*CANBERRA BLIND SOCIETY (CBS)*

*December 2019 Newsletter* 413

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**The CBS Christmas party will be held on Saturday 7 December from 12.30pm. Cost on the day $15.00. Please book in advance especially if you require help with transport.**

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| **Southern Cross Club Community Rewards Program**Members of the Southern Cross Club can help us raise funds by taking part in the Southern Cross Club’s Community Rewards program. Nominate the Canberra Blind Society as your organisation to benefit under the rewards program and five percent of your purchases made on food and beverages in the public restaurants, bars and grills are included.  |

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**Specsavers committed to supporting local community**

Canberra Blind Society (CBS) is pleased to announce a sponsorship arrangement with Specsavers Woden. For every pair of glasses sold at the Specsavers Woden store, the local store owners donate to a local charity of their choosing with CBS being the recipient. Mr Peter Granleese the CBS President said, “We are very fortunate to have a local store sponsoring CBS and hope that the partnership will continue on into the future. As a small locally based organisation, CBS relies heavily on donations from the local community and the money received from Specsavers Woden through the sale of glasses will be used to help people in the ACT manage the effects of blindness.”

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# Notice Board

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| **December 2019** |
| 4 December | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| **7 December** | **Saturday** | **12:30** | **CBS Christmas Party** |
| 5 December12 December19 December | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 20 December | Third Friday | 10:00 | Sense-Able Cooking |
| 20 December | Friday | 5:00 | Office closes for 2019 |
| **January 2020** |
| 28 January | Tuesday | 9:00 | Office reopens for 2020 |
| **February 2020** |
| 5 Feb | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 6 Feb13 Feb20 Feb27 Feb | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 21 Feb | Third Friday | 10:00 | Sense-Able-Cooking |
| **March 2020** |
| 4 Mar | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 5 Mar12 Mar19 Mar26 Mar | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 20 Mar | Third Friday | 10:00 | Sense-Able-Cooking |

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**From the President’s Chair – Peter Granleese**

# As this is the last newsletter for 2019, it is time to give a rap up on what has been happening at CBS over the last 12 months. The year began pretty much as the previous year ended. With no reliable streams of income and no paid staff, services were provided by a small group of vision impaired volunteers with some assistance from their sighted friends.Despite its limited resources, at least for the first half of the year, The Society continued to maintain a presence in the Griffin Centre between the hours of 10.00 am to 4.00 pm Tuesday to Friday and ensured that a number of activities and social events continued without interruption.The weekly Braille group facilitated by volunteers Sharon Sobey and Ranita Adhar continued and were well attended. Monthly cooking classes facilitated by volunteers Natalie and Stephen Kerr remained popular, while the well supported Monthly Book Club organised by volunteer Bob James with assistance from Marilyn Popp were also well attended.The CBS Newsletter published on a monthly basis since 1978 continued uninterrupted, providing dates of upcoming events and a wide range of topics of interest to our community. We thank volunteers Heather Fitzpatrick and Sharon Sobey who edited the Newsletter, Debra Quinnell, Graham Downie, Scott Grimley who submitted articles, Bob Sobey who read the Newsletter and 1RPH who produced the master copy for the audio version.The Society made its annual pilgrimage to Floriade on 29 September with members and volunteers enjoying the spring weather and all the colour that Floriade provides.The Griffin Centre continued to be a focal point for a number of social gatherings for CBS members and friends during the year. Christmas in July was held in July with 35 people plus volunteers sitting down to a traditional Christmas lunch. It was pleasing to note that numbers attending this annual event have remained constant, a good indication that CBS has retained contact with its membership base. We thank Dianne White and her band of volunteers who prepared and served the food and volunteers who transported people to and from the event.The last social event for the year will be our Christmas lunch to be held on 7 December. It is always the largest of our gatherings and an opportunity to catch up with old friends and reminisce over the year past. We encourage everyone to come along and join in the festivities. Can you let us know as soon as possible if you wish to attend?

