

The Bulletin

Number 1, 2 January 2018

Welcome to the first issue of the Statewide Vision Resource Centre's fortnightly newsletter. We aim to provide you with interesting and useful information about the expanded core curriculum, professional development opportunities, activities and recreation for children with vision impairments and their families, technology and other snippets from the field of vision impairment.

If you have something you'd like to share or ask, please contact us by phone or email.

Inside This Issue

Here's what you'll find:

- **From SVRC:** Dates for Your Diary, Review Recommendations Approved, VCE Special Arrangements, Q&A: English Online Testing in Braille, VT Support for Independent Schools, Feedback from our Community, Staff News
- **Technology:** Equipment Grants 2018, Build Your Own DNA, Duxbury Update, Blind Facebook Engineer is Behind Technologies to Help Verbalise Images and Videos, Maths Program: Animal Watch VI Suite
- **PD:** PD at SVRC, PD for New and Newish VTs, CVI Assessment and Intervention (RIDBC), 3-D Printing Webinar, CHARGE Conference, Round Table Conference
- **Recreation and Activities:** Travelling in Victoria with VI, 2018 Focus on Ability Film Festival,
- **From the Field:** Australian Copyright Amendment Act 2017, Dining in the Dark Restaurant in Melbourne, Queen's Birthday Honours: Gillian Gale and Rob Last, Vale Dr Jan van Dijk

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

Dates for Your Diary – 2018

Here is a list of our planned PD for next year.

- **Educational Support for Students who are Blind:** 13 February
- **New (and newish) VT Day:** 19 February
- **Educational Support for Students who have Low Vision:** 27 Feb OR 6 March OR 14 August
- **PE PD Day:** 14 March
- **Educational Support for Students with VI & Additional Impairments:** Thursday 22 March
- **Braille Music** (half day) 24 April
- **Art4Kids with VI:** 2 May (date to be confirmed)
- **Dot Power Term 2:** Tuesday 8 May
- **VT Master Class:** 5 June
- **Dot Power Term 3:** Tuesday 7 August
- **Dot Power Term 4:** Tuesday 30 October
- **Technology Expo:** 27 November
- **Christmas Morning Tea:** Wednesday 5 December

Programs and registration will be available on the SVRC website soon! And from 2018, online payment will also be available!

SVRC Review Recommendations Approved!!

From Marion Blazé

The Staff of the SVRC are looking forward to an exciting and very different year!

In 2017, the SVRC Strategic Leadership and Governance Group was formed to review the governance and operations of the SVRC, and develop a two-year strategic plan and revised budget for SVRC. The review was completed and 16 recommendations were approved and signed by Bruce Armstrong, Deputy Secretary, Regional Services Group on December 21, 2017.

Recommendation 14 was for the Department to appoint a "Transitional Manager" to oversee the implementation of the other 15 recommendations, and allow the SVRC staff to get on with what they do. This position was advertised (closing date January 30, 2018) and we are very much looking forward to the appointment of our Transitional Manager. No doubt we will have more to report then.

Thank you to the members of the SVRC Strategic Leadership and Governance Group who worked long and hard last year to investigate all that we do, and seek opinions from the many groups we support.

Todd Macbeth (Chair) – Director, Inclusive Education and Professional Practice Branch

Sharon Barry – Director, Inclusion, Access and Participation Branch

Stuart Edwards – Executive Director, Early Childhood and School Support Division, NEVR

Elizabeth Levesque – Manager, Victorian Deaf Education Institute

Matthew Trotter – Senior Project Officer, Inclusive Education and Professional Practice Branch

Kim Foley – Visiting Teacher Service Manager, NEVR

Gillian Gale – Ex-teacher, lecturer, educational consultant and author, Specialising in vision impairment and braille

Daniel Pritchard – Ex-SVRC (and VTS) student

Marion Blazé – Manager, SVRC

Professional Development at SVRC

Registration for our larger PD days is through our website, where you can make payments as well. The programs for these events are also on the website, so VTs can print and hand to teachers, or just send them to the website.

New and Newish VT PD Day

For the PD day for New (and Newish) VTs for Vision, on February, 19, we are taking registrations by phone and there is no cost.

