

# The Bulletin

## Statewide Vision Resource Centre

Number 10

Monday 12 July 2010

This issue was edited by Lyn Robinson, Vision Resource Teacher, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.

### Professional Development Activities for Term 3, 2010

Professional Development Event 2010	Date
<b>Skill Power Workshops for Visiting Teachers, Teachers, Aides, Students etc</b> <b>1. Computer Without the Mouse</b> – 10.00am to 11.30am Lea Nagel, SVRC <b>2. MAGic</b> – 12.00 to 1.30pm Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology <b>3. VictorReader Stream</b> – Ramona Mandy, HumanWare 2.00pm to 3.30pm (BYO VRS)	Wednesday 21 July
<b>Support for Students with Vision Impairments: The Psychologist's Role</b> – 9.00am to 3.30pm Geoff Bowen, Psychologist SVRC	Wednesday 28 July
<b>Skill Power Workshops for Visiting Teachers, Teachers, Aides, Students etc</b> Session 1 and 2 TBA. 3. <b>WYNN</b> – 2.00pm to 3.30pm Trevor Boyd, Quantum Technology	Tuesday 10 August
<b>A Blind Child at My School</b> – class and subject teachers, integration teachers and aides, therapists, family members and visiting teachers who are working with blind prep students in 2011.	Wednesday 11 August
<b>Term 3 Visiting Teacher Professional Development Day</b> – Intro to Macbook, iPad and iPhone accessibility options and applications.	Tuesday 24 August

\*Skill Power Workshops: please BYO technology and lunch. The yearly program is available at: <http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/PDannual.htm>

### Reports on recent SVRC activities by Marion Blazé

#### ***'Art for students with vision impairments' - June 11***

Michael Donnelly, who is our art teacher for the Support Skills Program run at SVRC on Fridays, and was the art teacher at the Vision Australia school until the end of last year, ran a half-day PD session on including children with vision impairments in art, on Friday, June 11. The day was attended by seventeen art specialists from special and regular schools and included a mixture of PowerPoint presentations, a 'show and tell' of materials and practical activities. All participants seemed enthused and said that next year it must be a whole-day activity. Thanks Michael for preparing and conducting a very successful PD.

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## **'Including students who are blind or have low vision in physical education programs' - June 18**

This whole-day activity was run by Charlie Roberts along with Emily White and with contributions from Gail Stinchcombe and a panel of students - Kimberley, Daniel and Veronica. Charlie and Emily both had stints as the PE teacher at the Vision Australia School and Charlie is now a part-time Visiting Teacher in Eastern Region and the PE and Maths specialist with our Support Skills program. Emily is now teaching at Sunshine SDS and we are very grateful to her school and Principal for releasing her to help run this day.

As an outsider observing the day, it looked like lots of fun, interspersed with plenty of practical information. On many occasions participants were blindfolded or wearing goggles. They were seen dancing, playing 'Swish' and over in the Heatherwood gym, playing 'Goalball'. Feedback from the 20+ participants was overwhelmingly positive with many saying they felt inspired and would change their practices in their schools. What more could we ask from a well run PD?? Thanks especially to Charlie and Emily for a great (and valuable) day.

## **Vision Loss Support Group meeting on recreation options - June 19**

For once we did not re-arrange the furniture between activities, because the equipment on display from the PE day was most appropriate for our Saturday afternoon meeting. About 15 families (about 30 people), came to hear Diana Hayward and Hazel Hockley talk about recreation options for kids with vision impairments. Diana is the Recreation Development Worker with Vision Australia and the source of masses of information about what's on recreationally for our kids. Hazel is from Blind Sports Victoria and is often spotted at our Expo singing the praises of sport for vision impaired people. Both gave the meeting an introduction to the options available to our students and then we had a look at the Swish table and other sports equipment. We also heard from Glenn Bowen, ex-student, about the iPad and how it talks (Glenn is blind) and a piece of software on his mobile phone which photographs text, OCRs it, then speaks it! All for only \$2,000. We'll find out more about this one for our Expo. Several new families attended this meeting and seemed to find it beneficial and enjoyable.

