

Focus



Vision
Australia

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

150+
years of vision

Issue 2, 2019



Thank you!

Your support is
making a difference to
kids like Kaylah.

In this issue:

- Hear from Sarah, whose honest account of vision loss will leave you inspired.
- Get 'rolling on the green' with Judith, a lady who won't let macular degeneration lower her score.
- Celebrate Maureen, as we find out how 53 years at Vision Australia can change a life.





Ron Hooton,
CEO Vision Australia

Thank you! Reading through this edition of our newsletter, I'm reminded of something very true to our work - low vision does not discriminate. I'm also reminded of how your kindness is making a profound difference to people of all ages, and stages, who are blind or have low vision - thank you!

I think that it's working with this diversity that makes the team at Vision Australia so special. Thanks to your support, our expert staff, educators and therapists can work with anyone who is experiencing low vision, blindness or sudden changes in vision.

To me, that makes us unique - and it's truly inspiring. In particular, I'm touched by Sarah's honesty about the experience of losing her vision right at the moment she became a new mum. I'm proud to know we have helped her and her family on their journey to a life without limitations.

I hope you will enjoy seeing the changes your donations have made to Kaylah and Maureen's lives, too. Please remember that your support has directly helped them, and countless other people who are blind or have low vision.

Kaylah's got a special message for you!

Dear wonderful adults,

I want to say a big 'thank you' for my therapist from Vision Australia - I am learning so many things.

I've had a really big year! Zippers, buttons and getting dressed used to be really tricky, but the people at Vision Australia have been helping me to learn to choose clothes and do up my school uniform, so I can get ready myself now. That makes my mum really happy in the morning!

I love to read with dad, so I've also learned how to use an iPad with ZoomText. I'm also learning braille. The only thing I really want for my birthday this year is more books!

We work really hard and sometimes I do get pretty tired. When I made my goals, I really wanted to do more trampolining. I hope we get to keep working on that!

I love my mum and dad. Thank you for supporting Vision Australia from them, too.

Love from,

Kaylah xx



You'll be bowled over by Judith!

Keeping Judith off the bowling green would be an impossible task. Despite her age-related macular degeneration, Judith is a formidable opponent on the lawns!

When Judith first got in touch with Vision Australia about her condition, she was at real risk of isolation. Thankfully, Judith was prepared to learn new ways to do all the old things she loves - and it's been an absolute success. But, the changes were not without their challenges.

For Judith to keep up with her day-to-day activities, she has had to learn to use a series of magnifiers and special glasses to enhance TV images.

'You look like a Freddo Frog in them', she said with a chuckle, 'but they bring the image much closer. I can read the subtitles now!'

When asked how support from Vision Australia had impacted her life, she said: ***'With all the aids from Vision Australia, I can still see everything my husband does wrong!'***

But the really important question for Judith is whether her speciality binoculars have helped her bowling game. Her reluctant answer is *'Well... it depends on the day.'*

Even though her eyesight may have deteriorated, it's clear that Judith's wonderful sense of humour and love of life have not been impacted!



Judith uses assistive devices to help with her low vision.

A letter from Sarah



To all the people who have supported me, I want to take a moment to tell you my story about suddenly losing my vision. It's a story of a few lows, like how I struggled to find balance with my mental health at times, but it also has a happy ending - now, four years later, I'm thriving and living my fullest life, and it's all thanks to the support from Vision Australia and people like you.

My vision loss was caused by benign tumours that were pressing on my optic nerve. They were discovered when I was pregnant with Archer. Just eight days after giving birth to him, my vision changed permanently, after surgery on the tumours.

Firstly, there was so much grief. I grieved for my sight, for my inability to see my son and be the mum I imagined I would be.

Then there was so much frustration, too. I couldn't find things, I had to learn new ways to do things I'd taken for granted before, and I felt, at 28, this was not how things were supposed to be.

And I was anxious. So anxious. Going to new places took planning and sometimes I didn't have the time.

Four years on, I have been working with Vision Australia to learn how to navigate the world, and motherhood, with low vision. The first steps - like accepting my new reality - were the hardest, but Vision Australia was with me all the way, telling me that my feelings were normal, and that things were going to get better. They were right!

I'm still learning braille, but I've improved a lot. I'm also learning more and more about technologies that can help me in new spaces and it's changing the world for my whole family.

Importantly, I'm active and independent. Fearing the potential loss of both those things were my hardest times. But most importantly, I've since given birth to my second son, Griffin. He's now 18 months old and we all couldn't be happier.

I'm now a mum to two boys and I'm living life to the fullest. I couldn't have done it without Vision Australia. Please keep supporting their crucial work. It saved me.

Thank you so much for being one of the people who has made this incredible support possible.