During the year, CBS advocated for the vision impaired community, being called upon by government to advise on several issues. Between September 2018 and April this year, Board member Scott Grimley and a representative from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT had a number of meetings with the Project Manager and senior ACT government officials, to ensure accessibility was correct for the Light Rail when it commenced in April.Scott also met with the Minister for City Services, his staff and TCCS officials at a number of meetings between July 2018 and February 2019, to discuss amendments to the Animal Welfare Legislation Amendment Act 2019. The purpose of these meetings was to provide input that will ensure access rights, accreditation and minimum standards for assistance animals and trainee assistance animal teams in public places. As a consequence, CBS made a submission during the public consultation period in June suggesting nine changes to the proposed legislation, all of which were adopted.In June CBS was invited to provide a representative on the Standards Australia committee known as ME064 to develop AS1428.6 Design for Access & Mobility - Fittings and Fixtures due to be released in June of 2020. The committee will also examine changes to parts 1 and 4 of the same suite of standards, the latter being for tactile indicators. Again, Scott Grimley with his expertise on the Australian Standards was asked to represent CBS on this committee.Following the departure of RSB in August 2017, The Society’s major objective has been to maintain a physical presence in The Griffin Centre and provide what services it can using the small group of volunteers able to assist. With no regular income stream at the beginning of 2019, The Society relied on occasional donations and money collected at this year’s Street Appeal. Although not large, it was sufficient to pay the bills during the first half of the year without the need to draw down on The Society’s financial reserves.Late last year, CBS lodged an application for a $112,200 grant under The NDIS 2018-19 Information, Linkages and Capacity Building ILC Funding Round, to employ a Project Officer for 12 months, commencing in July 2019. In March CBS was delighted to receive the news that its application had been successful and an amount of $112,200 was deposited in The Society’s bank account at the beginning of May.Under the terms of the ILC grant, CBS has undertaken to develop its organisational capacity by recruiting and training vision impaired volunteers to run The Society. This includes all functions, such as administration, policy development, membership of the CBS Board and group facilitators of the various activities CBS hopes to run.

To comply with the terms of the grant, these activities must build individual capacity, by making participants more assertive, engender confidence and provide them with the skills they need to break down the barriers preventing them from participating in the community.Buoyed by our initial success, we are seeking a continuation of funding for a further three years under the 2019 20 ILC funding round. If successful, the Society’s finances will be secure until August 2023. The Society held its Annual General Meeting on 21 November 2019 at which I was elected President, Graham Downie elected Secretary with Scott Grimley and Damien Wright elected ordinary members. The Society also held a General Meeting on 28 May where amendments to The Constitution were passed concerning the make-up of The CBS Board, filling of casual vacancies, requirements for Board Membership and notice of Annual General Meetings (AGM) and General Meetings.In August 2019 Glenn Doney was appointed as The Society’s Project Officer to increase The Society’s organisational structure and develop new programs that may be needed by our community. A number of programs and services have already been identified and assessed for introduction at the beginning of 2020.Of particular benefit to our community will be the establishment of a small retail outlet selling items in demand not readerly available in the ACT. Prior to 2017, our premises in The Griffin Centre displayed a large range of magnifiers, braille, large print and talking watches and alarm clocks of all kinds, large button telephones and other useful items that individuals could try before they buy. At present people must go “on line” to purchase these items.From the beginning of 2020, CBS will once again, become an outlet for these items and a hub for a range of new services. There is much to do over the next 12 months as we re-connect with the vision impaired community.At the time CBS entered into the Agreement with RSB in 2014, there were 408 clients on the data base. Although many of these people are now covered by the NDIS, there are still gaps in services, especially in the provision of information, peer support and access to cultural, social, sporting and recreational activities. There are also many older people who do not qualify for the NDIS and still rely on CBS for any useful services it can provide.It has been estimated that there are 10,800 people in the ACT who have some degree of vision loss. In most cases, the loss may not be great, but there will be a significant number of people at the more severe end of the spectrum who could benefit from our services. As 2019 draws to a close, we look back over the last 12 months and are gratified at what has been achieved. This has been due to many people. Firstly, we thank our dedicated group of volunteers, some of whom have already been mentioned, without whose help we could not have continued. We also thank those people for their generous donations, in money or in kind, that have contributed to the cost of running the Society over the last 12 months.We would particularly thank Project Officer Glenn for his expertise and hard work since he joined us in August. Finally, I would like to thank the CBS Board members Heather Fitzpatrick, Graham Downie, Dianne White, Scott Grimley, Sharon Sobey, Damien Wright and Lindy Hou for their hard work, dedication and who work so hard to make the organisation a success over the last 12 months