## **How to use the Ease of Access Centre**

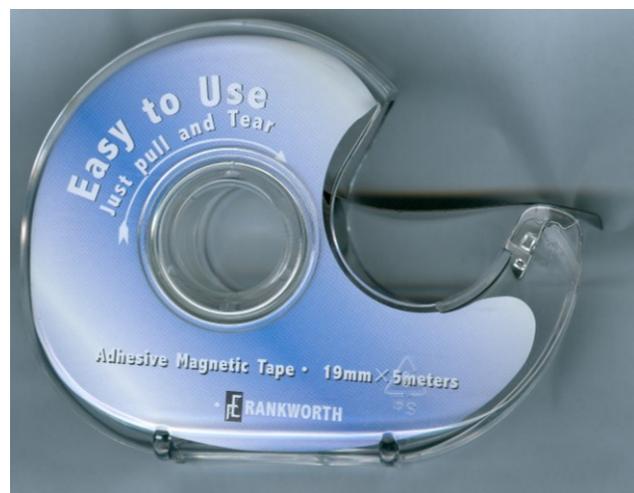
There are Guides available for using the Ease of Access Centre in Windows 7 and Vista, you can get them from: [http://www.rsc-ne-scotland.org.uk/e-inclusion/?page\\_id=43#narrator](http://www.rsc-ne-scotland.org.uk/e-inclusion/?page_id=43#narrator)

## **Magnetic Tape**

At the recent Visiting Teacher professional development day, Charlie demonstrated some of the ways to "confine" items such as 3-dimensional shapes, MAB blocks etc for use in a maths lesson. He used non-slip mats to minimize the random movement of his teaching items. Another method might be to attach magnets to the items.

Office Works have an adhesive magnetic tape on a dispenser which is sticky on one side and would work well.

Each roll is approximately \$4-5 and is 5 metres long.



## Finger Skills for Typing

Lea Philp dusted off an article that she had saved from an early issue of the Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness which has some very useful ideas relating to keyboarding ... and a few references to typewriters!

Essentially, the author recommends that students with vision impairments including those with additional impairments learn to type and navigate their way around their keyboard in a planned and effective manner. Carefully directed time for lessons is necessary to make the experience of working on this new and complicated skill more meaningful to the students. Further, young students and those with physical difficulties may even need to work on hand, finger and arm strength as part of their keyboarding program. Her 45-minute keyboarding lessons include 10-15 minutes dedicated to exploration and exercise of the hand:

1. What can it do for you? How does it move? How does it pick up a piece of paper that has been dropped on the floor? How many bends are in each finger?
2. Comparing hands – gently touch our own hands and the hands of others and observing the size, shape, colour and texture
3. What is under the skin? Moving the fingers and noticing the movements of the muscles. Clasping hands together.
4. Manipulation of everyday objects with the fingers such as clothes pins, tissues, paper, kitchen tongs etc

Games were developed which kept the students motivated:

### Hand trace:

- Initially the teacher, then later the student traced with crayon around one hand, keeping this hand still and flat.
- Sometimes students were encouraged to concentrate silently; sometimes questions and comments were encouraged: Up, around, down, up, around down; Does it tickle?; Can you feel your fingernails? What makes your fingers move?
- The outlines of students' hands were made tactile and students matched their hands to the tactile representation.
- With their hands on the tactile representation, students were encouraged to lift one finger at a time.

### Fist-hand exercise

- Clench the hands to form a tight fist then open the hands to a full span with straight fingers spread. If students have difficulty with this activity, they may need to place their hands on your hands while you slowly clench and spread your fingers, describing your action. Use hand lotion for variety.
- To encourage rhythm and maintain interest, bring along your mp3 player and let the student pick a song (songs with no lyrics appear to work better) for the fist-hand exercise. Or count by fives or tens to 100 forwards then backwards to add to the mental task and increase endurance.



### Thumb-to-finger game

- Students touch their thumb to the tip of each finger in turn and then spread the hands open for a beat and so on. This can be done to a chant of "thumb-to-pointer, open up wide, thumb-to-tall, open up wide, thumb-to-ring, open up wide, thumb-to-small, open up wide; and later "thumb to "f" finger, open up wide, thumb to "d" finger, open up wide, thumb to "s" finger, open up wide, thumb to "a" finger, open up wide, thumb to "j" finger, open up wide, thumb to "k" finger and so on.
- Later words and sentences can be dictated for the thumb-to-finger game to encourage listening and memory skills, along with dexterity.



### Foam Squeeze

- Obtain some heavy 20 cm foam cubes. Have fun with the foam: throw, catch, squeeze, smell, tuck under arm, bounce on various body parts etc.
- Once the novelty has worn off, squeeze the foam cube into a small ball in each hand for a few seconds before opening the hand, trying not to drop it.

