

Focus



Vision
Australia

Blindness. Low Vision. Opportunity.

150+
years of vision

Issue 1, 2025

**Elsie's world
is opening up
– her future
is so bright!**

(See page 2.)



Thank you!

Your support is
making a difference
to kids like Elsie.



Thank you

Welcome to 2025! I'm delighted to share just a few ways your kindness is changing lives for people who are blind or have low vision.

Catch up with little Elsie, star of our recent Christmas Appeal, who certainly captured the hearts of donors – thank you so much for your generous support! Meet Daphne and Hunter, who are making the most of Vision Australia support services to enrich their lives.

Read the latest news on community events (and how you can get involved) and join us in celebrating achievements you made possible through 240,000 hours of support for Australians across 2024. We are so very grateful to have you by our side.

Justine Heath

Justine Heath
Acting Chief Executive



The sky's the limit for Elsie!

What an incredible and generous response we received for little Elsie, the star of our recent Christmas Appeal. We cannot thank you enough.

Your kindness will ensure children like Elsie who are blind or have low vision have ongoing support to build foundational skills, learn to navigate their world safely and confidently and gain the social skills needed to thrive at school and beyond.

It was impossible not to be inspired and moved by the story of gorgeous four-year-old Elsie. When we told her mum and dad, Ally and James, about the response from donors like you, they were overwhelmed and incredibly grateful.

'From the moment we connected with Vision Australia, we knew everything would be alright – the advice, therapy and care from day one was extraordinary. But to know so many other people care as well is truly humbling. Thank you for believing in our little girl as much as we do.'



A brand-new start for Daphne

When 86-year-old Daphne connected with Vision Australia, she finally found the right solutions for her deteriorating vision, and she couldn't be happier.

Daphne's low vision is the result of age-related macular degeneration and Charles Bonnet syndrome. After seeking support from several different organisations, Daphne was delighted by the excellent advice and compassionate support she received from Vision Australia.

'This was the only organisation that supplied me with correct information about my condition after learning about my symptoms. It's given me great peace of mind.'

Daphne has received new aids which have greatly improved her engagement in at-home



tasks and found new friends through Telelink social groups and the Quality Living Group.

'I have one [a magnifier] right beside me on the table, it's great! I have a smaller one as well on the other side of me and a little one I can take with me in my purse. I've been able to get life back on track and learn how to manage my condition.'

Thanks to your help, Daphne's life has changed for the better.

What a year – what an impact

Whether at home, in the workplace, at schools, universities and the wider community, you have helped bring confidence, independence and joy to those who are blind or have low vision in so many ways.

Here are just a few of our many achievements from the past 12 months.



Of the 39,758 clients we supported, almost 2,000 were children and young people, who benefited from **42,484 hours of tailored services for young people.**



We worked hand-in-hand with clients to deliver **16,724 hours of orientation and mobility training** that helped get people out and about into their local community with greater confidence.



You enabled **58,820 hours of life-changing occupational therapy**, along with **31,696 hours of assistive technology support** from our talented and dedicated team.

Thank you for every hour delivered, every milestone reached, and every moment of achievement. We need you beside us always, so we can keep making a difference.

Thanks to you, children like Hunter can reach for the stars

At just five days old, Hunter was diagnosed with bilateral congenital cataracts. It was the beginning of many surgeries and challenges for this energetic young boy, who is now described by his mum as an overachiever!

Thanks to supporters like you, early intervention support from Vision Australia, has changed Hunter's life. At five months of age, he began occupational therapy and speech therapy to get him back on track with developmental milestones – and look at him now!



