

CANBERRA BLIND SOCIETY (CBS)

3rd Quarterly Newsletter – September 2025 - Edition 450

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Canberra Blind Society



@BlindCanberra



Canberra Blind Society

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Core Programs

Friends of Braille	Thursday of each week during school terms
Audio Book Group	1 st Wednesday of each month
Art & Craft Group	2 nd and 4 th Wednesday of each month
Sense-Able Cooking	3 rd Friday of each month
Men's Peer Support	Last Tuesday of the Month
Ladies Chat Circle	1 st Friday of the month
Exercise Group	Thursday of each week

Upcoming Dates for your diary

- Trivia Night!

Mark your calendars - CBS is hosting a trivia night on Sunday 19th October at Grill'd in the City. The entry fee is \$25 per person and for that you get a burger and fries. With a \$10 donation to CBS that will come out of your \$25 entry fee. You also get a fun filled night full of trivia questions and answers.

Doors will open at 5:30pm with trivia questions starting at 6:30pm. Other food and drinks will be available for purchase. We will be getting more information about the nitty gritty details and numbers on tables so start getting your team together.

- Mount Stromlo Tactile Galaxy Night

Mount Stromlo Observatory will introduce a pilot astronomy event designed for blind and vision-impaired audiences, inspired by *The Tactile Universe* project from the University of Portsmouth (Bonne et al., 2018). This program combines a guided exploration of Mount Stromlo's history with a hands-on "Tactile Galaxy" session, using 3D-printed models of astronomical objects visible from the site. Participants will learn about the Milky Way and the life cycle of stars through touch and inclusive narration, offering a non-visual pathway into astronomy.

About the workshops

A trial workshop with a small group of people with vision impairment, who can provide feedback so that we can build on and create a better workshop plan:

- Preferred date: 10-14th September, 1 hour session
- Location: anywhere
- Looking for: 2-3 participants

Main event: a session at Mount Stromlo Observatory (tbc) with professional astronomers, who will guide the participants in the workshop:

- Preferred date: 15-18th September, 2 hours session (1 hour tour around the site and 1 hour astronomy experience)
- Location: Mount Stromlo Observatory Visitor Centre
- Looking for: 12-15 participants

If you are interested to participate in this astrophysical experience, please contact Aalo on 6247 4580 or email admin@canberrablindsociety.org.au

- **Floriade Excursion**

CBS invites members, clients and friends to join us at Floriade 2025, Canberra's annual spring festival.

We will meet at CBS office on Friday the 26th of September, at 9.45am - walk to the Floriade Bus stop on Petrie Street, next to the Canberra Centre and catch the bus to Commonwealth Park. For those folks making their own way to Floriade, we plan to meet at 10.30am inside the front gate to Floriade and we will arrive back at the city at 2.30pm. There will be an abundance of food stalls at Floriade so we will have couple of volunteers to assist with any individuals who would like to purchase food – or you may bring a packed picnic Lunch.

Come with us as we step into a world of wonder as Floriade celebrates its 38th year with the theme: Science and Nature, transforming Commonwealth Park into a dynamic space of discovery and learning, all set amongst one million beautiful blooms.

Call Aalo at the office on 6247 4580 or email admin@canberrablindsociety.org.au to put your name on the list and if you require transport

- **Meta Glasses Information Session**

On the 23rd of October from 10-11am, Jan from Sunglasses Hut will be speaking on Meta glasses, how they work, and their many uses. After the information session we will also be providing a light morning tea with refreshments catered by Embrace catering. For this reason CBS asks that if you would like to attend this information session and/or require transport, please call Aalo at 6247 4580 or email admin@canberrablindsociety.org.au – please include any allergies and/or dietary requirements so we may provide everyone with some morning tea on the day.

This information session will be held during the time our Friends of Braille usually meet – so that group activity will be cancelled that week.

- **Mulligans Flat Excursion – Sensory Wildlife Experience Celebrating World Sight Day**

This year to celebrate **World Sight Day** we invite CBS members and clients to come along on a tour to discover the beautiful Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary and the extraordinary species that call it home. Join us on Friday 17th October for a Sanctuary Safari including a sensory tour.

CBS will provide a Community Bus and driver, picking up interested people from 9.15 am at the Griffin Centre, returning to the office from 2.30pm. The 1 ½ hour tour will consist of getting on and off the bus for an abundance of tailored sensory experiences all throughout the wildlife preserve. The tour will then be followed by a Café lunch.

The cost for this sensory experience is \$18 per person plus the cost of your lunch.

What to wear

- Enclosed, flat shoes are a MUST.
- Appropriate clothing (i.e. Rain protection or warm clothing)

If you are interested please contact Aalo at admin@canberrablindsociety.org.au We will need to pre-order lunches so please ensure you ask about the café menu.