At this is the last newsletter for the year, we wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New year.

CBS office will close on 20 December and re open on Tuesday 28 January 2020.

# JAWS/Zoomtext group training

A small number of blind and vision impaired people who are employed are seeking a group training session with Pacific Vision here in Canberra for the screen reader JAWS and the screen magnifier Zoomtext.

To ensure the trip is worthwhile and costs can be minimised, I am seeking interest from members of the Society who would like to join this training. At this point, we are yet to confirm a venue or devices etc. and will confirm this if interest is shown.

Please email me at scott.grimley@gmail.com as soon as possible if you are interested in group training sessions for JAWS and Zoomtext.

# What’s on at CBS

**CBS Christmas party**

Don’t forget that the CBS Christmas party will be on Saturday 7 December at 12:30 in the Griffin Centre in room 8 on the second floor. Please note your calendars. Cost is $15.00 per person. If you require transport to the Griffin Centre, please contact the office.

# For Sale

MEZZO CCTV magnifying reader 5 colour combination, Very good condition, including X-Y table $2500. Mini hand held colour CCTV $500.

Contact Faye Martin on 02 6258 1979

# Braille Transcription

Sharon Sobey who helps the facilitate the weekly braille class is offering a braille transcription service for anyone wanting documents transcribed into braille. She can transcribe any electronic document of any size into braille. The service consists of the creation of documents into UEB or old Australian grade one or two and includes proofreading of documents. Sharon will charge for the cost of braille paper and an hourly rate which is negotiable. For more information please contact Sharon on 0419 263 413 or 6254 7326.

# Cooking Class Recipes

**ROCKY ROAD CHOCOLATE SLICE**

**Ingredients**

375g chocolate block

½ cup coconut

½ cup peanuts

½ cup chopped jelly lollies

250g pkt marshmallows

½ cup glace cherries optional

**Method**

Line baking tray with glad bake

Brake chocolate into small pieces and melt in microwave safe bowl on high 1 min then stir, repeat till melted

Place all remainder ingredients into a bowl and add melted chocolate and stir

Spread onto lined tray and refrigerate till set 10 mins

Slice into bite size pieces and store in a jar and keep refrigerated

**CHEESY SCROLLS**

**Ingredients**

Frozen Puff pastry sheets thawed

Grated cheese

Optional tomato relish or other fillings of your choice

 **Method**

Oven 200 high temp

Line trays with glad bake

Spread tomato relish and grated cheese onto puff pastry sheet

Roll into cylinders and cut into rounds

Place rounds onto lined trays and bake 15 mins till brown

Cool before serving

# Canberra Blind Society merchandise

The Canberra Blind Society is selling merchandise with our name and logo. There are Notebooks ($20) with a debossed image of our logo and name on the cover, Keep Cups (for your coffee) ($15) with our name and logo on the silicon ring, Pens ($5) and Sunglasses ($10). The sunglasses offer UV protection for your eyes. Everything is available at our office in the Griffin Centre.

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# The Way I see It – Graham Downie

It was December 3, 1973, when, timid as a kitten, I walked into the smoke-filled office of The Canberra Times to begin a three-month trial as a journalist.

