

## The Bulletin

Number 16, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2016

### Inside This Issue

It's been a busy and VERY fun time here at the SVRC in the past few months! Please find information on the following topics and events below:

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- **Technology:** BN Touch, iOS & SIRI, The Audio Description Project
- **From the Field:** 10 Tips for Reading Aloud to Children with VI, Paralympics Results, Milo Cricket
- **News:** SVRC Writing Competition, Big Arts Day Out 2016 Report and Photos, SVRC Enters "Sing for Good", Student News: Goalball, Dot Power – Term 3, Camp Joe (Canada), Support Skills News, Braille in the Community, Staff News, Returns and Requests

Check [The Bulletin archive](#) for back issues!

### SVRC Expo 2016

**When:** Monday 28 November 2016 from 10am until 2.00pm

**Where:** SVRC, 370 Springvale Road Donvale

**Theme:** Promoting inclusion and access in education

The SVRC Technology Expo features best practise in access technology options for students with vision impairments. Displays and demonstrations of the latest in technology including magnification and screen reading software, audio books, braille technology and more!

We will announce the winners of this year's writing competition (more information below) and hear back from the 2016 Space Campers.

Open to all, there is no need to register and there is no cost to attend.

### SVRC Writing Competition – "Travel and Opportunity"

The SVRC writing competition aims to encourage the creative and literary skills of our students in their own alternative medium. **The 2016 theme is "Travel and Opportunity".**

This year we have chosen a travel theme because we have had so many students go overseas with families, as well as students traveling to camps in Canada, Space Camp in the US and to the Paralympics in Rio.

We are asking students to submit a piece of writing on, "The where, why and what of travel" – **Where I would like to travel, why I would like to travel there and what "vision" technology I would take to assist me.**

Please submit entries by November 14, in any alternative medium, to SVRC, PO Box 201, Nunawading 3131 or electronically to [svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au](mailto:svrc@svrc.vic.edu.au) with the subject "SVRC Writing Comp".

There will be prizes and certificates awarded in various age categories at the SVRC Expo.

## Big Arts Day Out 2016

The annual Support Skills Big Arts Day Out was well attended this year with 20 students joining us on the day. We assembled at Flinders St Station with families bringing their children into the city. Students were divided into two groups and allocated two iPads and two VictorReaders so they could capture the sights and sounds of the activities during the day. The travel and movement during the day was ably supported and monitored by the O&M team from Guide Dogs Victoria. They provided practical opportunities for the students to move safely and independently during the course of the day.

We headed off to our first destination, the Melbourne Recital Centre in Sturt St Southbank for a tactile tour of the centre.

Fortunately the rain eased and we could make our way along St Kilda Rd with the students photographing the land marks and recording the sounds of the city.

### ***Melbourne Recital Centre***

At the Recital Centre we were met by the Education Officer, Debbie Brady and Richard, who then took us on our tactile tour. This began with feeling the carpet in the foyer area which has been embossed with a textured pattern that simulates sound waves. We also sat in the special leather seats made by Ferrari at a cost of \$20,000 each! We walked outside checking the façade of the building, then up the main staircase to the various levels checking out the large windows, special wood paneling and the beautiful marble walls. After climbing 100 steps we reached the top level where we experienced the “sound lock” before entering the stalls and wings. Debbie played her flute and we were able to enjoy the unique acoustic features. The group then divided into 3 dispersing to the 3 seating areas at this level where we all sang a round. This allowed us to observe the special acoustics of the Elisabeth Murdoch Hall and provided us with a physical sound check of this space. It was great fun and now we can all claim that we sang at the Melbourne Recital Centre!



Finally Debbie and Richard took us all back down to the foyer where we explored the Salon. This is a much smaller performance space and the group again checked out the door handles, the sound lock and the special acoustic paneling on the walls. We were treated to a very special impromptu performance by Jordie Howell who sang a verse from one of her favourite German Art songs. Jordie is a trained Soprano and every dynamic and nuance could be heard. Jordie received a thunderous applause from all present. Such a lovely performance was fitting for such a beautiful room!

While the students ate their morning tea in the foyer we met some of the other MRC staff including Marshall McGuire and their newly appointed CEO Euan Murdoch. We were able to acknowledge the great job Debbie and Richard had done on the tour and also thank the "Share the Music" group who had sponsored our tour.

The students divided into their two groups retracing their walk back to Flinders St Station. Deb Davidson and Lea Nagel's group headed over to the National Gallery of Victoria in the Ian Potter Centre at Federation Square while Emily and Charlie's group went with the GDV staff on a Flinders St Self-advocacy Challenge!