### Cats' claws

- Designed to encourage a familiarity with the finger position for typing, have students wrap their fingers around a pencil so that the back of the hands and knuckles are flat and the fingers are curled at the second joint. Then return the fingers to a straightened position.
- Once the students are familiar with the position, have them make the "cat's claws" without the pencil. Use cat noises, tapping, music or other rhythm for interest.



The author points out that these exercises proved a successful way to begin typing lessons. It also assisted in students' ability to move their fingers with more ease, dexterity and muscle control. Students' improved control of their hands transferred to other hand skills such as shoelace-tying, clothes-buttoning, and use of knife and fork.

This material is very much adapted from "Focus on the Hands: A Beginning Approach to Teaching Typing to Visually Impaired, Multiply Handicapped Students by Frances J. Bauer Dibble, JVIB, October 1984 by Deb Lewis.

## Free PowerPoint Downloads

Thanks to Geoff for this "find" – the Special Education Technology British Columbia website includes several dozen PowerPoint Books which you can download for free – and most have large print, big & bold pictures and the story is read out loud.

With titles like:

- I like animals
- Hair
- Henry goes to a Hockey Game
- Make Pizza
- A Book About Egypt

there is something to interest most little readers! Along with the adult-created books, there are also student-created books eg I Love to Make Sounds!!! Several are Clicker Books or BoardMaker Books.

Take a look here: <http://www.setbc.org/setbc/accessiblebooks/freebooksforyou.html>

## First Impressions of the Apple iPad from a Blind User

Posted by Crista Earl on 4/5/2010 8:37:08 PM American Foundation for the Blind Blog



I dropped by my local Apple store on Sunday to see if the iPad might really be as cool as it sounded. Well, it's as cool and cooler. I asked the salesman to turn on Voiceover, the built-in screen reader, for me, and he did and handed me the device. If you're visually impaired and you've gone shopping for home or personal electronics in your life, you already think something is weird here. Screen reader built in? For free? Salesperson who knows it? Knows how to turn it on?

This is not science fiction, this is my actual shopping experience, and this is not the first time I've had such an experience at the Apple store (If you aren't visually impaired, you might think it's kind of normal to go to a store, ask about a product feature that's described on the web site, and have the sales person show it to you. You might even walk out of the store in frustration or disgust if the sales person couldn't figure it out. But we're pretty used to coming up empty-handed.)

OK, so I'll skip a few steps and say I bought an iPad. Yes, it's an all-touch-screen device. Yes, I've always said that touch screens and blind people don't go together – it's suggested, usually by slightly dumb people, that I could just memorize where all the icons were and then I could touch the screen at the right spot and get the right thing to happen... Do they really think they could withdraw \$100 from an ATM that way? Dial a phone? But, the iPhone and iPad have an ingenious and delightful interface that actually makes the touch screen a pleasure to use.

There will be a proper, full-featured review of the iPad in [AccessWorld](#) soon. These are just the first impressions of a so-far-happy customer.

### **How does it work?**

To get around the screen on the first day, when you don't know where anything is or how it really works, you can explore by swiping your finger across the screen. So, you turn the iPad on (by pressing a "real" button called the home button) and hear the time. Already, a fabulous talking clock! Then, you swipe your finger to the right to hear the date, then again to the unlock button. You can go back the other way by swiping to the left (I presume everything is in reverse for a right-to-left language model, but I've only tried the US English version so far). Once you decide to choose something, which on the first screen is mostly only the unlock button, you swipe across the screen until you land on the thing you want, then double-tap with your finger to activate the button. While you're exploring the home screen, which is where all the things you can do on the device are listed, you don't need to know where anything is or in what order they are listed. You start swiping, and you'll start with whatever you last did. So, if you had been in the contacts list earlier and then had gone back to the home screen, you would go forward hearing "Notes," "Maps," "Videos," and

then you could go backwards through the list and eventually get to the top item. There, you get a sound effect to let you know you've hit the edge.

After using the device a little, you'll learn the physical positions of certain things. On my iPhone, I know where the phone is, where the compass is, and where the clock and battery icons are. So, you tap the spot where you think the item is and Voiceover reads what's there. If it's what you want, you double tap. If you've missed it by a bit, you can swipe across until you find the right thing.