If you are a VT who started last year and has not had an introduction to the workings of the SVRC and how it can help you, please let us know and come along. We run the day according to the needs of the participants, hence there is no "program" on our website.

Equipment Grants 2018

Equipment grants opened late last year and close on 28 February 2018. Equipment Grants are available to assist Victorian government schools to purchase essential, specialised equipment for students with vision impairments who do not meet the eligibility requirements of the Program for Students with Disabilities.

Applications must:

- include a report from the student's visiting teacher outlining the nature of the student's vision impairment
- evidence of the student's visual condition
- demonstrate that the equipment is essential to enable the student to access the curriculum
- include a description of requested equipment and its cost.

Applications for support must use the Equipment Grants 2018 application form. The specific name, make, model, cost and supplier of equipment must be provided.

Completed applications should be scanned and forwarded by email to the appropriate Regional Disabilities Coordinator, during the application period (see following).

It is essential that all necessary documentation is included with the application. The following checklist sets out the required documentation:

- completed application form signed by the principal
- report from the student's visiting teacher outlining the nature of the student's vision impairment and why the equipment is essential to support the student
- evidence of the student's visual condition
- quote for the item of equipment that specifies its name, make and model number and cost.

Applications received after 28 February 2018 will only be accepted for students transferring from other schools systems in 2018, including interstate and overseas.

For further information, please see the Equipment Grants Guidelines booklet, available on the DET website:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/health/equipgrantsguide.docx>

The form can also be found on the DET website:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/health/equipgrantsform.docx>

VCE Special Examination Arrangements for Students who have a Vision Impairment

Friday March 2, 2018 is the last day for schools to submit Special Examination Arrangement applications for the 2018 external assessments. Students with vision impairments can be eligible for special arrangements such as papers in alternative formats, descriptions of pictures and diagrams, extra reading and production time, use of their own technology, and more. It is recommended that schools involve the SVRC in working out the best options for a student and that these options be trialled for Year 10, 11 and Year 12 subjects. That way, the student and school can be confident of their requirements for the Year 12 (Units 3 & 4) assessments.

If you have students in Years 10, 11 or 12, please contact SVRC about arranging one of our staff (probably Marion Blazé) to attend a VCE support Group.

Contact: 03 9841 0242 or blaze.marion.g@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Cortical Visual Impairment: An Introduction to Assessment and Intervention for Children with CVI

When: Thursday, 8 February - Friday, 9 February

Time: 9:00am - 4:00pm

Where: RIDBC Renwick Centre, 361-365 North Rocks Road North Rocks, NSW

Available: Face to face or digital access

Course Description: Through power point and video, Dr. Sandra Newcomb will discuss the definition of CVI, who are the children diagnosed with CVI, and the visual characteristics of children with CVI. Participants will practice identifying visual characteristics of children with CVI by viewing videos of children. The CVI Range is the reliable and valid functional vision assessment for children with CVI. Dr. Newcomb will provide a brief introduction to the CVI Range (Roman-Lantzy, 2007) as well as strategies for assessment of children with CVI. Based on scores on The CVI Range, Dr. Newcomb will describe severity of CVI as divided into three phases. Intervention for children in Phase I, II, and III will be discussed. Special considerations for assessment and intervention for children in Phase III will be discussed with emphasis on literacy, including use of pictures and how a child learns to understand pictures, use of pictures for communication, and early reading skills.

With case studies, participants will integrate and apply knowledge of characteristics of CVI, severity of CVI, and intervention strategies to design interventions that become an integral part of a child's educational or home routines. Participants will create an action plan for implementing knowledge and skills gained in this workshop. Dr. Newcomb will also reserve time to answer questions.

Further information: <https://shortcourses.ridbc.org.au/events/cortical-vision-impairment-an-introduction-to-assessment-and-intervention-for-children-with-cvi/>

3-D Printing Webinar: What's Realistic for TVIs?

Source: Leona Holloway

Perkins online learning are offering a free webinar on 3D printing for TVIs (visiting teachers) on 1 March. Registration is free and at 5am EST Australia!

