

**Vision Australia
Seeing Eye Dogs**



Volunteer Impact Report FY 19-20





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Front Page: Brooke Anderson, Seeing Eye Dogs Instructor and Seeing Eye Dog Ringo (also on this page)

Executive summary

Dear valued Seeing Eye Dogs volunteers,

Welcome to the first Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs Annual Volunteer Impact Report for FY19-20.

During this year, we have faced unprecedented times together as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to thank you for your dedicated volunteering, we couldn't do it without you.

We congratulate you on the way you have volunteered alongside our team and adapted so well to all the changes. This has allowed Seeing Eye Dogs to maintain the work that we do with our wonderful puppies and dogs.

As a community, your contribution has had the following impact while supporting people who are blind or have low vision. We have achieved this all together.

-  47 successful graduations including some dogs who joined our world class breeding colony to produce more Seeing Eye Dogs in the future
-  777 volunteers
-  847,000 hours of volunteering
-  200 puppies have lived with our loving volunteers

We also wish to thank our donors, corporate partners and ambassadors. Your generosity makes Seeing Eye Dogs the great organisation that it is today.

We look forward to working on the future Seeing Eye Dogs strategy together.

With warmest wishes and stay safe,

Ron Hooton
CEO
Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs



Ron Hooton, laughing and hugging a yellow Seeing Eye Dogs puppy

Future Seeing Eye Dogs strategy

At Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs, our vision is to produce dogs of the highest quality and to be innovators in the services that we provide to our clients.

Recently, that innovation has included online telehealth service delivery for volunteers and also clients. One of our most popular topics was 'How to care for and enrich the life of your Seeing Eye Dog during lockdown'.

Our plan is to deliver many more of these types of activities, supporting our clients to live the life they choose.

Our reliance on volunteers will grow over the coming years as Seeing Eye Dogs continues to grow and expand as Australia's only national provider of dog guides.

We anticipate the number of Seeing Eye Dogs matched with client teams to grow at a rate of five per cent each year.

Our current client waitlist of applications continues to grow as more people wait to be matched with our dogs, raised by and supported by our volunteer program.

We are also maintaining our focus on animal welfare ensuring that each and every one of our dogs is cared for at the highest standard.

Jane Bradley
Puppy Development Manager
The Seeing Eye Dogs Leadership Team

Client Services

For many people who are blind or have low vision, a Seeing Eye Dog can provide the confidence and skills to travel and to enter any environment safely, confidently, and independently.

The Client Services team have adjusted their operations and services since March 2020 to keep clients, staff, volunteers and the community safe during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

We have had to modify our programs and find innovative solutions to continue operating, including conducting client training online. One of our clients, Eleni, who was booked for face-to-face training became the first person in Australia to complete training with a Seeing Eye Dog via Zoom! The client was assisted by her support worker who would film the pair with the Instructor providing guidance and training from Melbourne.

As part of adapting to the changes, we have also created ongoing, small group sessions via video and phone, to ensure we keep our clients safe. A fantastic achievement for the year included clients graduating with their new Seeing Eye Dogs in FY20. Congratulations to all!



Eleni and Seeing Eye Dog Laura

Breeding and Puppy Centre

The Breeding and Puppy Centre worked hard during the year to birth and care for 200 puppies and their dams and sires.

Highlights included:

Reaching our target for puppies born into our colony! All breeding stock are screened using best practice CT scanning processes for elbow dysplasia. They have also had breed specific DNA tests performed to reduce the incidence of inherited disease in future generations.



Two yellow Seeing Eye Dogs pups ready for training in their puppy coats

Kennels

In Kennels, improvements and changes have also been made. We have been able to coordinate the boarding dogs' meals, dietary needs and medications with a new data information system and rostering app. There has also been ongoing development by the Kennel Stress Reduction Working Group and enrichment programs.



Yellow Seeing Eye Dogs (L-R) Rupert, Java, Cello and Addy sitting together

Caring programs



Six black puppies
in the Puppy Centre

It's always a busy time working with our valued volunteers from puppy development, breeder, foster and training dog carers. We are very lucky to be in a position to have a generous waitlist of carers lined up to help raise our puppies, a position any dog guide school in the world strives to achieve.