Please let us know if you put your name down for an event and are no longer able to attend as we have often pre purchased tickets, and it allows us to reallocate them to others who want to attend.

Upcoming National Gallery Art by Description Programs

Art by Description Onsite: Proofs and Processes - Sunday 3 September 11am – 12pm

Free, please book by email to access@nga.gov.au or call Adriane on 02 6240 6632

Engage through tactile resources and audio description with works of art from the Kenneth Tyler Collection of prints on paper by artists including Helen Frankenthaler and Roy Lichtenstein. This social tour, designed for participants who are blind or who have low vision, facilitates shared discussion and uses tactile resources.

National Art by Description Online program - Friday 12 September – 2pm – 3pm

Free, please book by email access@nga.gov.au Adriane on 02 6240 6632

Join Art by Description online for a second look at portraiture and the ways description and interpretation intersect and overlap. This is a monthly online program via the Zoom platform. Each session includes audio description and presentations by specialist staff, along with music to enhance the listening experience. An email with the zoom link will be sent to the mailing list the day before the program.

Audio Book Group

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 3rd September at 10am - 12pm in the CBS Meeting Room. Join us for a lively discussion about the books we love and the ideas that move us. The next book is an imaginative retelling of the Apollo Moon Mission and what could go wrong. "This Kingdom of Dust" by Australian author David Dyer is a novel of counter facts and deep psychological exploration. Contact the CBS office for assistance in joining and transport.

Griffin Centre Lift Upgrade

Infrastructure Canberra has commenced work towards delivery of the new lift components in the Griffin Centre. The left side lift when you walk into the building – is the first and has already been dismantled and will be replaced from basement 2. The

right side lift continues to operate so our members can access levels 1 and 2 when required. Fortunately, there has been limited noisy periods during the demolition works.

Currently workmen have placed hoarding around the first lift on each level which has not impacted on any of our members/clients visiting CBS rooms or attending activities on other levels.

When right side lift commences an exclusion zone will be required in the foyer on the ground floor, additionally where required tactiles may be applied to assist with wayfinding. Each floor will also likely require some minor exclusion zones as the team works their way through the building.

Signage has been applied throughout Griffin Centre indicating site contacts please reach out both before and during the works with any queries or concerns. CBS-EFLC staff will update all members and clients throughout the process.

Ladies Chat Circle

The Ladies Chat Circle meets on the first Friday morning of the month - with the next one occurring on Friday 5th September, in our office. In the upcoming meeting we will have Lindy will cover the basics on what accessibility tools are available for members who have low vision as well as how to make the most of our sight with available technology. This is aim at introductory level and members are encouraged to contribute with their own experience. If you would like to come along and share a cuppa and chat - please let Aalo know if you will be attending - Call 6247 4580 or email admin@canberrablindsociety.org.au

The October meeting will bring Jessica from Guide Dogs in to talk to the Ladies on the topic of tools and methods for marking items in the pantry, clothing and more – all from the perspective of an Occupational Therapist .

The Way I See It - By Graham Downie

Inaccessible touch screens are the enemy of people who are blind or vision impaired and of people without the dexterity to use them, yet they increasingly pervade appliances and commercial devices.

Arguably most appliances which rely exclusively on inaccessible touch screens breach Australia's Disability Discrimination Act, but this has done nothing to prevent their proliferation, replacing keypads or knobs to control or communicate with devices.

This is not a new concern but one which has received no serious attention in Australia by governments or manufacturers. Much has been done to require physical access for people using wheelchairs; indeed, billions of dollars have been spent modifying railway stations, buses and buildings to provide wheelchair access,. That is as it should be.

But little if anything has been done to require manufacturers to provide universal access to their products.

A touch screen need not be inaccessible. Gestures and/or voice commands are used on Apple and Android devices. Though for some tasks a keyboard is still far easier. Westpac has recently issued a short video explaining how people who are blind can use its EFTPOS terminals. This was necessary because the bank has introduced terminals which have only a touch screen and no keypad. So instead of simply keying in one's PIN, it is now necessary to put the terminal into access mode, then navigate the screen guided by external tactile markers and respond to tones as your finger navigates the screen.

At least there has been an attempt to make the terminals accessible. But there are clearly shortcomings, easily overcome with the provision of a keypad. This is not to say touch screens should not be available, particularly to people with a disability who find a screen easier to manage than a keypad.

I tried by telephone to speak to someone at Westpac who would discuss accessibility questions. This proved to be a waste of my time and the bank's staff member. I had asked that she arrange for me to speak with someone responsible for this technology. I received a standard, no-reply email which indicated the staff member had no understanding of the issue.

I emailed Westpac's media relations asking why Westpac had introduced EFTPOS terminals which required adaptation instead of a simple tactile keypad. At time of writing there has been no reply.