More details at

https://perkins1.secure.force.com/pmtx/evt_QuickEvent?id=a1B39000008qOF3&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=eLearning+PD+Calendar+-+Jan18&utm_content=eLearning+PD+Calendar+-+Jan18+CID_86b3d9895659b405acdc18a69485ddad&utm_source=Perkins+Message&utm_term=Sign+up+for+webinar

CHARGE Conference

When: 25-27 May 2018

Where: Melbourne

The CHARGE Syndrome conference for those with an interest in CHARGE Syndrome, Deafblindness and Multi-Sensory Impairment.

For further information and registration visit:

<http://www.chargesyndrome.org.au/conference2018/program/>

Round Table Conference: Advances in Information Access – Opportunities, Applications and Technologies

When: 5 May to 8 May 2018

Where: Rydges Sydney central, 28 Albion Street, Surry hills, NSW

Further information: <http://printdisability.org/conference/>

Funding to Attend Round Table Conference

Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc (Round Table) has been successful in obtaining a grant from the Department of Social Services' National Disability Conference Initiative 2017-18 grant administered under the Disability, Mental Health and Carers' Programme. The purpose of the grant is to help offset the financial cost to self-funded individuals with a print disability wishing to attend Round Table's 2018 annual conference, to be held in Sydney from 5-8 May 2018.

All applicants seeking a portion of the funding support made available by this grant must be an Australian resident and complete and lodge an application on or before 23 February 2018.

For more information, or to lodge an application, please follow the link below: [2018 Round Table Conference DSS funding application form](#). More general conference information, is available from the Round Table Conference web page [2018 Round Table Conference](#). Please note conference registrations will open later this month.

Tammy Axelsen Lifetime Achievement Award Nominations

Nominations are now open for the 2018 Round Table Lifetime Achievement Award. The closing date for nominations for the 2018 award is Friday, 23 March 2018.

Further information and an on-line nomination form are available on the Round Table Web site: <http://printdisability.org/lifetime-achievement-award/>

Australian Copyright Amendment Act 2017

On 22nd December 2017, the majority of provisions in the Copyright Amendment (Disability Access and Other Measures) Act 2017 came into force.

The Australian Libraries Copyright Committee has developed a number of fact sheets about the Act and its impact for practitioners with particular emphasis on the changes relating to libraries and archives:

- Overview of the Copyright Amendment (Disability Access and Other Measures) Act 2017
- New disability provisions in the Copyright Act
- Australia's simplified preservation laws
- Copyright term changes in 2019

The fact sheets are freely available under Creative Commons licence to all at:

<http://libcopyright.org.au/content/resources>

Q&A: English Online Testing in Braille

Question: How can VTs and schools access the English Online Testing materials in braille?

Answer: SVRC has the following testing materials as braille files:

- Cup Cakes
- Clever Max
- The Beach Ball
- Blackie's holiday
- Tap Dancing Star
- Tiger and the Big Wind
- The Golden Carambola Tree

Complete a request form and we'll have your materials brailled and ready for collection or mail.

Updated request forms for materials in alternative format can be found on the SVRC website:

<http://svrc.vic.edu.au/downloads/production/RequestForm2018.doc>

Further information regarding the English Online Testing can be found on the DET's website here:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/assessment/Pages/braille.aspx>

Travelling in Victoria with a Vision Impairment

The **Vision Impaired Travel Pass** (<https://www.ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/fares/free-travel-passes/vision-impaired-travel-pass>) requires a person to be diagnosed as legally blind. I do know of a case where a person who did not qualify as legally blind argued that their condition was worse at night and they were essentially within the "legally blind range" during most of their travel times. For someone with Retinitis Pigmentosa this would be a possible argument yet it appears your patients vision is quite stable.

Another consideration is the **Multi-Purpose Taxi Program Card**

(<http://taxi.vic.gov.au/passengers/mptp>). The eligibility for this card has a disability and financial consideration for each individual.

Finally, a **Companion Card** (<http://www.companioncard.org.au/ccapplycard.htm>) is another option but I wouldn't consider it a travel concession. Again, it is determined by the impact of the disability and many people with low vision would have one so they are able to safely travel to all required areas with assistance from a companion (at no cost to the companion).

