*CANBERRA BLIND SOCIETY (CBS)*

*April 2019 Newsletter* 405

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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 ten percent of your purchases made on food and beverages in the public restaurants, bars and grills are included.  |

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# Notice Board

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| **April 2019** |
| 3 April | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 4 April11 April18 April | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 19 April | Good Friday |  | Office closed |
| 22 April | Easter Monday |  |  |
| 25 April | ANZAC Day |  | Office closed |
| 26 April | Third Friday (Last Friday for this month only) | 10:00 | Sense-Able Cooking |
| **May 2019** |
| 1 to 4 May | Street Appeal – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED |
| 1 May | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 2 May9 May16 May23 May30 May | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 17 May | Third Friday | 10:00 | Sense-Able Cooking |
| **June** |
| 5 June | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 6 June13 June20 June27 June | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 21 June | Third Friday  | 10:00 | Sense-Able Cooking |

# From the President’s Chair – Peter Granleese

In the March issue of the Newsletter, I outlined some of the plans in hand for the future development of CBS as it re-establishes itself as a standalone organisation. The first step and a very necessary one, will be to increase the Society’s organizational capacity, enabling CBS to expand its services and support to the ACT community.

To this end, CBS applied for a grant under the National Disability Insurance Schemes NDIS 2018/19 Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) funding round, to provide a project officer for 12 months to develop strategies to increase the Society’s organisational capacity. It was with much pleasure and a considerable amount of relief that we received the news from the NDIA that our application for a grant of $102,000 has been fully approved. The amount of money on offer, $19.8 million under the current funding round, was not huge when you consider the large number of disability organisations competing for their slice of the pie. We were more than a little concerned therefore that CBS might miss out, so we really were greatly relieved to receive the news that the Society’s application has been successful.

 The introduction of the NDIS has radically altered the way disability services are provided, especially by small organisations like CBS. The stated vision of the NDIS is to empower people with a disability to choose and achieve their goals in an inclusive community, leading to their increased independence, social and economic participation.

The NDIS achieves this in two ways, NDIS Participant Plans or “individual funding packages” as they are usually called and Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grants available to Disability Peoples Organisations (DPOs).

Many of our readers under the age of 65 receive individual funding packages and will know how the Scheme works. On the other hand, ILC grants are provided from time to time, under the Community Inclusion Capacity Development (CICD) funding and available to Disability Peoples Organisations (DPO) like CBS. They are specifically designed to fill in the gaps not covered by the NDIS. They usually run for a period of 12 months and are for specific projects, in this case, organisational capacity building.

Being one off grants, they will not provide a continuing source of income for CBS, making it very difficult for future planning purposes. We will of course be on the lookout for any future opportunities for ILC funding or any grants available via CICD Funding.

Over the last 18 months, CBS has made great progress adjusting to the NDIS era. Relying on a small number of blind and low vision volunteers with some assistance from our sighted friends, CBS continues to provide services and act as a gathering point for social events from its premises in The Griffin Centre.

The appointment of a project officer will substantially increase the rate at which CBS can increase its structural capacity. This will require many more volunteers if the Society is to continue into the future. One of the duties of the project officer will be to develop strategies to recruit and train volunteers. In the meantime, things are rather busy at CBS as we prepare for the Society’s annual Street Appeal, to take place from Wednesday 1 to Saturday 4 May. The Street Appeal was an important fundraising activity up to 2014 when it was discontinued by RSB. We are working very hard to re-establish contacts with those schools, government departments and volunteers who helped collect donations. CBS is on the lookout for voluntters who can help us in this year’s Street Appeal. If you are able to help or know someone who would like to volunteer, we would like to hear from you.

# Clear Vision – Tour of facilities

Dr Riccardo Natoli from the Clear Vision Research Centre at ANU (<https://www.clearvisionresearch.com/>) has offered to give a tour of their facilities to interested CBS members. The centre’s mission is to eradicate all forms of retinal degenerations including Age-Related Macular Degeneration. Dr Natoli’s team came to CBS on 14 February to discuss their research and answer questions. The tour will be held on Friday 31 May at a time yet to be decided. If you are interested, please email CBS at canblind@canberrablindsociety.org.au with the number of interested people and a contact name and phone number. Let us know by Friday 17 May.

