of his father's photos taken from the harbour near Balmain.

James' creative journey started in early high school and progressed from there to art classes. His art is inspired by water, whether it be the ocean or Sydney Harbour, and natural landscapes.

For this painting, James predominantly worked with acrylic paint to allow for easier mixing. He used a paint pen, working with a magnifier and lots of light for the fine lines and a mop brush for the water and sky and decoupage for parts of the building.

Our annual artwork calendar competition is a wonderful opportunity to showcase amazing work and highlight inspiring art.

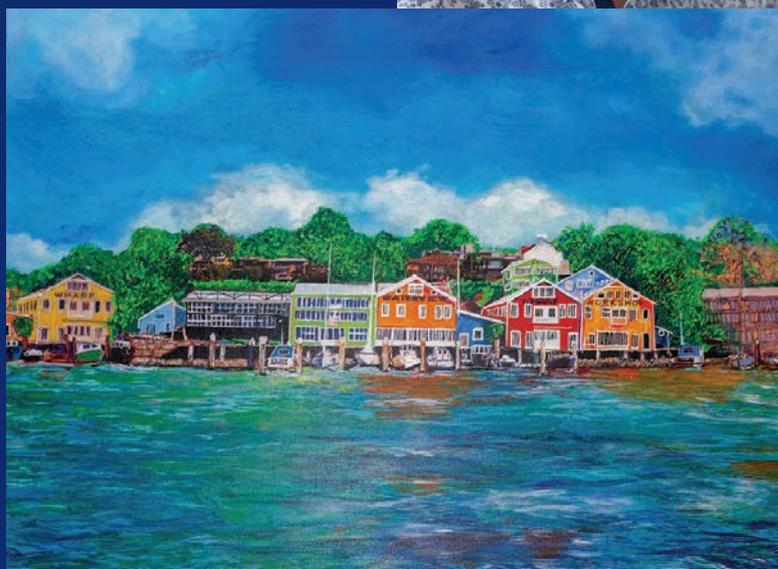
To enter the competition, clients must submit a painting or drawing they

produced in the last 12 months, and that's appropriate to feature in a decorative calendar.

The calendars are available for purchase through Vision Store online and at Vision Australia branches.

**Right : James Christie**

**Below : His winning artwork, 'Water View Wharf Workshop'.**



# Social inclusion

Vision Australia aims to provide people who are blind or have low vision with the services and support they need so they can participate fully in every aspect of community life they wish.

To help realise this goal, we work collaboratively with government, businesses and the community to

eliminate barriers clients might encounter when accessing the community or exercising their rights as Australian citizens.

Our clients are also empowered to develop advocacy skills to pursue their own rights.

## Inclusive democracy

Our Digital Access team has been working hard to make it easier for clients to vote and use government services.

Work done via our partnership with South Australia's Office for Digital Government –which supports social inclusion by allowing people to participate directly with government services, contributing and having a say–has been recognised nationally and internationally as a driver towards greater social inclusion and government participation for people with differing abilities.

The Australian Government asked us to ensure digital assets supporting the Federal election (website and native apps) were accessible, while the NSW Electoral Commission asked us to help deliver an inclusive digital voting platform (iVote).

During the media and communications campaign for the Federal Election in May 2019, Vision Australia created more than 450 accessible format products and distributed them across Australia.

We also successfully advocated for change to electoral legislation in Victoria, allowing Victorians to access electronic voting. During the media and communications campaign for the Victorian election in November 2018, we provided voting information and ballot papers in accessible format.

Through our relationships with government and commercial organisations, Digital Access has continued advocating for inclusive design approaches to all digital services; strategies that put accessibility first, supporting education, employment, independence and social inclusion.

## Audio descriptions

We are seeing an influx of first-time users of audio description at performances across Queensland, NSW, the ACT and Victoria. Word of mouth is an important driver of audio description usage.

Our audio description of ABC's 'Get Krackin' was an Australian first, providing an alternate accessible version via Vision Australia Radio. It was also the first time anywhere in the world where audio description was integrated into the comedic narrative.



*I just wanted to pass on my thanks to Vision Australia for the audio described performance of Harry Potter and the Cursed Child ...*

*It's an amazing production and would have been impossible to follow without this service. I had a great time, as did the other people I was with.*

**Lauren Henley**  
Former National Policy Officer  
Blind Citizens Australia

We've introduced new audio description equipment in Albury and are working on improving the client experience.

We now have 66 audio describers; 12 newly trained.

This year we audio described 153 performances from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Wollongong and Albury.