You can explore everything this way, including your playlists in your music app (which they call "iPod") and the keyboard in the Notes application. You can type an entire note by swiping across the keyboard until you find the letter you want, then double-tapping the letter, then swiping forward or back to the next letter.

Life is too short to do many notes that way, and luckily there's an alternative. You can glide your index finger around the screen and Voiceover will say each thing as you pass over it. When you find what you want, you can touch the screen with a second finger, all without lifting up the first finger. This is much faster, but takes some practice.

Of course, if all I want to do is take notes, I have much better options than the iPad. I have a laptop, a BrailleNote, a Victor Reader Stream....

### ***What is it good for?***

What I really think I'll do with the iPad is read books, show photographs, watch videos, and surf the Internet. This seems to be a content-consuming device, not a content-creating device. In other words, if I want to write the great American novel, I'll go to my PC with a "real" keyboard, a full-featured screen reader and word processor, and all the bells and whistles. If I want to read my novel after it's published, though, I might do it on this little guy. I sometimes carry my laptop around the house with music playing. Now, I'll do it with the iPad and its much-superior sound quality.

So, what have I done with it so far? I've connected it to my Wi-Fi network and I've synched it with my Mac. From there, I transferred my playlists and music files and my photos. The synching was painless. I have not yet downloaded or read a book – I did sample the book-reading capability at the store, and it appeared to work well – the salesperson put me into a book, I explored for a while, then he put me into the text of a chapter so I could be sure the actual text was readable. That's as far as I've gotten.

One of my favourite little dumb features is the screen curtain. I use it on my iPhone. If you tap the screen three times with three fingers together, the screen will go blank. This might save battery... No evidence yet to support this, but it does keep people from looking at what I'm doing. Don't forget to turn it back on if you want to show off your vacation photos!

[http://www.afb.org/blog/blog\\_comments.asp?TopicID=6149&FolderID=25](http://www.afb.org/blog/blog_comments.asp?TopicID=6149&FolderID=25)

### **What's Possible? Art for the Blind**

Following on from Michael's art workshop at the SVRC is this very inspirational video about the work of "Art Education for the Blind", a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote equal access to art experiences for all people.

If you've ever wondered what the relationship is between someone who is blind and art then this is for you. Or if you are already a convert you might also enjoy this short film which discusses "What's Possible? Art for the Blind". <http://www.youtube.com/user/artbeyondsight>

## MyVisBar

Phillip Mills, Access and Inclusion Blog

MyVisBar is a high contrast floating toolbar designed to support learners with a visual difficulty. The floating toolbar is a high contrast (yellow on black) toolbar which offers 6 quality applications; Magnify, Speech, Write, Read, Resize and Focus. MyVisBar is portable which means it can be downloaded to and launched from a USB memory stick.



Ed. Note: I have tried the toolbar and it is quite easy to download and install. There is a nice bright circle to help you find your cursor which is accessed by selecting “Focus” on the toolbar. “Resize” gives an overall enlargement to the screen including menu headings. The other applications “Magnify, Speech Write and Read” also are quite good. You can download MyVisBar from [www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/MyVisBar.zip](http://www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/MyVisBar.zip)

If you would like to check out the Access and Inclusion Blog where this software came from go to: <http://inclusive.ning.com/>

Source: It’s Vision Time Issue 16

## Meet Your Community: You are invited to a World Café Event

A conversation about our lives and our futures in a community to be inclusive of people with disability. The World Café is a chance to meet other people who live near you. It’s a chance to talk about your life, and the things you want to do.

**Where:** The Multicultural Hub,  
506 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne (opposite the Queen Vic Market)

**Date:** Saturday 17th July

**Time:** 10.00 am until 4.00 pm (lunch will be provided)

**Getting there:**

**Tram:** 19, 57, 59.

**Train:** Melbourne Central.

**Car:** Parking must be booked in advance. Please notify the organizers when you RSVP.

**RSVP essential by Friday 9th July:** (Some flexibility with RSVP)

Phone 9650 6499 to speak to Becke [bnicholls@melbournemobilitycentre.com.au](mailto:bnicholls@melbournemobilitycentre.com.au)

The venue is wheelchair accessible. When you RSVP, please notify the organisers of any dietary or access requirements.