### ***Touch Tour, National Gallery Victoria, Australia, and Federation Square***

Michael Donnelly who is the Support Skills Program Art Teacher had been liaising with Rebecca Hicks the Education Officer and staff of the NGV to set up a truly wonderful Art experience for the students. The focus of the Touch Tour was 21 art pieces of Bruce Armstrong's current survey, *An Anthology Of Strange Creatures*. Bruce is a famous Australian sculptor and artist. Bruce was present for the tour with the first group which was very special. Bruce accompanied the group as we explored the various pieces explaining how they were made and what inspired him to create them. Bruce is possibly best known for his large public sculpture in the



docklands, "Eagle (Bunjil), 2002". Michael had prepared a raised line drawing of this and other pieces which featured in the exhibition.

The students began by exploring two large sculptures in the foyer known as the "Guardians". They are mythological animals carved out of red gum. The students were able to walk around the art works exploring them and getting a sense of their size, shape and form. Bruce fielded lots of great questions before the group moved off to explore some of the other exhibits.

During this tour we were also joined by Catherine Andrews (left), the wife of the Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews. One of Catherine's interests is the NGV

and how the exhibitions and displays can be made more accessible for all Victorians. Catherine joined our tour and spent time talking to the students as they explored the various pieces.

Other art works the students were able to explore included:

- Bete Noir, made from a bronze casting. It shows a bear like creature hugging a human being from behind, which besides being menacing, is also welcoming and could be said to be “protective” too. Horse, painted Cypress and Bronze Figure.
- Snake, painted Cypress figure.
- Bunjil, maquette.
- Stretch, bronze figure on red gum.
- Mam, bronze figure on red gum.
- Choice, bronze figure on red gum.
- Acrobat, bronze figure on red gum.
- Dancer, bronze figure on red gum.
- Skater, bronze figure on red gum.
- Shaman, bronze figure on red gum.
- The Orator, bronze figure on red gum.



And many many more!

The students used "feather" touch when exploring these works. They also took photos using the iPads and recorded some descriptions of the various works.

We extend our thanks to the Gallery and especially Rebecca and Merren who guided us through the various works. We also extend our thanks to Bruce Armstrong for not only coming and speaking to the students but also for making so many of his works from his own private collection available for Touch Access on the day. It was a very memorable session.



### ***Flinders Street Station***

The group who had headed off to Flinders St Station with the GDV O&M team were quickly divided into small groups and then set eight mini challenges all requiring teamwork, good communication and self-advocacy. Station entrances were explored, information counters located, platforms accessed and good mobility problem solving and strategies discussed and then trialed. The groups were observed navigating their way around the station, building up their mobility skills, knowledge and confidence! It was a very full on session.

We'd like to thank Darren for planning the O&M challenge and pass on our thanks to Simon, Marnie, Dani and Paula who then worked with the groups to achieve a positive experience for the students involved. We really value the O&M team's input and support. They bring a functional aspect to these days which make for a realistic and practical involvement.

The students ate lunch in the Education Centre at the NGV which was fortunate as the weather was terrible outside!

After lunch the two groups swapped activities. The reports from the afternoon sessions were just as positive as the morning program.

At around 3:10pm students and their families met back outside Flinders St Station and headed off home after what had been a very busy and full day.

We'd like to thank the parents for bringing the students into the program. Families had travelled from as far as Traralgon, Euroa, Ballarat and Rye. A big thank you to all these families for supporting the program and making the day such a success.

I'd also like to acknowledge the wonderful work the SVRC and GDV staff did by organising the activities and being so accommodating and flexible. I'm fortunate to work with such a professional and enthusiastic team.



We will spend next term putting together a sound scape of the day and a photographic record of what students saw and experienced on the day. We will also review how they used the iPads and VictorReaders to capture the information on the day.

We would welcome any feedback from the students or their families as to what aspects of the program the students enjoyed most. We are always looking to build on and improve these learning opportunities.

Garry Stinchcombe, Support Skills Program Coordinator

#### Big Arts Day photos from top to bottom

- Walking in Flinders Street
- Recital Centre
- Tactile graphics of one of the sculptures at the National Gallery
- Student exploring one of the Guardians
- Catherine Andrews enjoying a sculpture with a student
- Student exploring Bete Noir
- Garry and a student looking at the small bronze sculptures
- Emily and a student enjoying a sculpture

## SVRC: Sings for Good

An upshot from last term's Dot Power Day – for early braille readers – has been an entry to the "Sing for Good" campaign.