# Fitability Trivia Fundraising Night

Event: Fitability Trivia Fundraising Night

Venue: Fred Daly Room, Canberra Labor Club Belconnen

Date: Friday 31 May 2019

Time: 6:30 for 7pm start

Cost: $20 plus booking fee

This is an opportunity to help the Fitability Tandem program to provide opportunity for vision impaired people to ride a bike

Get a group of friends together and make up a table

More information through the Fitability website

[www.fitability.org.au](http://www.fitability.org.au)

# Audio Description at Canberra Theatre

**The Miser**

Audio described Saturday 20 April 2pm – Tactile Tour 1pm

The Playhouse, Canberra Theatre Centre, Civic Square, London Circuit, Canberra City Box Office 6275-2700

Companion Cards accepted - please mention Audio Description when booking

Presented by: Bell Shakespeare

By: Molière - a new version by Justin Fleming

Director: Peter Evans

Composer and Sound Designer: Max Lyandvert

Cast: John Bell

Duration: Approximately 150 minutes including interval

**A DELIGHTFUL FARCE ABOUT A TIGHT-ARSE LACKING IN CLASS**

Wealthy skinflint, Harpagon is so cheap he’d rather bury his money in the backyard and steal oats from his horse before seeing a dollar spent.

Welcome to the world of The Miser, where passion and penny-pinching go head to head in a ribald comedy of manners. John Bell stars as the stingy, avaricious and obnoxious Harpagon, a money-lender who makes Ebenezer Scrooge look generous. This is a man who loves nothing more than his beloved cash – not even his own children.

With his eye on the prize – an inappropriately young bride who already has her sights set on his son – Harpagon is prepared to sacrifice his children and his dignity to win it all.

First performed in 1668, The Miser is the well-known satire by French playwright Molière, known for other classics such as Tartuffe and The Misanthrope.

Bell Shakespeare’s Founder, John Bell, will be directed by Artistic Director, Peter Evans, in this deliciously mean comedic Molière adaptation, exploring the depth of human greed, lust and manipulation.

A delightful farce about a tight-arse lacking in class.

**Barbara and the Camp Dogs**

Audio described Saturday1 June 2pm – Tactile Tour 1pm

The Playhouse, Canberra Theatre Centre, Civic Square, London Circuit, Canberra City Box Office 6275-2700

Companion Cards accepted - please mention Audio Description when booking

Presented by: Canberra Theatre Centre presents a Belvoir production

Director: Leticia Cáceres

Cast includes: Troy Brady, Elaine Crombie and Ursula Yovich

Duration: Approximately 100 minutes including interval

Content warnings: This show is not suitable for children. It contains strong coarse language, adult themes, fog/haze effects and may contain strobe lighting.

**A ROCK-GIG MUSICAL ABOUT LOVE AND HOME.**

Part road-story, part family drama, part political cry-from-the-heart, Barbara and the Camp Dogs is a high-octane rock gig featuring the powerhouse duo of Ursula Yovich and Elaine Crombie, and a very sharp band keeping the night alive.

Meet Barbara and her band the Camp Dogs. Barbara’s been trying to make it in Sydney, but this is a tough town for musicians. In all the relentless demands of city life, where’s the sense of belonging she craves?

When her mother’s health deteriorates, Barbara and her cousin René hit the road, embarking on a pilgrimage back home to country.

Barbara and the Camp Dogs was Belvoir’s 2017 sleeper hit that – due to an overwhelming demand – will make a return in 2019 with a national tour.

So take a seat and prepare to be blown away by Barbara and the Camp Dogs.

# What’s on at CBS

**Cooking Class Recipes**

**Tabouli**

Ingredients

1 bunch flat leaf parsley

1 bunch mint

1 red onion

1 cucumber (or 2 small)

1 packet of cherry tomatoes

1 large lemon juiced

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 teaspoon cumin

Salt and pepper to taste

¼ cup cousous (or burghul - CBS president’s preference)

**Method**

Chop all herbs

Dice red onion

Heat ¼ cup water and pour over couscous cover and leave for 5 minutes and leave to cool

Combine all ingredients in a large salad bowl

**Moroccan style marinade Beef skewers**

Ingredients

500g ox eye fillet

½ cup lemon juice

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon honey

2 cloves garlic crushed

2 teaspoons ground cumin

2 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon ground turmeric

½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pepper to taste

Method

Mix all ingredients except for meat. Mix well and refrigerate until required.

Cut 500g ox eye fillet beef steak and cut into bite sized cubes

Marinade in mixture in fridge for at least one hour or overnight.

Skewer 4 pieces onto each skewer and BBQ or cook in Heavy pan on medium heat.

# The Way I see It – Graham Downie

The introduction of Canberra’s $1 billion, 12km tram on April 29 will result in increased inconvenience for many bus passengers, especially in the Civic bus interchange.