## "In the Driver's Seat" 2010

‘In the Drivers Seat’, a program sponsored by the Warrandyte Lions Club in conjunction with V.A.C.C. and Independent Driving Instructors at Sandown Motor Circuit each year, is a very popular activity for senior students and adults. We had a number of participants in the program this year – you can read their stories in issue 5 of The Bulletin and on this temporary webpage:

<http://www.visiontech.svrc.vic.edu.au/DriversSeat.htm>

## Table tennis adaptation

Source: It's Vision Time Issue 16

1. Ball is rolled under the net; if it hits the net on a return, the player loses a point.
2. We use adapted ping pong balls purchased in Japan; they are bright yellow and have ball bearings in them, so they rattle when they roll across the table. I suspect that a player would develop the ability to hear an unmodified ball, but we've been spoiled by having the modified balls available.
3. We have one-inch trim along the ends of the table, and along the sides near the end, so the ball does not roll off totally if the player misses it.
4. The players keep their paddles perpendicular to the table and pretty much keep the paddle in contact with the table, "sliding" back and forth to block the rolling ping pong ball as it approaches the end.
5. If the ball goes over the edge of the table (or hits the trim of a modified table), the receiving/defending player loses the point.

## New Inventions

From Gabrielle Graf Visiting Teacher Regional Coordinator, Western Metropolitan Region: Just an interesting observation made recently at a school "invention convention" I had the privilege to attend. Invention 1: "The Watcher". Worn like a watch around the wrist, made with wet suit material so it won't slip off. The watch face is actually a small sophisticated GPS which, when prompted, tells the blind person exactly where they are, and how many steps and in which direction to take to get where they are going. For example, the wearer says, "help me navigate my way to the closest Coles supermarket". The Watcher will then speak the exact way to get there. For example, "walk out your front door and turn right. Take five steps to the corner of the street and turn left. Now walk 18 standard steps and stop at the pedestrian crossing....." The Watcher also has a time function so it speaks the time. It is powered by solar battery so the wearer doesn't need to change batteries. It is labelled with braille for ease of operation. The second invention noted was a walking stick with a built-in light and built in GPS navigation system so the user with low vision is able to seek assistance at night. The final invention helping our blind citizens was a car that drives for the blind. The blind person simply gets in, tells the car where to go, and it goes there!!! These inventions were all created by grade 4 children under the instruction of "invent something to help the disabled, to help a teacher or to help the elderly". Our future is secure when we have such thoughtful budding little inventors out there in our schools!!!

## Accidents Happen: Accessible First Aide Course

Young Blind Citizen's Victoria and Accidents Happen First Aide are running an accessible first aide course at Vision Australia, Kooyong. The following information is from their flyer:

Would you like to know you are doing the right things when treating cuts, burns and injuries of your family and friends? Would you like to know what to do in an emergency? Complete your Level 2 First Aide Certificate

**Where:** Vision Australia, Glenferrie Road, Kooyong.

**When:** Saturday 24th July

**Materials:** Provided in an accessible electronic format. Printed large print copies can be arranged on request.

**Cost:** \$160

**How:** Reading material and work-booklet to be completed prior to the day session .

1 day session to learn and assess practical skills and ask any further questions you have of the trainers.

If you have any further questions or wish to enrol in this course please contact Amy Baillie at: [amyba@tpg.com.au](mailto:amyba@tpg.com.au) to discuss enrolment and payment of course fees.

## Update makes Mac compatible with braille displays

From Kevin Blazé

Latest update for Mac OS has something that might be of interest to students and visiting teachers: "improved compatibility with some braille displays". According to the literature out there on the net the Apple team have been working to enhance Macs compatibility with a whole range of braille displays. The Apple Braille Display Update 1.0 is available from <http://mac.brothersoft.com/apple-braille-display-update.html>

## Braille Proficiency Test

From: Leona Holloway

The next Trans-Tasman Proficiency Test will be offered in Australia between 28 September to 9 October 2010, with candidates able to elect one of those two weeks in which to sit the test. The cost is \$50 + GST (ie. \$55). Please contact our new ABA Secretary, Linda Triasmono, at <mailto:mlindatriasomono@bigpond.com%20> to register for the test or find out more.

A practice test is available on the ABA website at <http://www.ebility.com/roundtable/aba/aba.php>

## Ultraset Pupil-free Day 9 August 2010

Visiting Teachers please note: "There will be an additional 'one-off' pupil-free day for all government schools on 9 August 2010 to support the implementation of the Ultraset."