Sarah



Your gift is giving Maureen vital support

A passionate volunteer, Maureen has been coming to Vision Australia for more than half a decade. Legally blind and with hearing loss, she has never been held back by her low vision. In fact, her list of personal achievements is quite astonishing!

An exceptional pianist, a recognised volunteer at multiple organisations and the author of 'Beyond Sight and Sound' (available at the National Library and in audio format from the Vision Australia Library), Maureen has certainly had a fulfilling 53 years of attendance at Vision Australia's schools and programs.

At the moment, Maureen's passion is her volunteer work at the Vision Australia Ballarat

Day Program. There she assists participants learning ceramics to smooth the seams of their creations—something she does entirely by feel.

Maureen has developed a close relationship with Yvette, our Regional Business Manager, and have worked together on events and projects. Recently Maureen assisted with the planning of a major milestone event for the organisation, celebrated with the Mayor of Ballarat and our very own CEO of Vision Australia.

The community of Vision Australia has provided Maureen so much in her lengthy association and inspired her to give back, tenfold. Keep it up, Maureen!

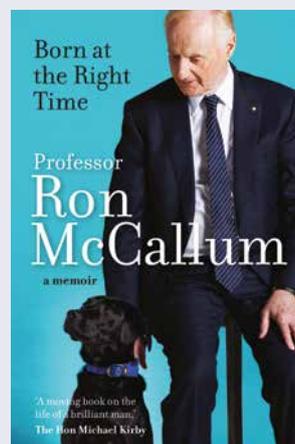
Born at the Right Time: A Memoir

Professor Ron McCallum has been blind from birth. When he was a child, many blind people spent their lives making baskets in sheltered workshops, but Ron's mother had other ideas for her son. She insisted on treating him the same as her other children.

In his new memoir 'Born at the Right Time,' Ron recounts his social awkwardness and physical mishaps, and shares his early fears that he might never have a career, find love or become a parent.

Ron McCallum AO was the Deputy-Chairman of the Board of Vision Australia. He is the first person who is blind to have been appointed to a full professorship in any field at any university in Australia or New Zealand.

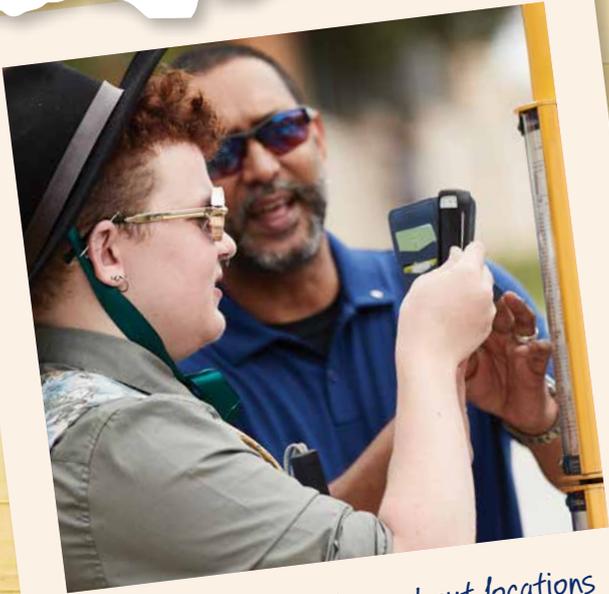
'Born at the Right Time' is available for purchase at all book stores and online www.readhowyouwant.com.au



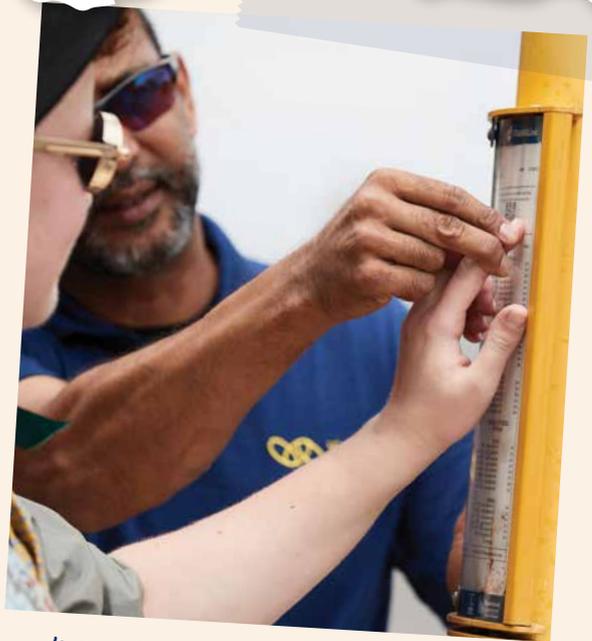
White cane training

Learning to use a cane is about far more than just navigation. When the technique is mastered, a cane will search the ground ahead of its user, with every step. It warns the user of obstacles, subtle changes in levels and surfaces, and steep inclines or declines.