"Sing for Good" is a global online video challenge. Communities are invited to sing for joy in every postcode of Australia and beyond to support people in need. Groups of two or more from families, workplaces, schools, sports teams, choirs ... everyone is welcome.

According to the website, "Sing for Good" raises awareness of the global epidemic of our times: loneliness. Loneliness leads to mental and physical health issues and economic disadvantage. More than 2 in 5 people feel socially isolated and unheard.

We called ourselves, "The Brailley Bunch" and our song is "I'm going to the Paralympics"

### ***"The Brailley Bunch": Why We Sing***

We got together to sing on Dot Power Day, a day for children who are blind to come together to learn about braille. The theme was the Paralympics and the children sang "I'm going to the Paralympics, I'm going to be an athlete!" They experienced running, cycling, javelin, long jump and shot put, learnt accessible ways to measure each sport and heard about the vision impaired athletes representing Australia in Rio this year!

In Victoria, children who are blind attend their local school with support, and may be the only blind child in their school or extended community. This can lead to a sense of isolation. At Dot Power, children 4 to 8 years old are empowered by learning and singing together. It's more enjoyable to read braille music along-side other braille readers. Our Paralympics song is all about the joy and optimism of our children imagining themselves as future athletes!

See and hear our song – the writing, performing, videoing, editing, uploading and everything in between – involving most of the SVRC staff: <http://singforgood.org/campaigns/the-brailley-bunch-im-going-to-the-paralympics/>

## Student News: Goalball

Over the school holidays, several Victorian students were involved in the National Goalball Championship in Sydney. Team players Callam, Thanh and Thien are becoming very competitive and their team won Gold for Victoria!!!

In addition, Callam took home the following trophies – Most Valued Player, All Star, and Most Goals Scored. An incredible effort!

Photos (right) show a team strategising tete-a-tete, and Thanh about to send the ball towards the opposition.

Love your work, people!



## The Paralympics Results

Australia achieved an incredible 5th place overall in the recent Paralympics in Rio, coming behind the People's Republic of China, Great Britain, Ukraine, USA; and in front of Germany, Netherlands, Brazil, Italy, Poland, Spain, France, New Zealand, Canada, Iran Uzbekistan, Nigeria, Cuba, Belarus and so on.

Australia's final medal count was 22 gold, 30 silver and 29 bronze with a total medal count of 81 (from a total of 2,347 available medals). Well done to the Aussies! Well done to the competitors with vision impairments! Well done to Victorian school-boy, Jaryd!!! And we look forward to seeing more of our students and former students on our TVs in 2020 in Tokyo!

### ***A Little About Jaryd***

Source and answers to more questions about his life as a Paralympic athlete:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-04/seven-questions-for-paralympian-jaryd-clifford/7748150>

At age three he was diagnosed with juvenile macular degeneration, a condition that causes him to gradually lose his central vision. At age 12 he was declared legally blind.

Jaryd is competing at Rio in the 1500m and 5000m T12 category track events.

#### **How do you see?**

"First of all, I am pretty lucky to be a distance runner, in the fact that I don't have to worry about the lines, because I think I would probably struggle with that one.

"Running in a pack, which is quite common in distance running, is tricky sometimes, but I've learnt to use my other sense to feel my way through a pack.

"I use my ears a lot to listen to where everyone is around me. But I can see two metres in front of me reasonably well, so I can see the person in front of me if they're close, but then I can also see the movement in front of me as well, it's just not as defined.

"I've always run with a vision impairment, so it's just been how I've learnt to run."

See the above website to read Jaryd's responses to the following questions:

#### **Does your disability define you?**

"I don't think my disability defines me so much, I think it is a part of who I am. It does make me me, but I don't think it is my defining ability.

"It has given me so many opportunities but it doesn't force me to do much ... I've always had a vision impairment, like I have always worn glasses. I suppose it has been tough, but it is what I know.

"It is a part of me and I am embracing it as that... I definitely wouldn't get rid of my disability, I think it has given me so many opportunities, I mean I am going to the Paralympics in September and I don't think, without my disability, I would have the opportunity to be in Rio this year."

### **Paralympic Medals – Tactile and Audio**

All 2016 Paralympic medals had small steel balls implanted inside. When shaken, each medal produces its own distinct sound. Gold medals, with 28 balls, make the loudest noise. Silver medals have 20 balls, while bronze medals come with 16 and create the softest sound. In addition, medals have the words, "Rio 2016 Paralympic Games" embossed in braille.