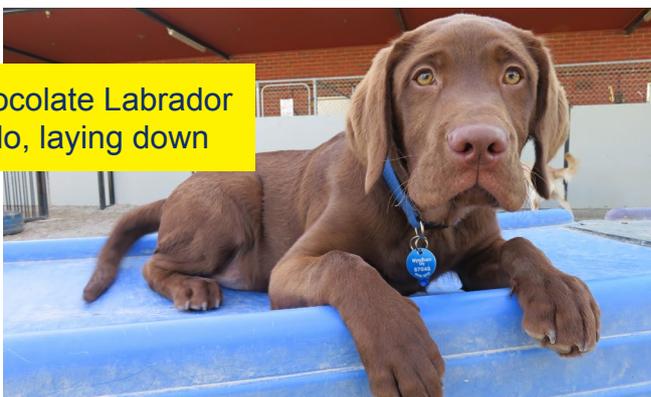
The Seeing Eye Dogs team has had to quickly adapt to the changing environment, with our carers doing an excellent job with the fast transition to online and social distancing guidelines. From Zoom based group training sessions, to replicating the sounds of shopping centres and the busy CBD, via laptop at home. Through online training challenges, we've discovered new innovative ways to expand and adapt our programs – many of which will continue into the future.

Caring programs - highlights

- 🐾 Implemented contactless pup delivery strategies for carers.
- 🐾 The Seeing Eye Dogs Puppy Caring Program has featured as part of the Duke of Edinburgh program.
- 🐾 Hosted a Professional Development Workshop from world-renowned genetics experts, Jane Russenberger and Eldin Leighton, in November 2019. It was also attended by our colleagues at Border Force.
- 🐾 Developing a world-class breeding program strategy.
- 🐾 Introduced the Behaviour Checklist and 16 Week Walk and Talks in line with international standards.
- 🐾 Revised our In for Training (IFT) processes.
- 🐾 Joined the International Working Dog Registry (IWDR) global database.
- 🐾 Reached over 380 members in our exclusive Seeing Eye Dogs Carers Facebook group managed by the Seeing Eye Dogs volunteer moderators – ‘the mod squad’.
- 🐾 Dedicated PawPals volunteer committee hosted social and training events for the carer community.



Puppy fun in the Puppy Centre.
Three yellow pups and two black pups



Chocolate Labrador
Ludo, laying down



Yellow Seeing Eye Dog
Addy sitting

Volunteering

We have many volunteer programs at Seeing Eye Dogs including:

-  Puppy, breeder, foster and training dog carers
-  Social media moderators
-  Peer-to-peer facilitators and phone callers
-  Administration volunteers
-  Driving volunteers
-  Kennels and Puppy Centre volunteers
-  Letterbox drop volunteers
-  Event coordinators
-  Seeing Eye Dogs representatives
-  Vet Support volunteers
-  Instructor assistants