The interchange will be split across busy Northbourne Avenue, adding precious minutes when changing buses. The pedestrian signals at the intersection of Northbourne Avenue and Alinga Street are cunningly designed to ensure all but the fittest cannot cross both carriageways without a considerable delay in the median. The present timing of walk signals is not expected to change, meaning it can take more than four minutes to complete the crossing.

Having redesigned the bus interchange to incorporate the tram platform between the Northbourne Avenue carriageways, it is unfathomable that no allowance was made for improved pedestrian access. For people who are blind, vision or mobility impaired, the challenge of making connections across a six-lane highway is even greater. Yet, despite the $1 billion, probably more, spent on the tram infrastructure, no underpass has been provided for the hundreds, possibly thousands of extra pedestrians who will have to cross at least one carriageway of Northbourne Avenue. Some passengers will be able to avoid this crossing by changing buses at the ANU bus station on Marcus Clark and Rimmer Streets.

Those having to cross Northbourne Avenue on the northern side of Alinga Street have only eight seconds to cross each carriageway, generally the allocated time at most intersections. People crossing from the Sydney building to the median have 12 seconds. The wait time between walk signals is from 110 to 130 seconds, with the longer time at morning and evening peaks.

How the expected hordes of public transport users are expected to make these crossings safely with these constraints while trying to make connections is not known.

A transport spokesman said, “Any longer times allocated for pedestrians will have an adverse impact on the broader road network.” In other words, priority will continue to be given to people using private vehicles.

The spokesman said, “Transport Canberra and City Services will be reviewing the operation of the intersections with the introduction of light rail operations and will adapt any identified positive changes for all users as required.”

To keep bus passengers on their toes, platforms in the Civic interchange will have new numbers from April 29 and departure points for most services will change. So too will route numbers, even on services whose routes will not change. Positively, there will be more rapid services at 15-minute intervals and the frequency of many feeder services will increase.

There is a promise of better connections between services. But there have been similar promises for more than 20 years with no obvious improvement. Unless allowance has been made for the time needed to cross Northbourne Avenue in the Civic interchange, promising more efficient connections there is elusory.

From April 29, R4 (Rapid 4) will effectively replace the current 300 series between Belconnen and Tuggeranong. In Civic, it will use the new platforms one and two, in Alinga Street, west of Northbourne Avenue. Southbound services will use platform two, adjacent to the GPO. Northbound services will use platform one on the south side of Alinga Street, adjacent to the Melbourne building.

These stations will also service R2, Fraser to the DFO in Fyshwick, and R6, City to Woden via Kingston and Narrabundah.

Also from April 29, platforms three and four will be in Alinga Street on the Eastern side of Northbourne Avenue, replacing platforms 4 and five, and six and 7 respectively. The new platforms three and four will be used by other rapid services. Platform numbers in Mort Street and East Row will change, as will the departure points for most feeder services.

A helpful guide to the new bus routes and timetables is online at <https://www.transport.act.gov.au/getting-around/new-network/bus/regions>

This is an accessible webpage for screen readers, but does not show from which platforms each service will depart. However, it has numerous tables showing services by regions with their timetables. Interestingly, it notes, “The Light Rail timetable is indicative and may change subject to confirmation.” Though I could not find the light rail timetable on this page.

# Canberra’s Light Rail – Familirisation Day.

A number of Society members were able to experience the light rail platform and a stationary Light Rail Vehicle. Below are the observations of two members to assist all members

**Stephanie Creaser – White Cane user**

My observations as a white cane public transport user.