Source: DEECD Mail Schools Bulletin - week ending 25 June 2010

## Assistive Technology Room at the State Library of Victoria

The State Library of Victoria keeps a register of names of people who can access their Assistive Technology Room. They have a Braille embosser, a ScannaR and 2 computers which run Duxbury, JAWS (v6), Kurzweil 1000, ZoomText, Dragon Naturally Speaking and a Merlin CCTV.

To join the register please contact Jan Brennan on 03 8664 7005 or email [jbrennan@slv.vic.gov.au](mailto:jbrennan@slv.vic.gov.au)

For more on the State Library of Victoria and their Assistive Technology Room, please visit their website: <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/services/disability-assistance-technologies>

Thanks to Max Bini for this information.

## Free 2 go – a free service from RACV

From Marion Blazé

I recently attended an information session at my daughter's school about life after school and it included a session on 'free2go'. This new initiative from the RACV could have benefits for our students because it is available not only to drivers, but to passengers.

It offers the same road side assistance for break downs, keys locked in vehicles or flat tyres as regular RACV membership and any Year 12 student or 18 year old can call upon this assistance even when they are a passenger. The service is offered Australia-wide. For 19 and 20 year olds, it is half price. It is not being advertised but is depending on word of mouth to promote it - so pass it on. Take a look at [www.racv.com.au](http://www.racv.com.au) and search for free2go.

## Jets Studios Taster Day

Vision Australia will be running an activity day for school age children at Jets Studios. Jets Studios is a music, multimedia and creative arts space for young people and community groups. Flyer attached at the end of Bulletin 10.

**When:** Tuesday August 24th 2010 (school aged)

**Time:** 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm

**Where:** Jets Studios, 2/24 The Concord, Bundoora

**Cost:** \$10

## Staff and Student News

### **Student wins Quantum Technology Scholarship**

Odette Budge (Visiting Teacher – Catholic Education Office) has sent a picture of one of her students, Sylvia receiving a prize from Quantum Technology.

Sylvia is from St Stephen's Primary School and has won writing competition run by Quantum Technology. Her prize was a scholarship from Quantum in the form of a copy of Magic enlarging software.

Sylvia is pictured on the right holding a copy of Quantum's "Magic" enlarging software.



### **Circus Oz Performance**

About 12 students and their families attended a special performance of Circus Oz recently. Students from Geelong, Kinglake West, Williamstown, Morang South and Greensborough attended the performance thanks to an offer of complementary tickets from Circus Oz and some quick work from Visiting Teachers and the SVRC to get the tickets out to families. A fabulous time was had by all. Student, Heath, liked the acrobatic performance, particularly the part where the man fell out of his pants while hanging upside down on the trapeze.

### **Staff News**

Zhi, who works in the braille department at the SVRC, is currently visiting her family in China. She also plans to do some sight seeing at the World Expo while she is there. We look forward to hearing about Zhi's trip on her return.

### **Finally**

Thanks to everyone for their contributions to this Bulletin especially, Deb Lewis, Gabrielle Graf Odette Budge, Kym Gribble and Marion Blazé.

If you have something you would like included in "The Bulletin" please forward it, preferably in a word document, to Lyn Robinson [lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au](mailto:lynrobin@svrc.vic.edu.au)

To Read the Bulletin Online: <http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/bulletins2010.html>

# Jets Studios Taster Day

## Partnership between Vision Australia and Jets Studios; a project of the Banyule City Council.

Jets Studios is a music, multimedia and creative arts space for young people and community groups.

Do you want to:

- Learn how to spin some tunes and DJ on our decks?
- Create your own sounds, songs, stories or a radio show?
- Create and then put sounds to your own video?
- Rehearse your band, start a band or just jam?
- Record your band's sound?
- Or have some fun and do Karaoke!

### Then come to Jets!!

The Taster day will provide an opportunity to experience the Jets Studios and then discuss what you and your peers would like to do.

**When:** Tuesday August 24<sup>th</sup> 2010 (school aged)  
**Time:** 4.00pm to 6.00pm  
**Where:** Jets Studios, 2/24 The Concord, Bundoora  
**Cost:** \$10

If you're aged under 18 and would like to join us, or for any further queries, call Brendan at Vision Australia 03 8458 0118 to register your place.

If you would like some Orientation and Mobility support, for either travelling to the studio or within the studio please let Brendan know when you ring to book your place.