2018 Focus on Ability Film Festival

From: www.focusonability.com.au

The 2018 Focus on Ability Film Festival is now open for applications. Entrants create a short film or documentary that is less than 5 minutes long with an ability/disability theme.

Visit the website above to watch all of our 210 documentaries and films from the 2017 festival.

Submit by: 1 June 2018

For more info please contact Ryan Goodwin: ryan@focusonability.com or (02) 8886 5606.

VT Support for Independent Schools

Two days into the school year, and we've already had parents asking about how they can find a VT (VI) to support their child who has moved to an Independent school. So if you are a VT with the time and the interest in visiting an Independent school, please contact Marion Blazé.

Independent schools can source some funding for a VT through Independent Schools Victoria (ISV), and have often been known to "top this up" so that students get the support they require.

Of course, students in Independent schools are eligible for all the other things SVRC can provide (alternative format materials, Support Skills or Dot Power, Professional Development).

Australia's first Dining in the Dark Restaurant Opens in Melbourne

Source: ABA Facebook Updates

Recently opened in Como Melbourne, you'll find more information on their Facebook page, Dans Le Noir?

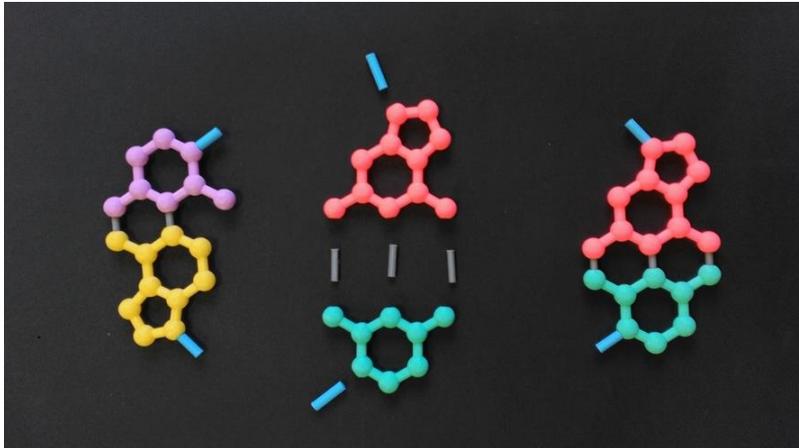
https://www.facebook.com/danslenoirmelb/?hc_ref=ARTsFEGkUpenyLZOd6Akee8qam17WGfmgxd91ctSFEvJTzSPTA31iQ7MXBo3oxX7o4&fref=nf

Build Your Own DNA

Source: ANZAGG Facebook Digest

Award-winning (and accessible) 3D print design available for free download: Build your own DNA chain.

https://pinshape.com/items/40598-3d-printed-building-a-dna-chain?utm_source=blog&utm_medium=post&utm_campaign=createtoeducatewinners



Duxbury Update

Duxbury have released service release 1 for DBT 12.2.

This new service release is free to all who are running the previous version 12.2! It includes JAWS improvements, Math improvements, Typeform improvements, TactileView integration fixed etc!

Blind Facebook Engineer is Behind Technologies to Help Verbalise Images and Videos

Source: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/20/facebook-matt-king-profile-blind-engineer-helping-image-recognition.html>

A Facebook team led by a blind engineer may hold the key to one of the most pressing problems on the internet: Screening images and videos for inappropriate content.

"More than 2 billion photos are shared across Facebook every single day," Facebook engineer Matt King said. "That's a situation where a machine-based solution adds a lot more value than a human-based solution ever could."

King's team is building solutions for visually impaired people on the platform, but the technology could eventually be used to identify images and videos that violate Facebook's terms of use, or that advertisers want to avoid.

King's passion stems in part from his own challenges of being a blind engineer...

King's IBM work revolved around creating the Accessible Rich Internet Applications standards, what he called "the plumbing for accessibility on the Web."

Now he works on features to help people with disabilities use Facebook, like adding captions on videos or coming up with ways to navigate the site using only audio cues.

"Anybody who has any kind of disability can benefit from Facebook," King said. "They can develop beneficial connections and understand their disability doesn't have to define them, to limit them."