1. Myway scanners are located outside the tram on the boarding platform. You must tap on and off there. No card scanners inside tram.
2. There is Myway card terminals located on the platform to recharge or buy a single trip ticket.
3. If you have the Travel Pass (without the chip to tap on and off) there are CMet officers on the platforms who will assist. It is recommended that you apply for a new Myway card/Travel Pass with the facility to tap on and off. This information will assist Transport Canberra with how often people travel, when, where, demographic, disabilities so they can structure schedules and improve services. Such as, more frequent trams during special events or peak times.
4. Gungahlin residents, Myway card can be bought at the newsagent, near Woolworths, Access Canberra, apply online or renew over the phone. People with a disability need fill in a form to apply, as they travel at no cost, make sure you tick and carer and include passport size photo - card may take up to 5 days to arrive.
5. Seats 66 passengers and lots of designated spaces for guide dogs, wheelchairs, bikes and prams.
6. Red seats at front and middle of tram reserved for people with disabilities.
7. Tactiles along edge of tram platform for white cane users, also along path and traffic crossing to bus station.
8. Tram boarding from middle of platform near platform seating highlighted with a wheelchair symbol on ground has seating for people with disabilities, prams and bikes (4).
9. For everyone, (except those who qualify for a disabilities Myway card, who travel at no cost ) - All travel within 90 minutes, after 1st swipe of Mywaycard is included in the 1st swipe. Need to still tag on and off. Example bus and tram to city = one price.
10. Enter and exiting the tram, small step up to enter, and must press large round raised button on sliding door. Doors do not open automatically when tram stops at platform (for climate control in Canberra weather)
11. Tram stops at each platform, no need to signal your required stop (like the bus). There are announcements when tram is leaving the platform and advises next platform stop.
12. Inside tram, lots of Visual screens displaying upcoming tram stops.
13. Inside tram, lots of red hand rails.
14. Near Myway scanners on platform there are two buttons. The red buttons inside tram and on platform are for emergencies. There will be CMet people to assist.
15. On the platform, The green button, which is the top button, when pressed, advises the Platform eg. This the Gungahlin Platform and the next tram travelling to Alinga Street (city) arrives in 1 minute.
16. Takes average 24 minutes to travel from Gungahlin into the City. Currently, it takes me 35-45minutes travelling by bus in morning traffic.
17. 20 April light rail starts, in time for Folk Festival at Epic. 1st month, free travel.

Many thanks Scott for the opportunity to familiarise myself with the Gungahlin light rail. Thanks Nicola, from CMet who patiently guided and answered all my questions. Thanks everyone involved for the kindness and courtesy for giving up your time. I will look forward to using Canberra’s light rail. Can’t wait for it to connect to other town centres

**Cameron Roles – Dog Guide Handler**

My thanks for CBS and Canberra Metro for giving me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the light rail vehicle. I am writing this having had the benefit of seeing Stephanie’s description, so I have not repeated things she has covered. I am also writing as a dog guide user.

I’ll begin by describing the platform at Gungahlin. It is located in the middle of what used to be Hibbeson street, in the block between Gungahlin Place and Hinder street, where Aldi and Coles are. I’ve been told that this block will not have cars using it any more. If you want to reach the platform, you can cross at the pedestrian crossing on the corner of Hibberson Street and Gungahlin Place, or the crossing which runs between Aldi and the Coles building. Whichever crossing you use, you go to the middle of the crossing and turn either left or right – depending on which end you are coming from – to access the platform.

Each side of the platform is designated with tactile markings. There is a small drop off the edge of the platform to the tram tracks (about 50 cm). This shouldn’t be a problem, as the tactile markers clearly show where the edge is, but I just want to let you know that there is a small drop off on each side of the platform, and no physical barrier to stop you stepping off.

The platform is rectangular. There are two lots of seats in the middle – and these are supposed to line up with the double doors on the tram when it arrives at the stop  (I’ll explain the significance of the double doors in a moment). There is what is called a help point on the platform which will tell you upcoming tram arrivals and also enable you to call for assistance. The help point is marked with braille and large print.

Let me describe the tram. It is one long, rectangular vehicle. Starting at the back and moving forward, there is a single set of doors, then as you proceed toward the front there are two lots of double doors evenly spaced apart, and then a further set of single doors at the front. I would recommend you access the tram through either of the sets of double doors, as the accessible seating is right beside these doors. Be aware that when you step inside the double doors, immediately in front of you in the middle of the tram isle, is a pole for people to hold onto. It starts as one pole at ground level, but spans out into two poles as it rises toward the roof. So if you are looking for the accessible seats, my advice is to not walk toward the middle of the tram corridor but instead to look along the edges of the tram once you are inside the door.

At each set of double doors there is a single accessible seat facing into the middle of the tram. Right next to the single accessible seat are 8  non-priority seats, four on each side of the tram. Two face forward and two face backward on either side of the tram. Dog guides can slide under either the accessible seat, or the non-priority seats adjacent to the isle. They can’t slide under the non-priority seats adjacent to the window, because the seats are held up by metal brackets which attach to the wall on the window sides of the tram, and these brackets slope toward the floor meaning that the dog guide can’t slide under the seat. Likewise dog guides can’t slide under the other seats on the tram, as they don’t have space under them. What this means in practice is that seating is quite limited for dog guide users.

If you are a dog guide user, I would recommend you sit in either the accessible seat, or the non-priority seat immediately adjacent to the accessible seat, on the isle. This is because, at various points along the tram, there are grates covering articulation joints which essentially allow the tram to bend around corners. The metal beside each of these grates moves, which could create a hazard for a dog guide’s paws.

I hope this is useful, and I’m very much looking forward to the tram commencing operation.