Of course, Westpac is not the only nor the major culprit with the use of touch screens. It is difficult to find appliances, such as stoves, cooktops, refrigerators, televisions, even digital radios which are easily accessible by people who cannot see the screen. The good news is there are some solutions, even quite simple ones, for people who are blind to access touch screens. Tactile markers, which can be supplied by CBS, can be a reasonable solution on some household products. This is not generally an option on external devices such as ATMs, EFTPOS terminals and lifts.

In such cases, more advanced technology can help, though this depends on people having a smart phone. Be My Eyes and Aira used real people and artificial intelligence to help with many tasks. I have used Be My Eyes with human assistance to navigate the computer mouse on a terrible form by Operoo. This company has not made its forms accessible despite my complaint to the Human Rights Commission about three years ago. I digress. There are numerous smart glasses which with AI or human can help with many tasks. Perhaps a look at these in a future edition.

For managing an EFTPOS payment, the best solution for me is my smart watch. It avoids the need for a PIN. You do not even need your card with you.

To use your smart watch or smart phone, you put your card on to the Apple or Android wallet. When a payment is required, activate the wallet, select the appropriate card and point your device at the EFTPOS terminal. This is arguably more secure than using a physical card. There is a bit more to it which I am happy to explain personally to anyone interested.

Though there are ways of managing many tasks, there is no excuse for making what were easily managed tasks more difficult or impossible with inaccessible touch screens.

Expos in September – Come and show your support!

Disability Expo – 12th – 13th of September

The Canberra Disability Expo brings together a wide range of product and service providers to help people live their best life and is being held at EPIC, Exhibition Park Canberra. Eyes for Life Canberra has secured a table at the venue and we would love to see you there.

ACT Seniors and Better Ageing Expo – 24th of September

Join us at the Old Bus Depot Building in Kingston where we will be setting up alongside 150 other exhibitors to showcase how Eyes for Life can be of assistance to the seniors in our community.

Carpet Bowls - Free to a Good Home!

Canberra Blind Society currently has equipment for Indoor Carpet Bowls. This game is similar to lawn bowls but indoors, using biased bowls that curve as they travel down the mat. The objective is to get your bowls closer to the jack (a smaller white ball) than your opponent.

Equipment includes

- Carpet (roll)
- Assorted balls
- Jack

If you are interested to come and take the equipment away please contact Aalo or Deb on 6247 54580 or email admin@canberrablindsociety.org.au

FOR SALE

CBS has a surplus of brand-new **Yoga mats for sale**. Purchased new at \$42.00, now selling for \$20.00.

If you are interested, please call the office on 6247 4580 or email admin@canberrablindsociety.org.au

Volunteer with UC Optometry Students at the CBS Office!

Eyes for Life Canberra collaborate with the UC Optometry school. We are looking for volunteers that would be happy come in for a few hours for the UC students to learn how to do practical eye exams on individuals with glasses and/or eye conditions. This allows the students to learn how to interact with people with a vision impairment as they go into the field of optometry. If you would be interested and would like to know the details please contact Aalo or Debra on 6247 4580 or admin@canberrablindsociety.org.au

Recipe from August Sens-able Cooking

Chicken curry for 10 people!

Ingredients:

- 1.5 kg chicken can be pieces or chopped meat
- 4 red onions chopped
- 4 tomatoes diced
- 50g ginger
- 1 garlic bulb
- 1 tablespoon spoon of each cumin, coriander, turmeric powder
- 1.5 tablespoon meat masala powdered

Method

1. Prepare the Base (Medium to High Heat - 10 to 15 minutes):
Shallow fry chopped onion, tomato, ginger, and garlic on medium to high heat until they turn soft and slightly golden. This should take around 10 to 15 minutes. Blend the mixture into a smooth puree or paste and set aside.

2. Cook the Chicken (High Heat - 10 to 15 minutes):
In the same pan, shallow fry the chicken pieces on high flame. Sprinkle some salt and turmeric while cooking. Fry until the chicken is lightly browned and sealed. This step takes around 10 to 15 minutes. Set the chicken aside.

3. Cook the Spices (Low Heat - 3 to 5 minutes): Add a little oil to the pan. Mix your spices (meat masala, cumin & coriander powder, turmeric) in a bit of water and pour it into the pan. Cook gently on low heat for 3 to 5 minutes until the spices are roasted and aromatic.

4. Combine and Simmer (High to Medium Heat - 15 to 20 minutes):

Add the blended puree to the cooked spices and stir well. Let it cook for a few minutes on high heat, then reduce to medium heat. Add the shallow-fried chicken pieces and cook for another 15 to 20 minutes until the chicken is fully cooked and the flavours are well blended.

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. The Community Rewards Program allows Canberra Southern Cross Club members to give back to the group most important to them.

By nominating Eyes for Life Canberra / Canberra Blind Society - 7.5% of your spend on food and beverages at the Southern Cross Club is donated to your chosen group

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