Dear Editor,

October 15th is International White Cane Day. It is a day that is celebrated around the world and, to me, it is a day that is incredibly important.

My name is Melissa. I am 26 and I was born with cataracts. I also have nystagmus, which is involuntary eye movement, and glaucoma. What I see is like vivid coloured blurs.

Late last year I decided I would learn how to use a white cane so I contacted Paul at Vision Australia in Fairy Meadow. I was nervous at first but it has made a huge difference in my life.

My white cane gives me vital information about my surroundings. I rely on it as my guide and I learn so much from it. For example, I can feel changes in the road surface. Even the sound it makes lets me know what I am about to walk over.

I don’t look vision impaired, and sometimes people don’t know why I am struggling, particularly in crowds, but my white cane has really helped and I feel much more confident travelling at night.

This year, I represented Australia at the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics in downhill Alpine skiing. My cane made it remarkably easy for me to find my way through the airports. I even had it with me out on the snow.

On White Cane Day I would like people in Wollongong and the Illawarra to take a moment to become more aware of the white cane and its significance to people, like me, who are blind or have low vision.

I’d also like to thanks Wollongong City Council,TAFE Illawarra, and Vision Australia for the work they are doing on the ‘Keep it Clear’ campaign, a series of posters that remind us about how we can make simple changes that will make it much easier for people with vision impairments to get around safely.

Visit [www.visionaustralia.org](http://www.visionaustralia.org) to learn more.

Yours sincerely,

Melissa Perrine, Welby