## The Paralympics Came to Dot Power

Term three's theme was the Paralympics with students jumping, running and throwing their way into their own Paralympic Passport.

Students used a range of measuring devices to record their times and distances ranging from a knotted rope (knots every metre – shown right), tactile ruler (photo right), audio measuring tape, timer on the BrailleNote (photo right), timer on the iPad (photo right) ... and more!

Here is some feedback from a Dot Power VT:

My student took all her work to school last Wednesday and showed everyone what she had done at Dot Power. The ES staff told me that she hasn't stopped talking about it since! And she can't wait until next term's Dot Power Day!

And the past two days with her has been incredible. She is really enjoying the braille. Today she actually did her persuasive text writing in braille, and was so excited about using the contraction for "because". She did such an amazing job we took it around to show the principal. By this time, she had reread her writing 4-5 times! All very exciting.

We look forward to reviewing some of these measuring methods at our Term 4 Dot Power Day which will be held on Tuesday 22 November 2016.

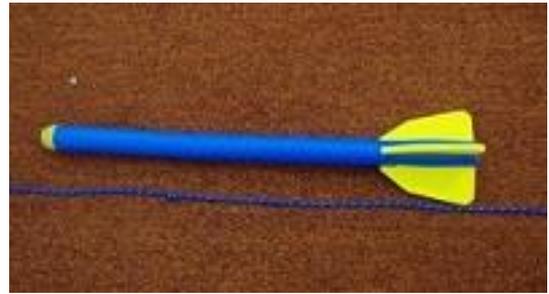
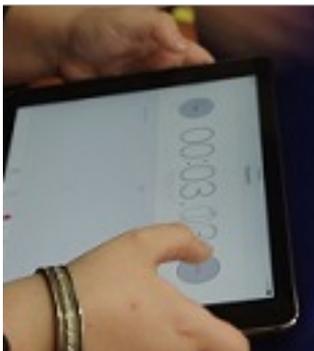
### About Dot Power Day

Dot Power is a program for children whose primary reading medium is braille. Based around the Expanded Core Curriculum, Dot Power is designed to encourage students to get as much braille under their fingers as is possible in one day!

Eligible Victorian students from 4 years old (pre-school) to Year 3 are invited to participate in the SVRC Dot Power Program.

Held termly at the SVRC, students participate in group activities designed to offer opportunities to read and write braille.

Each day features a theme: a post man delivering letters, a mother bird feeding its babies, pizza-making, braille music...



## Upcoming SPEVI Conference – 8 to 12 January 2017, Brisbane

The SPEVI Biennial International Conference will be held in around 3 months in Brisbane! “Shining the Light on Vision Education” aims to:

- share information about the latest developments in provision of accessible information
- provide information for people with a print disability
- enhance dialogue between users and providers of accessible information
- promote and enhance collaborative partnerships and peer support networks
- showcase and workshop examples of best practice in the provision of accessible information and technology for children and adults with a print disability

See the website for further information: <http://speviconference.org.au/>

## Round Table Call for Papers

You are invited to submit abstracts for the upcoming RT Conference to be held in Perth. The closing date is 30 November 2016.

**Theme:** Information Access - new modes, technologies and opportunities

**When:** Saturday 6 – Tuesday 9 May 2017

This conference provides three full days of technical, research and panel sessions, presentations and practical workshops on issues related to accessibility. There are also many opportunities for networking and socialising with key speakers, panel members and attendees.

See the website for further information: [www.printdisability.org](http://www.printdisability.org)

## BrailleNote Touch News

HumanWare is offering a trade-in program (up to \$1,500) towards the purchase of a new BrailleNote Touch. See the HumanWare website for details.

## iOS & SIRI

Some apps in iOS10, can be integrated directly with SIRI. For a list of apps that currently offer this capability, see: <http://www.imore.com/these-are-apps-you-can-use-siri-ios-10>

## The Audio Description Project

An initiative of the American Council of the Blind The Audio Description Project is a comprehensive site detailing what audio description is, who does it, how to get it, and much more. It contains a list of DVDs and television series with audio description as well as schedules for watching television shows with audio description and lists opportunities for individuals to train to become audio describers. It even includes listings of iTunes and Netflix programming with audio description.

Since new audio-described media is released regularly, interested persons should visit the ADP site at <http://www.acb.org/adp/> and sign up to receive page changes/updates via email.

## 10 Tips for Reading Aloud to Children with Vision Impairments

Source: National Braille Press website

### 1. Choose the right book.

- First, read it to yourself. Is it the right book for your child? Also, pick out material you might want to shorten, cut, change, or emphasize.
- Be on the lookout for key objects, geography, people and characters to point out while reading. What things would interest your child?

