

Focus



Vision Australia

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

Edition 2 – 2017



Exclusive

Jasper's on track to achieve great things!

In this edition of your Vision Australia supporter newsletter:

- How bursary programs are helping our students excel at university
- Follow Paisley's story as she begins her first year of school
- Celebrating our regional groups and volunteers' dedication and commitment



From Ron, to you

Hello and welcome to the second edition of Focus for 2017. We're having another very exciting year at Vision Australia, and I am delighted as always to have the opportunity to share some of our clients' achievements with you.

Thanks to your support, our bursary program continues to give talented students like Timothy the chance to complete their tertiary studies. I've had the pleasure of meeting Timothy and he's such an outstanding young man that I just know he's going to go on to succeed in life!

On pages 3 and 5, I am proud to share some of the wonderful things children like Paisley and Jasper are achieving. These two outgoing youngsters are reaching their milestones, thanks to the resources and support your generosity has helped provide them.

So much of our work is made possible with the help of our wonderful volunteers. I hope you will enjoy reading about long-time volunteer – and client – Cliff, and join us in congratulating Mudgee's Vision Impaired Friendship Group as they celebrate 20 years of supporting the blind and low vision community.

Thank you again for being one of our valued supporters. Your commitment allows us to give people who are blind or have low vision access to the support they need to live confidently and independently – we couldn't do it without you!

Ron Hooton
CEO, Vision Australia

Timothy is set to enjoy university, thanks to you

Tertiary studies will soon be more accessible and less stressful for 28-year-old Timothy, thanks to a technology grant through Vision Australia's Higher Education Bursary Program that your commitment helps fund.

Timothy has Albinism which affects his vision by making things look blurry and out of focus. Despite this, Timothy is completing a Bachelor of Information Technology by correspondence at Melbourne's RMIT University.

Timothy is excelling in his studies and achieving outstanding results. Vision Australia has provided him with a portable video magnifier and MacBook laptop computer, which Timothy says will help him overcome some of the challenges he still faces.

To find out more about Vision Australia's Bursaries program, please call 1300 84 74 66 or visit visionaustralia.org/bursary



The technology Timothy receives through our Bursary Program helps him study successfully alongside his peers.

"My low vision means that getting work done in time can be difficult sometimes. The new technology will really let me work faster and make things a lot less stressful – that's something that I'm looking forward to."

Paisley's Big School Adventure stories from our community



to her first year of school. As her mum, Kimberley, writes:

"Paisley has made new friends, come out of her shell, and has something new to tell me every afternoon... the apprehension and anxiety that I felt in the lead up to school was warranted, but unnecessary. My little girl... has begun her education journey and welcomed it with open arms."

"I know that my little girl is going to love school. She will embrace it and blossom into the superstar she was born to be."

One of our young clients, Paisley, is currently on her journey through her first year of formal schooling. Paisley's mum, Kimberley, has been writing a blog that takes us through the ups and downs and the challenges the family experiences.

Paisley's low vision means her eyes have reduced depth perception and are unable to filter sunlight. As soon as she is exposed to the slightest glare, she starts to squint and her eyes shake.

But thanks to your support, Patricia, one of our Occupational Therapists, has helped Paisley and her family through her transition to school. She made sure that Paisley was familiar with shapes, the letters of the alphabet, and writing her name.

Patricia gave Paisley exercises to practise at home, including walking back and forth on the balance beam, doing step ups on the stairs, and rope walks. These activities help fine tune Paisley's depth perception and hand-eye coordination, as well as building her confidence and preparing her for the unfamiliar surroundings at school.

Patricia also took the family on a walk through Paisley's new school. They met her teachers, looked at the classrooms, and gave her the chance to play in the playground with her little sister, Parker.

As a result, Paisley has settled in very well



Follow Paisley's blog

To follow Paisley and her Big School Adventure, head to visionaustralia.org/seelikeme

To help support families like Paisley's to navigate the important transition to school, please donate at visionaustralia.org/donate

Above: Paisley with her friend, Olive
Above left: Paisley is loving her first year of school

Mudgee Group celebrates 20 years

On March 8, Mudgee's Vision Impaired Friendship Group celebrated two decades of support and advocacy for blind and low vision community living in the area.

Mary, founding member and current Mudgee Group coordinator, said the past 20 years have been amazing.