*I think you hit just the right balance between maintaining the visuals and putting on a comic slant ... having the visual jokes described in that same farcical way makes the whole show so much funnier. It reminded me of when AusLan interpreters translate a concert and sign in the style of the music.*

*The comic slant tied the audio description in as part of the performance ...*

**Jennelle Schroder**  
Client and staff member,  
on the audio description of  
'Get Krackin'



# Achieving success

## Measuring our services

We've introduced the Regional Client Feedback Tool (RCFT) to measure service quality.

We use RCFT to survey our clients very early in their service journey to see how they're feeling about progress against their service plan goals. This ensures any issues are addressed quickly.

The RCFT operates in all regions and is fully automated and integrated into our client management system. Roll-out for both clients and our workforce has been seamless and successful.

The client response rate is a strong 27 per cent — well above our targeted 20 per cent — and shows satisfaction levels of 96 per cent.

## Plan success with Ready SET

Ready SET is a purpose-built, interactive tool used by a staff member to support clients acquire or reacquire individualised funding.

The tool enables a staff member to guide a client through understanding their funding options, identifying their goals in different life domains, and what needs they may have based on their goals.

Clients are then provided with an educated estimate of the types of services and amount of hours they

may need to meet their desired goals. They can then take this to their planning meetings with the National Disability Insurance Agency or My Aged Care, improving their chances of getting the funding for the things they need.

We are excited about further developing this tool throughout 2020.

## Helping shape the NDIS

We took part in sector advocacy around communicating with NDIS participants. This led to agreements on more accessible format options and faster access to them.

This year almost 200 NDIS plans were converted into alternate formats.

We played a key role in discussions with the NDIS and McKinsey and Co., regarding the NDIS Price Guide, ensuring services for our clients are appropriately funded.

In addition, we've acquired funding for 21 clients and their Seeing Eye Dogs through the NDIS, adapting to this new scheme at a much faster pace than originally forecast.

## Meeting demand in Perth

Our Perth centre relocated to a new fit-for-purpose office in West Leederville, increasing the ability to offer our full range of services in Western Australia.

Vision Australia's presence in Perth fills a growing need for services in the state, and ensures people who are blind or have low vision have access to timely, high-quality services delivered by experts.

## Engaging health care professionals

We raised our profile and engaged with new and existing local health care and allied health professionals through continuing professional development (CPD) accredited educational sessions.

This year, we have been very fortunate to have the support of Associate Professor Julian Rait OAM, who is not only a prominent ophthalmologist and received the Order of Australia for his work in eye care but is also the President of the Victorian AMA.

Julian featured in a video testimonial that urges healthcare professionals to refer to Vision Australia. This video has been very well received and used in several online campaigns directed at referrers including optometrists, GPs and occupational therapists.

Our clinical standing and reputation in the low vision field has been elevated by attending eye health conferences and presenting case studies in both print and face-to-face formats. We've also built strong relationships with Specsavers and Novartis Australia.



Above : Associate Professor Julian Rait OAM.

# Our people

## Our volunteers

In May 2019 we held 28 recognition events celebrating the achievements and support of Vision Australia's volunteers.

In the past year, volunteers contributed more than one million hours to Vision Australia in areas such as client services, administration, fundraising, radio and puppy caring.

During that time we have introduced several new volunteer roles, including the Regional Client Feedback Tool client liaison volunteers, and Technical Support volunteers who assisted with the roll-out of the new library technology. These dedicated volunteers met clients in their home or over the phone to provide training on using the new devices replacing Daisy players.

We are incredibly grateful to all our volunteers for their unwavering support and commitment to the Vision Australia mission.

## Veterinary Symposium

Under the careful curation of our own Dr Nicola Cotton, we held the inaugural Seeing Eye Dogs Veterinary Symposium on-site at Kensington. It featured 13 guest speakers covering a wide range of veterinary topics.

## RUOK365 strategy

Our RUOK365 mental health and wellbeing initiative officially launched in September 2018.

RUOK365 is about tackling mental health head-on, embedding wellness into our culture and ensuring that our staff's mental health and wellbeing is at the core of all interactions.

We've trained 60 managers/supervisors as accredited Mental Health First Aid Officers to support our workforce members and clients. We also have ready access to mental health and wellbeing resources on our intranet, The Hub.

**Right : Seeing Eye Dogs, like these two inquisitive black Labrador puppies, were one of many topics discussed at the Veterinary Symposium.**



## A lifetime of service

### Meet Dorothy Hamilton

Vision Australia staff member and volunteer, Dorothy Hamilton, was recognised in the 2019 Australia Day Honours list, receiving an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for her work within the blind and low-vision community.

Blind since birth, Dorothy developed a love of and a talent for music.

In fact, she was the first woman in the Southern Hemisphere who is blind to obtain a music degree. She then went on to teach the recorder, piano and choir.