### 2. Make reading a family tradition.

- Read together every day at the same time and place. Read slowly and explore the book. If you can't finish the whole book, choose a stopping point. You don't have to finish a book a day.
- For any child who is not yet reading, it is okay to skip over material in the book, to simplify language, or replace names with the names of the kids who are listening.

### 3. Take your time.

- It's important to convey the richness of each page and make sure your child understands all the words, concepts and emotions. Before reading, choose three or four words your child may not know. Talk about what these words mean. When you come across those words in the story, *let your child tell you* what they mean!

### 4. Before reading each page, describe the images.

- Like most things, it takes practice for a parent to become a good describer of pictures. Keep the descriptions age-appropriate and consistent for a non-visual learner. Suggested picture descriptions for our featured titles, *Dragons Love Tacos*, *The Day the Crayons Quit*, and *Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes*, will give you a flavor for how to do it.
- Focus first on the three or four most central objects, the geography, characters, or people on the page. Giving picture cues helps children better understand the text.

### 5. Use vocal expression.

- Use your voice to strengthen your picture descriptions, and to emphasize the words in the story.
- Your voice can sound happy or sad or frightened or calm. Your pitch could be high or low, or it could sound like it's nearby or coming from far away.

### 6. Describe - and model - the facial expressions, body language.

- It isn't always easy for children to "read" facial expressions and body language.
- If a character has an angry look, ask your child if they know how to make an angry look, and how to sound angry. If they aren't sure, model the feelings for them. Let them touch your face to feel what it looks like. Also model the physical positions of the people, characters, and objects in the book.

### 7. Ask simple questions that spark responses and foster empathy.

- "Have you ever felt that way before?"
- "What might [one of the story characters] be thinking?"
- "Do you know someone who has felt that way?"
- "How would *you* feel if...?"
- "What would you do if you were in *their* shoes?"

### 8. Use tactiles while you are reading - toys, objects found around the house, natural materials found outside.

- If you have a toy or animal that matches a character in the story, for example the main character is a teddy bear, you can use it.
- Provide tactile explorations where your child handles and explores an object - at the playground, at the mall, at the supermarket, everywhere.

### 9. Let your child help tell the story.

- Active reading means both you *and* your child play a part. Your child can chime in with details they already know, they can imagine, or they can guess long before they are reading. Strengthen their listening skills with questions like these:
  - "How many ... did we already hear about?"
  - "Which runner came in first? Second? Third? Last?"
  - "What do you think will happen next?"
- On repeated reading of the same story, once your child is familiar with how the story goes, stretch their imaginations by asking:
  - "We saw an animal at the zoo like the one in this story. Did it act the same way as the one in this story?"
  - "When we tried to climb the icy hill outside our house last winter, what happened to *us*?"
  - "If the birthday boy/girl eats *one more* piece of cake, how will his/her tummy feel?"
  - "How could ... have planned things differently so ... didn't happen?"

### 10. After reading the story...

Here are some suggestions for things to discuss.

- What was the story about?
- What was real and what was make-believe in this story?
- Who are the characters?
- What was the problem and how was it solved?
- Do you think ... could have acted differently? How?

## Student News: Camp Joe

Several students had the most excellent opportunity to attend Camp Joe in Canada, earlier this year. I asked one student what was the best thing he learned and he answered,

**“Making new friends isn’t as hard as you think.”**

**James** (VT Odette) is another student who attended Camp Joe. He wrote the following:

On the 22 of July a group of vision impaired people went to Camp Joe in Canada to learn about employment skills, independent living skills, being away from parents and more.

After a long flight we finally made it to Camp Joe in Canada. The camp was about getting ready for employment for vision impaired people and the skills that vision impaired people need. What we learnt from the sessions. We learnt how to get ready for job interviews, how to present yourself in an interview, how you look, what you were and how you speak. We also talked about how to write resumes and we had to write a practice one. We also talked about disclosure letters which are letters where you say that you have a vision impairment and that you can still do the job but you just need some ways where you can manage it. At the end of the week, we had a pretend interview to practice the skills we learnt.

The camp was also about being independent and learning new skills. In the afternoons, we had an independent living skills session where we learnt to make sandwiches, smoothies, and drinks which some people made and some just drank it.