"All the members of the group are blind or have low vision and being part of the group is something that's very important to everyone," she explained. "When we meet each month we always share something about ourselves or what we've been doing. It's a great social outlet and it's good to discuss things with people who are in a similar situation."

The group has worked hard to improve accessibility around Mudgee and arrange other services for people who are blind or have low vision. Thanks to the group's advocacy efforts, there are now clear footpaths and tactile indicators throughout the town that help people who are blind or



Graham, Rachel and Mary are celebrating 20 years

have low vision safely navigate their way around.

"Some of the members in our group are in their 80s and have been members for over 10 years," says Mary. "We used to be a much more physically active and hands-on group, but now we're trying to use our brain power more to come up with ways we can make a difference."

To find out more about our advocacy work, please call **1300 84 74 66** or email advocacy@visionaustralia.org

Surf's up for kids on NSW Central Coast

Children who are blind or have low vision got to hit the waves over summer on Vision Australia's surf day in NSW, thanks to you!

Fifteen Vision Australia clients aged five to 17, supported by the Newcastle and Gosford Vision Australia teams, took part in the event.

It was led by ex-surf instructor Aimee, Vision Australia staff, a local surf school, and representatives from Adaptive Surfing Australia, an organisation that supports people with a disability get



Children enjoying the surf

back into the ocean.

The kids learned about rips, currents and other aspects of beach safety and had a great experience surfing! They had a ball, and can't wait to do it again next summer.

To find out more about Vision Australia's services, please call **1300 84 74 66**.

Thanks to you, Jasper's achieving great things!

Have you seen our fundraising campaign featuring six-year-old Jasper?

Jasper was just 10 weeks old when he was diagnosed with Albinism, a genetic condition which affects his vision. But thanks to the support of people like you, we have been there for Jasper and his family from the very beginning.

Our wide range of services have supported Jasper at each crucial stage of his development and maximised his learning opportunities.



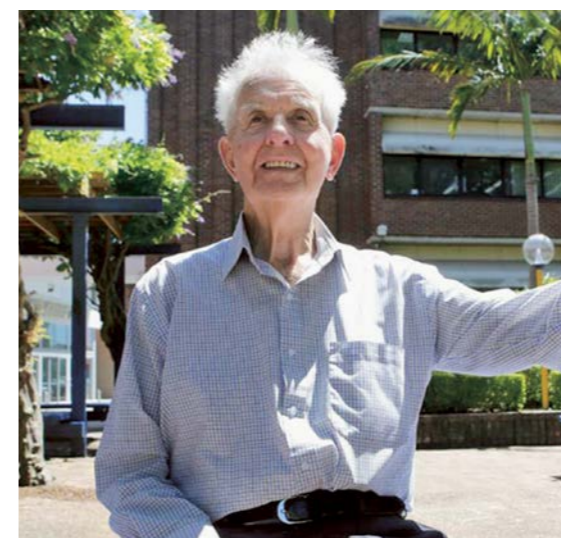
Jasper is very active and loves riding his bike!

As a result, he has developed into a confident little six-year-old who is reaching his milestones and becoming more and more independent. As Jasper's mum Lee told us:

"The way Jasper gets around new environments constantly surprises me. He is so confident that he will go up to children he doesn't know and ask them to play. He rides his bike down the street, plays trains, and loves music and watching Thomas movies.

"I've said many a time that I couldn't have done it without Vision Australia."

To make a gift today and help children like Jasper, please call **1800 42 00 77**, visit visionaustralia.org/donate or fill out the attached donation form. Thank you!



Cliff celebrates 20 years volunteering

For the past 20 years, Cliff has made the three-hour round trip on public transport from his home in Ramsgate, Sydney, to Vision Australia's Enfield office where he volunteers three or four times a week.

Cliff, 91, explained that he joined the organisation as a client after losing his sight in 1996, but was soon helping out as a volunteer.

"I heard about the volunteering side of things and I think the next day I started," he said. "I was there at 7 o'clock the next morning working in the library."

Cliff's work and dedication was recognised at a recent presentation with an award for his outstanding long-service.

Cliff began volunteering following his retirement as an engineer in the aviation industry. Among other things, his career

saw him serve in the Royal Australian Air Force, establish an airline in Papua New Guinea and hold senior executive positions at Ansett Airlines.

Despite those achievements, Cliff said the last 20 years have been "the most fulfilling" of his life.

We thank Cliff and all our volunteers for the fantastic work they do!