One of his main projects is "automated alt-text," which describes audibly what is in Facebook images.

When automated alt-text [was launched in April 2016](#), it only available for five languages on the iOS app, and was only able to describe 100 basic concepts like whether something was indoors or outdoors, what nouns were in the picture, and some basic adjectives like smiling.

Today it is available in over 29 languages on Facebook on the web, iOS and Android. It also has a couple hundred concepts in its repertoire, including over a dozen more complex activities like sitting, standing, walking, playing a musical instrument or dancing.

For more, see the link above.

Maths Program: Free UEB Maths Support for Kids!

Source: ABA Facebook updates

The AnimalWatch VI suite app has accompanying braille and tactile graphics files for embossing.

<https://awvis.aphtech.org/>



Ed: We haven't tried this – would anybody like to comment?

Summer Holiday Activity

Inventi Ensemble invited students with vision impairments to a workshop at their Music Play Festival on 17 January. If anyone attended, please send comments or photos that we can include in The Bulletin.

2018 Queen's Birthday Honours

Dr Gillian Gale

Our recent Australia Day Honours recognised **Dr Gillian Gale** for "significant service to children who are blind or have low vision as an educator, and to learning support and education integration programs".

Amongst many significant achievements, Gillian co-authored SVRC's Ozzie Dots, our program to teach contracted braille to beginning braille readers.

Gillian received a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia.

Gillian has been a mentor and inspiration in the field of vision impairment and this recognition is well-deserved!

Rob Last

Well-known to many is Rob Last whose work with children and adults with CHARGE Syndrome and their families has been recognised in the recent Australia Day Honours. Rob received an AM for "significant service to children who are deaf, deafblind, or have low vision, and their families, particularly to those with CHARGE syndrome."

Feedback from Our Community

We had some lovely notes and cards offering feedback to the staff of the SVRC at the end of 2017. Here are a few of the comments:

- Our great appreciation for the high quality, personalized service you give the students so they can efficiently access the curriculum and participate in many aspects of extra curriculum in schools like music, performance and clubs. We are very fortunate here in Victoria to have access to the best available and you are always willing to do our "odd" requests.
- Words really can't express our gratitude to you all for providing such a supportive and empowering environment for students with vision impairments. My child has blossomed under your guidance and we are so appreciative for the efforts you make in improving the lives of our children. We are indebted to you.
- Many thanks for the fabulous support skills program that the students cherish so much. Our appreciation for the multi-talented skills you bring to our students who love coming to SVRC.
- Thank you for all the work you do for our students. I know at times you have very little notice but you always come through and ensure the students have what they need. I have really enjoyed working with you all this year.
- We are so fortunate to be able to access such a world class service that SVRC provides and high quality alternative formats. We all appreciate the innovative, diverse and fun activities for kids and VTs and how you are prepared to support the big programs that change some kid's lives.
- Big thank you to everyone. I don't think I have ever experienced such a friendly, supportive group!

Ed: We all love our work, here at the SVRC, and we are happy to contribute to our community!

Vale Dr Jan van Dijk

From ICEVI President, Frances Gentle

It is with sadness that I inform you than Dr Jan van Dijk has passed away. He was an enormous contributor to the field of deafblindness.

The National Centre on Deaf-Blindness described him as follows:

Dr van Dijk has been a practitioner, researcher and advocate in the field of deaf-blindness for 50 years. His approach to the education of children who are deaf-blind has led to the development of the concepts of resonance, attachment, co-active movement and natural communication. His research includes work with the rubella population, with CHARGE syndrome, assessment and also neurobiology.

Staff News

Ro Gooch who has been a VT in Gippsland for many years is retiring! Congratulations and enjoy!

Lee Clarke's last day was this week. Lee retires to spend time travelling, fishing and creating! All the best, Lee!

Darren Hess will be on Family Leave for the beginning of 2018. There may be a vacancy in NWVR – check Employment Online.

No changes at **SVRC** – it's business as usual!

Finally

Take care of yourselves in this busy term! Drop in for a cuppa and a chat if you have the time!

Deb Lewis (Ed)