### **What we got out of the sessions**

We learnt how to cut and chop food, we learnt how to pour drinks into cups and glasses, we learnt how to use the electric mixer and we learnt to spread ingredients on bread. Also as part of independence, we had an O and M session from how to get from a place to another. We learnt how to get from the kitchens where we eat to the welcome center, from there to our cabins, from there to the lake and back. We also learnt how to get from our rooms to the kitchens or the lounge room where we do most of the sessions and is in the same building as the kitchens. We learnt how to wash our clothes. The instructors did help us, but we had to put it in the machine by ourselves and they showed us how to start it.

The camp was also about vision impaired people being away from their parents for the first time. For some it was their first overseas trip. I was nervous at first being away from my parents for the first time because I would have had to do a lot more things for myself and manage my personal belongings such as clothes and technology and the passport. But as the days and weeks went by, I got used to being away from my parents and I felt much happier than I was at first. For those who might be interested in going, you might feel nervous for the first time leaving your parents, but you will get used to it after a while.

I do think I was more independent now than before I got to camp. Before I went to camp, I thought I would leave some of my technology behind in Canada or I thought I would leave my passport behind, but after learning how to manage my belongings I managed to keep it with me all the time. I also knew how to identify different Canadian money notes. I did not know this before my camp until just before it. I learnt that the notes have the G dots on the side of the note and it tells you what note it is. For example, 4 Gs is a \$20 note, 3 Gs is a \$10 note and 2 Gs is a \$5. I knew this already, but I learnt again about the right way of cutting and chopping food and pouring drinks into cups and glasses. I have not heard of an disclosure letter before coming to Camp Joe and it was good that I found out about that so I can use one when I am going for a job and telling them that I have a vision impairment.

I think Camp Joe is a really good experience for people who have a vision impairment who would be thinking about going. I do recommend the camp. You learn new life skills for when you live without your parents, you learn about new employment skills and you also get to have some fun with water sports. You get to do tubing, water skiing, paddle boating and canoeing. I do think it is a very good experience to meet people from Canada and make some new friends.

## Milo Cricket

The Victorian Blind Cricket Association is pleased to announce that Cricket Australia's Milo Cricket Programs have now come to Blind Cricket. Now all students who are blind or have low vision can enjoy the same Milo in2 Cricket and Milo T-20 Blast programs that are available to all other students.

Commencing Saturday 15 October the Milo Cricket programs will run every Saturday morning from 10:30am to 12:00noon through to 17 December then again in new year after the Christmas break from 28 January through to the 4 March.

All participants will also get the chance to play cricket on the hallowed turf of the MCG on Sunday 27 November.

To register or find out more details about Milo Blind Cricket simply contact the VBCA by email at [secretary@vbca.org.au](mailto:secretary@vbca.org.au) or phone Rod Pritchard on 0401 718 926.



## Braille in the Community

Toni is back in the country after taking an extensive international inventory of braille-in-the-community. Here are her final photos for our collection, which will be added to the SVRC website in due course!

There is a huge topographical model complete with braille labels for Muir Woods and Muir Beach Overlook (lookout) near San Francisco, and some comprehensive instructions for using a public toilet, California-style!

## Space Camp 2016

Hopefully we'll have some news and photos from our Space Campers, who have returned home safely, in the next issue!



## Give-Away

We have a Merlin CCTV which is available for free to a student or family. Please contact Glen at the SVRC.

## Support Skills News

Please see the SVRC website for:

- Try Day Enrolment Application form
- SSP Evaluation
- Expression of Interest form for new and returning students

For further information, please contact Garry Stinchcombe on 9841 0242.

## Staff News

- **Lyn Robinson** is back from leave and will be working on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this term.
- **Toni Chilton** will return to Braille Transcription this week.
- **Michael Donnelly** and **Michael Kelly** are on leave for the first few weeks of this term.
- **Nola Houghton** returns to Braille Transcription on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

## SVRC Returns 2016

Please review your students' use of their access technology which is on loan from the SVRC. If the student is no longer using equipment, please return so it can be reassigned.

Please return braille, large print and audio resources as they are no longer needed by the student.

## Alternative Format Requests for 2017

We have received several requests for learning materials in alternative format for next year – you know who you are and THANKS!!!

As booklists become available, please send in your requests – that way we can get on to production and have the resources to students in a timely manner!

## Finally

Editor Deb Lewis would like to thank everyone for their contribution to this issue of The Bulletin!



Dear Visiting Teachers,

I hope you are all enjoying the term 4 and 2016 is proving to be a great year for you and your students.