**847,000
hours**

dedicated by
volunteers,
valued at approx.
\$1.7M



777 volunteers

support
Seeing Eye Dogs



10 years

Annual Walk of Fame
celebration
for volunteers



Yellow Seeing Eye Dog
Cashew wearing her coat

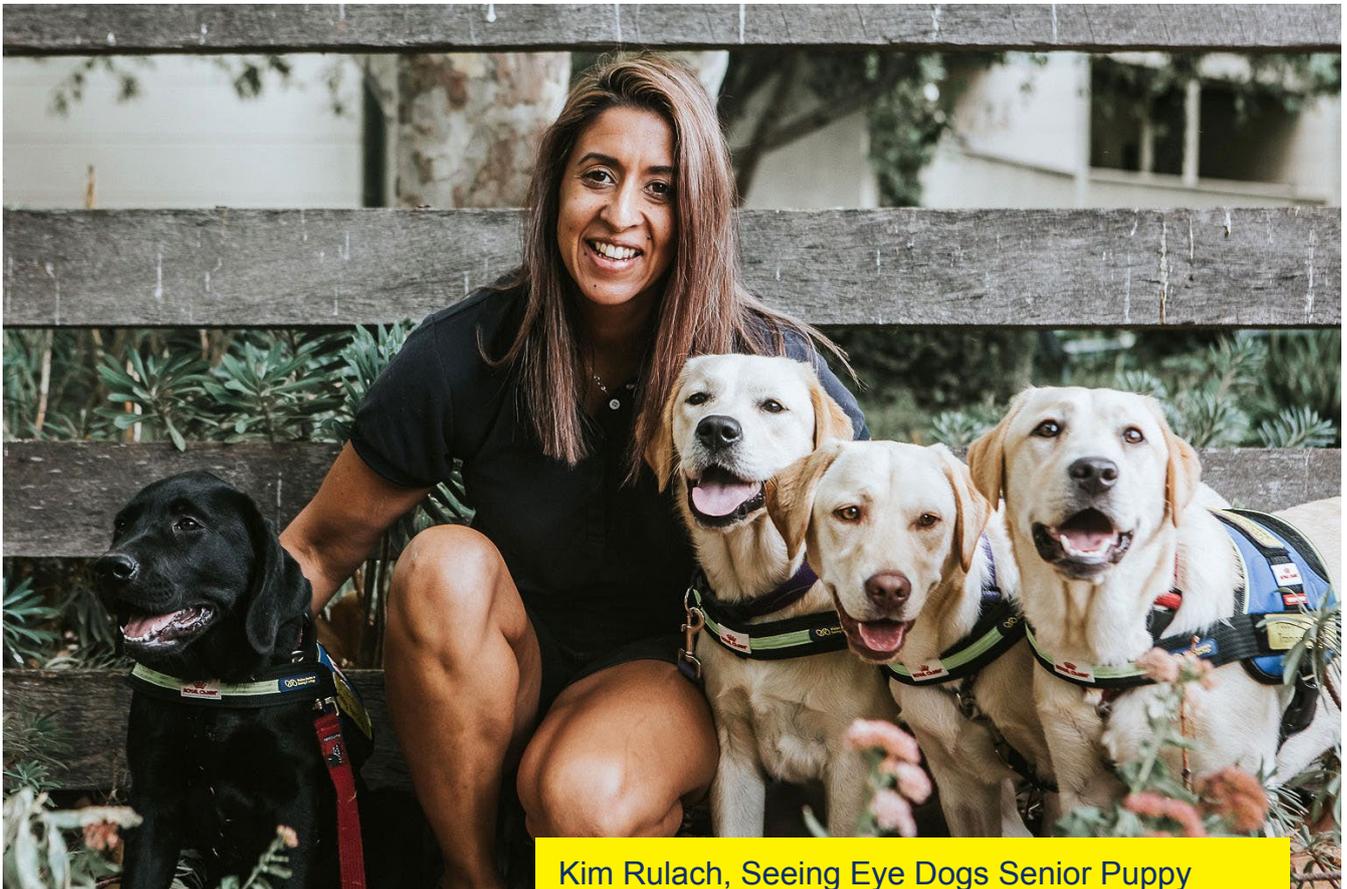
Walk of Fame members

Below is a list of our valued volunteers who have dedicated their time and love to Seeing Eye Dogs for 10+ years.

- Anita Bottomley
- Di Combe
- Esther Revens
- Jan Verdon
- Jeni Conquest

- Joan Duncan
- Karen Anderson
- Kate Harry
- Kim Rulach
- Linda Richardson

- Michael Vitale
- Rosalie Dewar
- Susan Rafferty
- Tracy Smith

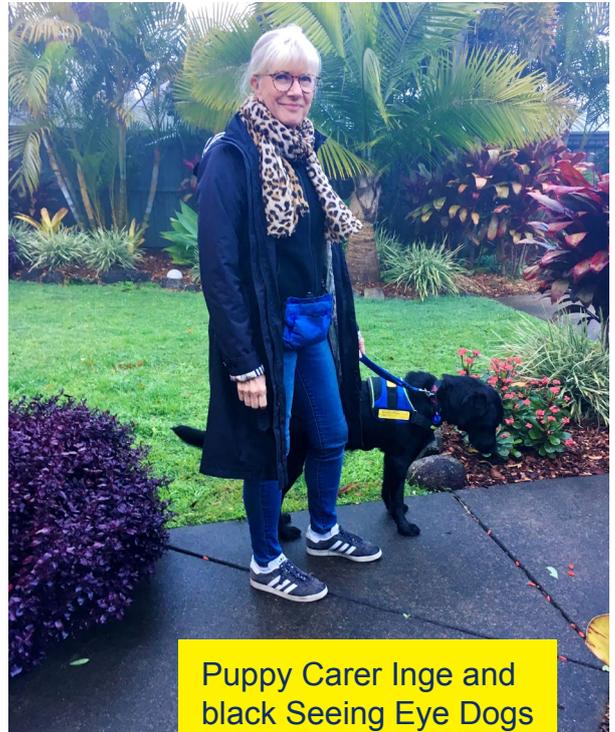


Kim Rulach, Seeing Eye Dogs Senior Puppy Development Trainer in the garden with one black pup and three yellow pups wearing their coats

Volunteer testimonial

Since retiring, I'd often thought about volunteering, but hadn't come across anything that grabbed me. Then one day I noticed a Seeing Eye Dogs ad on Facebook looking for Puppy Carers. Our lovely poodle had died the year before and we were missing the company of a dog in our house. I applied on the spot.

The application process took a bit of time, so my husband and I had ample opportunity to talk about the commitment we were about to make, but there was no doubt in our minds. We were excited about the idea of assisting a great cause and I was looking forward to learning new skills. In December 2018 we welcomed our first Seeing Eye Dogs pup, Tiny.