For more information on volunteering, call us on **1300 84 74 66** or email volunteer@visionaustralia.org

Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight 2016 was once again a fabulous success!



Above: The Sidney Myer Music Bowl full of Vision Australia clients and supporters.

Right: Dami Im performing on stage.

Bottom Right: Groups gather outside for a photo before the event.

Thank you so much for your incredible support. Together we achieved our vision of raising \$1 million in one Christmas – in fact we raised over \$1.2 million!

Vision Australia's Carols by Candlelight on Christmas Eve has been a fabulous tradition for 79 years, sharing classic Christmas carols and an evening of entertainment, with something for the whole family. This year will be no exception as 2017 marks the 80th anniversary of Carols by Candlelight.

In 2016 we delivered almost 50,000 hours of services to children who are blind or have low vision, and the money raised from this event will enable us to keep up this crucial work.

Thank you again for your support. Together, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of children who are blind or have low vision.



To stay updated with the latest information on this event, join the Carols by Candlelight Club carols.visionaustralia.org

Become one of our monthly supporters today

By joining our regular giving program **Live the Vision** you can be sure that no one who comes to Vision Australia faces vision loss alone. You will help thousands of people who are blind or have low vision, practically and emotionally.

From the very young to the not-so-young, they can have access to services that help them achieve their goals, including receiving support to achieve independence and social inclusion as well as education and employment.

Why support in this way? Regular giving is so important because it provides Vision Australia



Your monthly support will help children like Mieah

with the financial stability to plan ahead and dedicate funds to life-changing services.

Your regular monthly donation is truly valuable and will make a lasting difference in the lives of those whose daily lives are affected by vision loss.

To pledge your regular gift today and support people with vision loss, please call **1800 42 20 77** or complete the attached form. Thank you!



Helpful tips for having conversations with a friend or family member who is blind or has low vision:

- Use their name when introducing yourself or when directing conversation to them in a group.
- Talk directly to them. Don't channel conversation through a third person.
- In a group, make sure you introduce yourself and the other people present so they know who's there.
- Avoid situations where there is competing noise.

- Continue to use body language. This will affect the tone of your voice which gives them a lot of extra information.
- Never leave a conversation without saying so – it's embarrassing to talk to someone who is no longer there.
- Identify yourself. Don't assume the person will recognise you by your voice.
- Speak naturally and clearly. Loss of eyesight does not mean loss of hearing.
- Use everyday language. Don't avoid words like "see" or "look" or talking about activities such as "watching" TV.

When speaking with a person who is blind or has low vision, be yourself and act naturally.

- Always ask first to check if help is needed.
- Don't be offended if an offer of assistance isn't automatically accepted – help may not be required this time, but offers are generally appreciated.
- Use accurate and specific language when giving directions, eg "The door is on your left", rather than "The door is over there".



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

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

– OR –

I would love to give a monthly donation of \$.

My payment method:

Please debit my credit card (details below)

Card type: Visa MasterCard AMEX Diners

Card No: _____

Expiry: ____ / ____

Name on card:

Signature:

– OR –

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

My Details:

Title:

First name:

Surname:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Suburb:

State: Postcode:

Reference number (if known):

Please complete this coupon and return to the below address.

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

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

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



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





Mieah enjoys being outdoors

Transform someone's life!

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

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

\$100 can help provide a Felix library kit for children, which includes a brailled book, tactile items which relate to the story and an audio copy of the book on CD helping with early literacy skills by bringing stories to life.

PRIVACY STATEMENT:

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

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

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

Ways you can get involved



Vision Australia's mission is to support people who are blind or have low vision to live the life they choose.

Thank you for making this possible!

-  **Give a donation** - your gift will make a real difference and go towards providing vital services to those who need them most.
-  **Become a Live the Vision supporter** - give a monthly regular donation to provide ongoing support to clients to live the life they choose.
-  **Leave a Gift in your Will** - create a powerful legacy that will positively impact many people beyond your lifetime.
-  **Sponsor a Seeing Eye Dog** - make a monthly regular donation towards the training and care of a puppy which will make a life-changing difference to people who are blind or have low vision.
-  **Volunteer** - make friends and have fun while enjoying the sense of reward that comes from helping others.
-  **Fundraise** - run your own event, hold a cake stall, enter a race, have fun while raising funds which will help provide support to Vision Australia.



For more information call **1800 42 20 77** or visit www.visionaustralia.org/fundraising-and-volunteering