As you may know Laura Hunt has moved into the role of managing all of Guide Dog Victoria's Client Services including The Adults Mobility Service, Acquired Brain Injury Service, Guide Dogs Client Services and the Children's Mobility Service. With this change, Alicia San Martin has been appointed to the new position of CMS Team Leader and I will be acting in this position while Alicia is on maternity leave.

For those of you I have not met, I have been with Guide Dogs Victoria for six and a half years. A permanent member of the CMS team over this time, I have also worked across our Adult and ABI teams and share my time between GDV's Geelong and Melbourne offices. I have been involved in the Barwon region from the beginning of the NDIS trial phase and bring my lived experience and knowledge of the NDIS to the team leader role in preparation of the ongoing roll out of the scheme to all areas of Victoria over the coming years. I, along with the CMS team, are looking forward to providing the best quality service that we can to students and welcome any feedback as to how we can improve. Over the second half of 2016 I look forward to meeting many of you and discussing how we can work collaboratively with you to achieve the best academic and life outcomes for your students.

The Children's Mobility Service are excited to announce some **changes to our referral system** and **new services** that we are confident will allow us to provide the best quality service for vision impaired Victorians.

### **Referrals**

To make sure we are able to attend to the needs of our clients in the most effective and timely manner we have made some changes to our referral process to make it easier for both yourself and families to make a referral.

Referrals can now be processed in two ways:

#### **Directly contacting our Client Service Administration team**

By phoning (03) 9854 4467, our friendly staff will be able to take all required details of the referral over the phone.

Please ensure that you have received consent from the family before contacting our team.

#### **Through the Guide Dogs Victoria Website**

<https://www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au/our-services/referral-main/>

### Other important changes to referrals:

- When making referrals you will need to advise of your position as a Visiting Teacher so the assigned O&M Specialist or Occupational Therapist is aware of the need to contact you to acknowledge that the referral has been actioned and they are the person who will be providing the service. This will also allow us to provide the Statewide Vision Resource Centre with information as to what services we are providing to each student.
- If an O&M has worked with a child but is not currently providing service, then please enter a referral via phone or our website. This allows us to respond in the most effective and timely manner.

**Note:** *The previous O&M may not be the same for a new program so contacting them directly does not allow us to act in a timely manner. Please respect that the O&M's will politely direct you back to the referral pathway as outlined above so we can provide consistent service delivery.*

- If you know an O&M is working with a child and wish to ask for further service support (e.g. Environmental Assessment, school/classroom workshop or newly identified O&M or OT goals) then please speak directly with the instructor or preferably email the request as this may require further consultation with the student and their family as it may be outside the current agreed program goals.
- If you require an O&M for a general presentation or workshop, or require support/information to be provide to your regional teams, please contact me directly [simon.m@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:simon.m@guidedogsvictoria.com.au) or 0449 903 441.

### Occupational Therapy

Occupational Therapy is an area that we know is in demand from many of the children we work with. Inability to use cutlery, tie shoe laces, safely handle money, maintain personal hygiene, prepare basic meals (e.g. breakfast) and organise personal belongings are areas that many children struggle with. If these are skills that you identify as beneficial to work on with the students you know, please feel free to discuss with them and their families that GDV now have an OT service that can support children and their families achieve these goals.

The CMS strongly values effective communication with educators, like yourselves, and the Occupational Therapy service will be no different. The service is aimed at providing effective outcomes for students and recognises that skill development needs to happen across all areas of a child's life including within the home, community and education. Our Occupational Therapists will be able to contribute to SSG meetings so that the child's skill development of their daily living activities can be consistent across all areas of their life and, when appropriate, be reinforced on a daily basis within school.

Profiles of our OT's Krystle and Leah can be found in the last edition of the Getabout Newsletter. They both look forward to meeting with many of you and support your students.

Referrals for Occupational Therapy can be made through the referrals process as describe above.

## **Support Coordination**

As far as support for families, this may be the most important service we are able to provide to families to effectively navigate the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The role of Support Coordinators is assist clients and their families to strengthen abilities to connect to and coordinate informal, mainstream and funded supports in a complex service delivery environment. This includes resolving points of crisis, developing capacity and coordinating supports from a range of sources.

Tim and Sabrina, our new Support Coordinators, are both keen to meet with families to answer their questions about the NDIS and discuss how GDV can best support them through the NDIS to access the appropriate supports to meet their goals. Both Tim and Sabrina will effectively be part of the CMS and will work closely with O&M's to establish and maintain the ongoing relationships we have with clients, their families, yourselves as Visiting Teachers and other supports. By taking a holistic approach to our client's access of education and the NDIS, we hope to be able to provide support that allows consistency across these areas. For example, technology accessed through funded support of the NDIS is consistent with the assistive products used by the student with their education.