# Technology

History of ground surface indicators

Monday 3 April google celebrated Japanese inventor Seiichi Miyake, whose desire to help a close friend turned into an innovation that drastically improved the way those who are visually impaired navigate public spaces around the globe.

In 1965, Miyake spent his own money to invent tactile blocks (or Tenji blocks as they were originally known) to help a friend whose vision was becoming impaired. The blocks come in two predominant types: one with dots, and the other with bars. The dotted blocks alert the visually impaired when they are approaching danger, and can often be found at the edges of crosswalks and railway platforms. The barred blocks provide directional cues, letting users know that they are following a safe path.

Aside from identifying tactile tiles via a support or white cane, individuals also do so with the help of guide dogs or feeling them through their shoes.:

Miyake’s tactile blocks were first introduced on a street near the Okayama School for the Blind in Okayama City, Japan on this day in 1967. Their use gradually spread before they and sound guides were made mandatory in the Japanese National Railways a decade later. Since then, tactile paving is now used around the world.

# Medical News

**Nanosecond laser trial**

The Centre for Eye research Australia is conducting a world first randomised controlled trial of a new laser treatment for age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

**What does this trial hope to achieve?**

AMD is a progressive condition that can lead to vision loss and blindness. Currently there is no specific treatment available for early AMD.

This trial aims to demonstrate the ability of a novel laser treatment to slow or partially reverse the progression of AMD, before vision is lost.

**What is nanosecond laser treatment?**

The treatment will involve the use of a laser device – known as retinal regeneration or 2RT laser therapy – to deliver a controlled nanosecond dose of laser energy into the eye. The laser has been designed by the South Australian-based ophthalmic company, [Ellex](http://www.ellex.com/).

In applying the laser to the affected eye, researchers aim to eliminate the yellow deposits, known as ‘drusen’ that are present in the retinal tissue of AMD patients. It’s hoped the elimination of drusen from the retina will reverse the degenerative processes caused by AMD.

**What are results of the pilot study?**

The interim 12-month results from the trial of 24 high-risk patients with early AMD have shown that the laser can improve the function of a patient’s retina.

After 12 months, around two-thirds of patients experienced sustained improvement in their visual function in the treated eye, with the majority of patients also noting an improvement in their untreated eye.

A patient’s visual function typically improved in the area of the eye that had the most damage. It’s this damage that typically leads to complications of AMD and subsequently, severe vision loss. In addition, the treatment appears to be safe, with research showing no evidence of laser damage to photoreceptor cells.

**Who can participate in the multi-centre randomised control trial?**

Patients with early yet high risk AMD in both eyes may be eligible to participate. The trial is conducted at two sites – Sydney and Melbourne and participants will be recruited from Victorian and NSW ophthalmology clinics. Interested patients should contact their eye care professional for a referral. Referrals can be addressed to:

Kate Brassington
Centre for Eye Research Australia
Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital
Level 1, 32 Gisborne Street
East Melbourne 3002
Centre for Eye Research Australia
P: 03 9929 8362
E: cera-info@unimelb.edu.au

**What can trial participants expect?**

Only patients with early AMD who have not experienced vision loss are able to participate in this trial. For full exclusion criteria, please visit the [Clinical Trials](https://www.cera.org.au/research/clinical-trials-research/) section.

**What is AMD?**

AMD is a degenerative condition affecting the central area of the retina called the macula. The macula is a small area at the back of the eye which is responsible for fine and reading vision. There are two forms of AMD, known as ‘wet’ and ‘dry’. Dry AMD, the more common of the two, is characterised by gradual loss of vision. Wet AMD can lead to rapid and severe vision loss.

AMD is the leading cause of vision loss in Australia. Fifteen per cent of people over 50, or half a million Australians, live with early AMD. The prevalence of this disease increases exponentially with each decade of life and almost a quarter of people over 90 are vision impaired as a result of AMD.

**Who is CERA collaborating with on this project?**

The trial is being conducted by CERA researchers in partnership with [Ellex](http://www.ellex.com/) and the University of Melbourne. The study will be conducted at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (Melbourne) and Marsden Eye Specialists (Sydney).

**How is the trial being funded?**

The trial is supported by funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and a Bupa Health Foundation Award

*Source: The centre for Eye Research, Feb 2019*

# 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 . Please note that there are no vacancies at present, please make contact to join the waiting list if you are interested in becoming a member.

## 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.

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

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

## 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.

## Music Group

As the co-ordinator of the Music Group will be overseas for the next two months the Music Group held at CBS on the last Tuesday of the month will recommence when we arrange a time with the co-ordinator. Stay tuned for details.