Puppy Carer Inge and black Seeing Eye Dogs pup-in-training, Quincy

Caring for a Seeing Eye Dogs puppy is not the same as having a pet and there are some rules about how they are brought up, but the important thing is that you're not in it on your own.

The Puppy Development Trainer here on the Sunshine Coast is Tracey Bashford. She is a warm and supportive guide who is in regular contact from the beginning. She is always available to answer any questions and give advice on how to handle puppy issues.

You don't need to have any experience in dog training to become a Puppy Carer, but I think it's a great advantage that we have had dogs ourselves. I was confident in bringing up a puppy and could focus on the things that were new to me, such as the training method and skills I needed to teach the puppy. We now have our second Seeing Eye Dogs puppy, Quincy and enjoy every single day with him. It's a lot of fun and also satisfying to see the contribution you're making in raising a happy and confident dog that will one day make a significant change in someone's life.

– Inge, Seeing Eye Dogs Puppy Carer, Sunshine Coast

Client testimonial

Leah's life was transformed when she was matched with Seeing Eye Dog Harlow.

As a university lecturer and PhD student, Leah navigates public transport and busy campuses. She has low vision due to an eye condition she's had since birth. Leah says the wait was worthwhile, as Harlow is her perfect match.

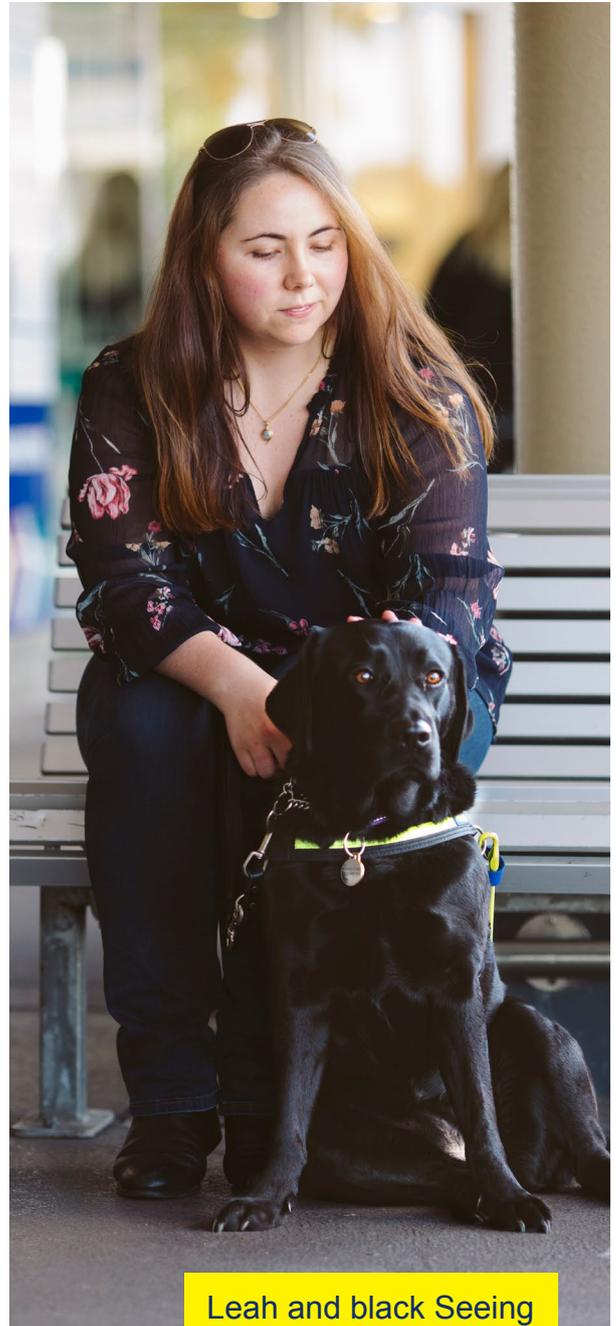
"When I finally met Harlow I thought it was amazing how much the trainers had listened and how well matched we were," says Leah.

"Everything I said about my situation was taken into account: the fact that I take public transport, that I move a lot between urban and regional areas, and the way I interact with a large number of people every day in my work."

Seeing Eye Dog Harlow has helped Leah become more confident than ever.

"I now take everything in my stride, even the situations which used to hold me back. I'm so grateful to all the kind people who helped raise and train Harlow!"

"I'm a lot less stressed about going to new places or places on my own. Harlow has given me the confidence to go anywhere I want."



Leah and black Seeing Eye Dog Harlow

**Thank you
for changing lives.**



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