If you are interested in discussing their role or how the NDIS may impact your students, please email me directly and I will organise a time for Tim or Sabrina to contact you or meet with your regional department.

If you have a family interested in support from GDV to negotiate the NDIS please contact us through the referral pathways as described above.

## **Feedback**

At Guide Dogs Victoria we welcome all feedback and suggestions so we can continue to provide, and further develop, the best quality service we can to Victorians with low vision and blindness.

If you have any feedback or would like to further discuss our services, please don't hesitate to contact me directly on 0449 903 441 or email us at [feedback@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:feedback@guidedogsvictoria.com.au)

I hope you find our development of services and changes to the referral pathway to be a positive experience.

Kind Regards

Simon McDonald-Kerr

## **Orientation & Mobility Specialist**

### **Acting Children's Mobility Service Team Leader**

2-6 Chandler Highway

Kew 3101

Tel 9854 4444

## What's New at Vision Australia

To students, their families, visiting teachers, and school staff,

We've had a busy year here at Vision Australia with some staff changes and with up-skilling and broadening our team. We've said goodbye to staff retiring, having babies, travelling the world, and taking on new challenges.

We're excited to welcome new staff:

- Jayde Lambert, paediatric occupational therapist at our Kensington office
- Violetta Shersher, speech pathologist at our Kooyong office
- Erin Nicol, paediatric occupational therapist at our Kooyong office
- Sally Powe, paediatric physiotherapist at our Kooyong office

We're excited that our team is expanding and that more of our staff are gaining the skills and knowledge to work with children, their families and within the wider community.

All of our metro and regional offices now have occupational therapists working with children and families.

At the end of last year, 20 of our orientation and mobility specialists attended an intensive course to gain the very specific insight and skills required to support the growing independence of our young children and students.

And our adaptive technology specialists continue to form great partnerships with students, schools and families. This technology training will support your child with their learning, access to information, and completing coursework. At University level, we offer further education grants to help with the costs of adaptive technology for study for a student who is blind or has low vision, and applications are currently open.

For those new to Vision Australia, we are here to support families to help their children achieve the highest levels of independence, participation and development, and provide early intervention services, such as occupational therapy and speech therapy. During the school years, we can support students with adaptive technology equipment and training, or one-on-one advocacy. We also support adolescents to transition to adulthood, helping them to learn the necessary skills that will help them achieve the goals they set for themselves throughout life.

With this in mind, our experience in regions in Victoria, NSW and Queensland, where the National Disability Insurance Scheme has already arrived, tells us that access partners and others who are responsible for designing plans take a while to learn about the unique needs of people who are blind and have low vision. We have found that families who have support from us have plans that are much more specific to their needs. This is why we

have recruited and trained “community engagement consultants” who will work with families and others in the team around their child to ensure that they are prepared and ready for their “conversation” with NDIA or those who represent them.

We’ve also found that some families want to manage their own plans, and some want more case management support. And so we are recruiting skilled staff to help families if this is something that they choose.

### Other News

In July, we arranged for 12 young people (15-18 years) to attend Camp Joe, a 19-day employment camp in Canada. They travelled without their parents but with Vision Australia staff to enhance their independence. The group was also joined by other young people with blindness and low vision from New Zealand and Canada. We received remarkable stories from the team, which includes one girl who wouldn’t get out of bed before the camp, but while there she developed a love of photography and is now out of bed by 6am to snap pictures. Another success story has been a young man from country Victoria. We received this email from one of his teachers:



*“It was a life-changing experience for him. He has come back with more confidence and knows there is more out there in the world. And he wants a part of it! He wants to reinvent himself. He is developing a plan with realistic and achievable goals. He came into the school office and some of the other teachers commented on how much happier he looked and he even laughed. He’s a new person after Camp Joe, thank you Vision Australia!”*

### How to refer

Referrals to Vision Australia can be made to the office closest to you (see below), by visiting our website <http://www.visionaustralia.org/about-us/contact-us>, by email [referrals@visionaustralia.org](mailto:referrals@visionaustralia.org), or phone 1300 84 74 66.

Albury/Wodonga: (02) 6041 8800	Kensington: 8378 1100
Ballarat: 5337 4555	Kooyong: 9864 9524
Bendigo: 5445 5700	Mildura: 5023 9500
Boronia: 9760 0000	Shepparton: 5831 9400
Dandenong: 8791 0201	Warragul: 5623 0100
Geelong: 5249 2700	Warrnambool: 5560 2300