Vision Australia's Orientation and Mobility specialists work with people who are blind or have low vision to learn how to use their cane and navigate safely and with greater independence.



Assistive devices help read out locations and maps enabling travel to new places with more independence.



Vision Australia therapist shows how to use the tactile markings and braille to read the road sign accurately.



Getting the hold right: users need to learn to keep the cane centred, in front of the body.



Uneven surfaces on the pathway can be accidents waiting to happen. Vision Australia specialist shows how to use the long white cane to watch out for these dangers.



Getting in and out of a bus is not easy as it looks. People using a long white cane must learn how to avoid dangers and be able to get in and out of a bus safely.

Imagine how terrifying the world can be when you can't see the dangers ahead of you. This is why your gift is so life changing. Your support helps provide critical mobility training to help people learn to travel to new places independently. Because of you, people living with blindness or low vision can enjoy a better quality of life doing all the things they set their minds to.



Waiting for the bus. It's hard to tell which one is the right bus or if it has pulled up right in front of you. This can be a daunting task for someone who has no sight.



Surface markers on walkways in the form of a series of bumps provide tactile cues to help people with vision loss navigate safely as they move from one area to the next.

The long white cane is an important tool for independence and mobility among people who are blind or have low vision. There's more to properly using a white cane than just picking one up and heading off down the street. Your support helps provide training by an Orientation and Mobility specialist to teach people how to use their long white cane to travel with safety and greater independence.

Yes! I would like to make a life-changing gift of:

\$35 \$50 \$100 My choice \$.....

- OR -

My payment method:

Please debit my credit card (details below)

Card type: Visa MasterCard AMEX Diners

Card no: _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

Expiry: ____ / ____

Name on card:

Signature:

- OR -

Please find enclosed my cheque/money order payable to Vision Australia

My Details:

Title:

First name:

Surname:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Suburb:

State: Postcode:

Reference number (if known):

Please complete this coupon and return to the below address.

Send to Reply Paid 9802, IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY, call 1800 42 20 77 or donate at www.visionaustralia.org.au/donate

Occasionally we allow like-minded organisations to contact our supporters. This helps us reach additional generous Australians willing to support our cause. If you do not wish to receive communications from other organisations, please cross this box .

Your donation will help fund the services Vision Australia offers, helping people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.

Please read our privacy statement overleaf. If you do not wish to receive further information about the work Vision Australia does in the community, please call 1800 42 20 77.



Thank you for making a difference. Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

ABN 67 108 391 831



Transform someone's life!

\$35 can help pay for a long white cane, ensuring a person who is blind or has low vision can get around safely.

\$50 can help pay for a 30 minute independence and daily living activities session for a child to learn basic skills such as social interaction and personal care.

\$100 can help provide a Felix Library Kit for pre-schoolers, which includes brailled book, tactile toys and the audio version of the story on CD. Bringing stories to life in this way is an invaluable resource that helps with early literacy skills.

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Vision Australia respects your privacy and embraces the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs). We obtained your personal information from you directly. When you return this form to us, we collect your personal information so we can process your donation, and contact you again with information about us and our related entities, our services, our fundraising campaigns, and how you can support us again in the future. We may contact you by email, mail or telephone, and you can opt-out at any time.

You don't have to provide us with your personal information; however without it we are limited in how we interact with you.

Our Privacy Policy is available at www.visionaustralia.org/privacy, and contains important information about (i) how we collect and handle your personal information, (ii) how you can access and correct your personal information, and (iii) how you can make a privacy complaint. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact our privacy officer by email at info@visionaustralia.org, or call us on 1800 42 20 77.

Thank you

Since I starred in my own Vision Australia letter at Christmas, it's fair to say I've been spending a bit of time with a few stars myself. Don't worry, I'm not letting it go to my head or anything! You may have seen the video of me with Hawthorn AFL superstar, Jarryd Roughead! As a huge Hawks fan, this was so awesome. Even my mum, Stacey, who is a big Cats fan, was pretty excited for me.

I also got to meet a real life palaeontologist who knows what it's like to have low vision. That made me realise that my future dreams of becoming a palaeontologist can come true, so I'm going to keep learning about dinosaurs and studying hard at school.

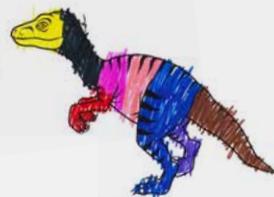
I'm also loving playing soccer and learning new facts in science. It's been such a fun year!

Thanks so much I know my dreams can come true, not just because I've met a few stars, but because of people like you!

You're awesome!

Zavie

(age 9)



Phone: 1800 42 20 77 Web: www.visionaustralia.org.au/donate
Mail: GPO BOX 9802 IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY

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