The trial was apparently successful, because I remained until October 2012. I was not aware my becoming a journalist was so significant, but now realise the date is marked by the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Of course, I jest. However, the date remains significant in my year’s anniversaries. For it marks what I still believe to have been a brave decision by then editor of The Canberra Times, Ian Mathews. He reversed a decision by his predecessor and offered me an opportunity to show whether or not I could manage the numerous challenges which he clearly set out in his letter offering me the position.

For the record, the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities has been annually observed on December 3 around the world since 1992. This year’s theme is, “Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. Quite why the word, persons, is used instead of, people, is beyond me.

Nevertheless, the theme is important and often the focus of discussions at board meetings of the Canberra Blind Society. This year, at least five CBS board members and our project officer, Glenn Doney, were involved in activities on December 3 to mark the international day. President Peter Granleese, Glenn and myself were at the Department of Education which arranged a significant expo which illustrated the work of numerous organisations by or for people with disabilities. At our table, it was fun having people try to write their names in Braille. But the real interest was in the technology which has opened a broad field of opportunities which did not exist when I began work as a journalist with little more than a manual typewriter and a Perkins Brallier as my tools of trade.

I believe the letter which Ian Mathews wrote to me in 1973 should be framed and hung on the wall of everyone who espouses equal opportunities, inclusion, or whatever word is fashionable. For, as you will see, it acknowledged the challenges a blind person would have to overcome if he were to have a career as a journalist. What follows are direct quotes from that letter which changed my life.

“I feel that whatever objections or reservations I may have about a blind man working in the editorial department of The Canberra Times it is not realistic to make a decision until the matter has been proved in a practical way.

“Therefore, I will offer you a position as a D grade journalist at a weekly salary of $93.00 on the understanding that the position is reviewed realistically at the end of three months.

“The difficulties as I see them are many. There will be a necessity to duplicate filing so that apart from braille reports we have complete written records. This is because other people such as sub-editors and holiday replacements would need to use the files. There will be a need for increased clerical assistance in dictating documents on to tape or directly to you.

“... From my point of view, and I suspect from yours also, it is essential that you are in no way "carried" by other members of the staff. This, however, does not mean that there will not be ample assistance available and guidance in learning to write for a newspaper. ... I must emphasise that the normal opportunities of moving from section to section within the newspaper could be severely limited for you.

“This brings me to the final consideration, and I believe it will be the most important one, to be made at the end of three months. That is, will you make a good journalist? It is essential that whoever does the job is able to write copy which requires a minimum of work by sub-editors, and that it is completely accurate.

“I would like to emphasise once again the trial nature of this offer. In the final analysis it will depend on how good a journalist you are and, on that score, it would be impossible for any other criteria to influence a final decision as to whether you remain on the staff or not.

“If these stringent conditions are acceptable to you would you please let me know on what date you could join the staff of The Canberra Times.

Yours sincerely, I.R. Mathews Editor”

May all potential employers take note.

# Monthly Programs

## Audio Book group

This group meets monthly on the first Wednesday of each month to discuss the audio book of the month. RSVP to Bob James on 6296 2644 or 0408 474 916 or by email at randjjames1@gmail.com The group now has places available for new members, if you are interested please contact Bob.

"The Audio Book group will resume on Wednesday 5th February at 10:00am to talk about "The Italian Girl" by Iris Murdoch, an older book by one of the last centuries most famous British writers." Join us for this exciting read or just read along with us.

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## Braille group

If you would like to learn Braille or you would like support to continue your practice, we host a peer-supported Braille group for all levels of ability. For more information about Braille group contact Sharon Sobey on 6254 7326 or 0419 263 413 or koala@areujoking.com

**When**: every Thursday, 9.30 am – 11.30am

Please note that there is limited space at present; please make contact to ensure a place.

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## Sense-Able Cooking

Sense-Able Cooking group is held on the third Friday of each month. The group aims to practise cooking skills, learn handy tips for cooking with vision impairment, and share favourite recipes. And eat delicious food, of course!

**When**: third Friday of the month

**Where**: Room 6, Griffin Centre, 20 Genge Street

**Cost:** $5 (for ingredients)

Please call CBS on 6247 4580 to reserve your place in this group.