Dorothy is also a prominent figure in the braille music code. In 1985 she established the braille music camps and represented Australia a number of times at international camps.

Among her many impressive accomplishments, Dorothy also raised four children.

Considered by many as a trailblazer and an innovator, Dorothy worked incredibly hard for all she achieved, but did so with good grace. Many of her younger blind students found inspiration in what she achieved professionally and personally, and through this saw a future for themselves as well.

Dorothy has been working at Vision Australia as a braille transcriber for more than 35 years and remains to this day, a very valuable and admired staff member and volunteer.

**Below : Dorothy at her desk with volunteer John Tribe. They have worked together for 23 years.**



# Your support empowered more people

To our supporters, thank you for being so generous in helping people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose. We couldn't support as many people as we do without your most generous contributions and so many people have helped in so many ways.

For six years now, the Petbarn Foundation has held an annual fundraiser to support Seeing Eye Dogs. With the assistance of Royal Canin, the 2019 Paws for the Cause campaign raised an incredible \$553,221 in just four weeks. This was due to the dedication, passion and hard work of staff across the country and the generosity and loyalty of Petbarn customers.

Thank you, Petbarn and Royal Canin, for helping us raise and train more than 70 Seeing Eye Dogs through this partnership.

The J.O. & J.R. Wicking Trust has continued to support the digital transformation program this year. This exciting program continues to refine and develop client focused products and services. It helps our clients, referrers and the community to better engage with Vision Australia and be in control of their user experience.

Along with The Wicking Trust, other trusts and foundations have supported our clients, offering a wide range of services and programs. These include:

- orientation and mobility training
- learning vital early braille and literacy skills through the Feelix library
- new Envoy Connect players so older library members have easy access to our library catalogue and can continue enjoying the pleasure of reading books.

Thanks also to our amazingly vibrant group of fundraising committees around the country like Friends of Vision Australia, who hold community events to raise funds and contributed close to \$500,000 to support services.

A special thanks to the Black and White Committee of Vision Australia, Double Bay NSW, who contributed \$260,000 and the Black and White Committee of Vision Australia, Maitland NSW, who contributed \$100,000 this year.

In Bendigo, Vision Australia again conducted its Annual Easter Egg Hunt fundraiser. The event linked us to some fantastic sponsor/ partners in V-Line, Bendigo Mazda, BUFS pharmacies, Tumble Tots Gym, the City of Greater Bendigo and the SES. It also raised just over \$26,000. Eggsellent.

Major donors also contributed \$675,000 to Seeing Eye Dogs across four key projects:

- providing upgraded transportation for pups in training
- new state-of-the-art veterinary equipment
- external vet care for our dogs across the country
- the development and production of 600 new harnesses.

The project has had a powerful impact, taking our Seeing Eye Dog division a step closer to being the best of the best.

**Thank you to all our generous supporters.**

**Below : A Seeing Eye Dog puppy in the arms of its trainer, wearing a Vision Australia 'Sponsor a Puppy' coat.**



## A heartfelt thanks to you, our most generous donors

### Gifts in Wills

Donations from the Estates of the late:

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Mrs R Yabsley

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Petbarn Foundation  
Royal Canin

### **Major Partners**

Priceline Pharmacy  
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3AW  
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## **Committees/ Auxiliaries**

Black and White  
Committee of Vision  
Australia, Double Bay  
(NSW)

Black and White  
Committee of Vision  
Australia, Dubbo (NSW)

Black and White  
Committee of Vision  
Australia, Maitland (NSW)

Black and White  
Committee of Vision  
Australia, Mudgee (NSW)  
Corryong Auxiliary (VIC)

Friends of Vision Australia,  
Cohuna (VIC)

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Coorparoo (QLD)

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Euroa (VIC)

Friends of Vision Australia,  
Gisborne (VIC)

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Glenthompson (VIC)

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Griffith (NSW)

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Warracknabeal (VIC)

Friends of Vision Australia,  
Willaura (VIC)

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Yarrowonga (VIC)

Friends of Vision Australia,  
Yass (NSW)

International Committee  
of Vision Australia (NSW)

Swan Hill Blind Auxiliary  
(VIC)

**Below : Vision Australia CEO, Ron Hooton pictured with Black and White Committee of Vision Australia Double Bay President, Susan Diver OAM, as she accepts a Vision Australia Award in recognition of their support of the blindness and low vision community since 1936.**

**Last year they raised \$260,000 bringing their total support to more than \$4 million.**





## Connect with us

- Commit to a regular gift
- Enter into a corporate partnership
- Volunteer with us
- Leave a gift in your Will
- Donate now

## Vision Australia 1300 84 74 66

[www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org)

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## Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs

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