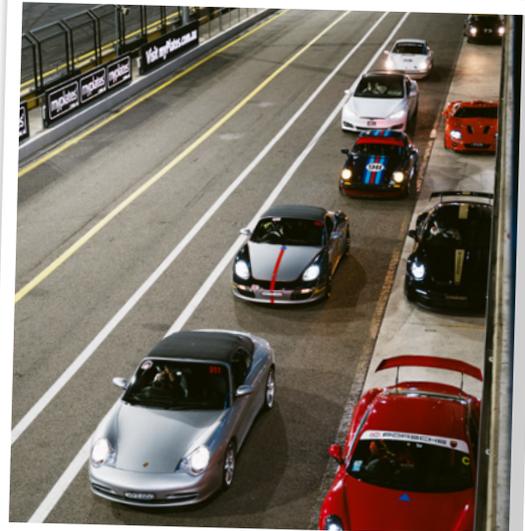
Being active is one of Hunter's favourite things to do, and he is testing out all varieties of sports including surfing, soccer and dancing. For our Book Week, he even dressed up as Matt Formston, Paralympian surfer and star of Vision Australia's first ever Big Visions book, *Surfing in the Dark*. Hunter is making fun memories and loving his adventures, and it's all thanks to early intervention.

Along the journey, Hunter and his family also connected with Vision Australia's amazing Felix Library, a unique braille and tactile library tailored especially for young children. This innovative library provides a wide range of children's books, which have additional tactile elements such as characters from each book as a toy, adding a truly immersive aspect to books produced for children who are blind or have low vision.

Today, aged six and legally blind, Hunter doesn't let anything hold him back. He continues to conquer every hurdle in his path, utilising everything Vision Australia has to offer, thanks to you and your kindness!



Excitement on the Track: Blind Driving Experiences at Vision Australia



In partnership with Blind Speed and kindly supported by a generous donor, Vision Australia held an exciting blind-driving track day at Eastern Creek racetrack.

Experienced motorsport and club drivers offered their expertise, instruction and guidance to give people who are blind or have low vision unique hot-lap driving experiences. While some of the drivers had been keen motorsport participants and drivers during their sighted lives, others such as Vision Australia client Lara, have been blind from birth and the event offered her an exhilarating, first-time opportunity to get behind the wheel.

When asked about her Porsche drive adventure, Lara enthused, 'It was really exciting and so much fun because I'd never driven before, and it was just really cool to experience what it's like.

'Initially I was a little bit worried because I didn't know how I would go with driving. I knew it would be fine because I had an instructor, but I didn't know how much the instructor was actually going to describe to me how to turn, what was coming up and when to brake. I had a really great instructor.'

For Shaun, blinded following a traumatic life event and who hadn't driven in two years, the track day fulfilled a bucket-list dream.

'I woke up in hospital, couldn't see anything and one of my goals was to drive a car again. And, yeah, today was absolutely amazing. Today was the first time I drove again in a long time, it was very exciting,' Shaun said.

In our drive for inclusivity, it was a fantastic day for over 70 participants.

To hear more about how you can help make events like this possible in the future, contact us at philanthropy@visionaustralia.org – we'd love to hear from you!



Lara



Shaun

Every session is one step closer to independence

Access technology specialist, Jason, has been interested in new technologies and 'how things work' since he was very young. His dad was his first inspiration; always tinkering with his car, getting the coolest new gadgets. 'I remember the first-time dad had a phone in his car. I thought that was the coolest!'

So, it seems only natural that Jason's passion for 'all things tech' took him towards a career in assistive technology.

'I hadn't heard of the technological advancements available for those who are blind and have low vision - I did a lot of research to apply for the role. I'm forever grateful for the chance to do this job and of course, to Vision Australia donors who help me deliver great solutions to people in need.'



Jason is rarely in an office. On a typical day, he's driving all over North and South West Sydney, including the Blue Mountains and even Southern Highlands. 'Everyone is different, so I like to meet them where they are and tailor my approach to what feels comfortable to them. Help could be as simple as learning how to make a call on their smart phone, but each solution can be life-changing. Every session is one step closer to independence.'

Jason says being there for clients and helping them with their technological needs is so rewarding.

'It's great to hear a client say, 'I can do this', knowing they have the confidence to do the things they want to do independently and see the look on their face. That's what keeps me going every day.'

Your kind and compassionate support is so important. You help Jason deliver life-changing technology every day.



Judy's Enduring Commitment: A Gift in Her Will for Vision Australia

Judy's dedication to Vision Australia is a testament to her upbringing where her mother's influence instilled in her a profound sense of service and compassion.

Born in Drummoyne, Judy's journey took her to a rural property near Deniliquin in 1955, after marrying a farmer. By the 1960s, she had moved to Canberra, where her remarkable journey with the Royal Blind Society began. 'I never imagined that a simple invitation to a Royal Blind Society meeting ten years later would lead to a fifty-year journey with this incredible organisation,' she reflects.

After moving to Kiama in 1985, Judy took on the role of Honorary Treasurer for the Kiama Friends of the Blind Society. She supported the group with her hands-on approach, from helping on stalls to cooking for fundraising dinners and selling raffle tickets for golf days in Jamberoo. 'Our Jamberoo members organised these events, securing fantastic

prizes and attracting golfers from all over New South Wales, making them a financial success,' she explains.

For 11 years, Judy devoted herself to making information accessible for the blind and low vision community, converting written materials into audio, recording books, and scanning articles. 'It was demanding work that required a lot of patience, but knowing I was helping make reading accessible to so many was incredibly fulfilling,' she warmly shares.

Even after returning to Sydney later in life, Judy's support for Vision Australia remained steadfast. She made modest monthly donations and encourages others to do the same.

Judy's enduring commitment is further highlighted by including a gift in her Will to Vision Australia. **'As a gift in will supporter, I'm proud to contribute to Vision Australia's future. Knowing my gift will help ensure life-changing services for future generations brings me great peace of mind,'** Judy warmly shares.

'I cherish the annual Iris Circle Thank You lunch and the opportunity to connect with fellow members. It's comforting to know that my gift will support future generations,' she adds.



We sincerely appreciate supporters like Judy. If her story moves you and you wish to explore how your legacy can impact Vision Australia, please reach out to us on 1800 422 077 or email giw@visionaustralia.org

Community celebrations bring festive joy



The incredible Vision Australia community helped see out the year with memorable celebrations as we enjoyed our second Santa Fun Run and 87th Carols by Candlelight!

A huge thank you to everyone who joined in and supported Vision Australia's Santa Fun Run last November in Melbourne and Sydney – what incredible turnouts! Vital funds were raised to support Carols by Candlelight

and Vision Australia's Life Ready Program, which empowers blind or low vision children, building strong foundations for lifelong participation and employment.

Then on Christmas Eve, Melbourne's Sidney Myer Music Bowl was again alive with enchanting performances, incredible musical talent and endless festive fun when thousands of supporters came together for the 87th Carols by Candlelight. Our largest annual fundraiser also supporting Vision Australia's Life Ready Program and a treasured Christmas tradition, we're already looking forward to December 2025!

Check out some other great event we have going on throughout the year: fundraise.visionaustralia.org/events

It's nearly time for 100K Your Way!

A walk or run isn't always easy for someone who is blind or has low vision. That's why we call on supporters like you to run, walk, cycle, roll or move your way for 100km in one month to support people who are blind or have low vision to reach their goals and keep active!

Every dollar raised helps to fund important services such as occupational therapy sessions to help people who are blind or have low vision stay active and independent.

Last year's fundraiser made a real difference for so many people, like Jake and his family. 'We love participating in 100K Your Way, especially being up and active together as a family. This was a great way to bring people together for both walking and fundraising.' Jake, father of Koa, a Vision Australia client.



Join us this April! Go solo or team up with friends, family, workmates or active buddies to help support people who are blind or have low vision remain independently mobile. Registrations for 100K Your Way 2025 open in February. Find out more at 100KYourWay.org

For more information call **1800 42 20 77**

or visit www.visionaustralia.org/get-involved/ways-to-help