*CANBERRA BLIND SOCIETY (CBS)*

*November 2019 Newsletter* 412

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**The CBS offices will be closed for Christmas from Monday 23 December and will re-open on Tuesday 28 Jan 2020.**

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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.  |



**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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| **November 2019** |
| 6 November | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 7 November14 November21 November28 November | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 15 November | Third Friday | 10:00 | Sense-Able Cooking |
| 21 November  | Third Thursday | 6:30 | Annual General Meeting |
| 29 November  | Friday | 4:00 | Festival One Queanbeyan |
| **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 |

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# From the President’s Chair – Peter Granleese

Now that day light saving is upon us, the days are getting longer and warmer weather just around the corner, it is time to be out and about taking full advantage of the long hot summer days. With this in mind, I would like to focus once again on the range of sporting and recreational activities locally available to the blind and vision impaired community.

Sport and recreation have always been an important part of CBS in the past. Unfortunately, it has fallen on hard times in recent years following the loss of Government funding and no permanent staff to run these activities. Consequently, not much has happened at CBS in the sport and recreation department over the last two years.

Earlier this year, CBS obtained a grant under the 2018 / 19 Information, Linkages and Capacity ILC funding to employ Glenn Doney as The Society’s Project Officer. His role is to develop The Society’s organisational capacity and introduce new programs with an increased emphasis on sport and recreation.

Perhaps one of the longest running sporting activities for blind and vision impaired people in the ACT and one that CBS has long supported, is blind cricket. At various times there have been enough players to enter a team in the National Blind Cricket competition. At present however, they are a few players short of a full team and would welcome anyone interested in making up the numbers. Several social games have been scheduled for the summer season while a ‘come and try’ day will be held shortly for those people interested in taking up the sport. If you are interested or want more information, contact Dave Brown via email at blindcricketact@gmail.com or mobile 0420 530 009.

Another long running activity and one that has proven most popular in our community, is tandem cycling run by Fitability. There is something for everyone in the Fitability program; be it competition racing with one of Canberra’s cycle clubs, participating in the various community cycling events held in and around Canberra during the year or the occasional social ride with a friend. Fitability maintains a stable of tandem bikes that are available to the community and provide fully trained volunteers to act as pilots. For more information about Fitability please contact them via email info@fitability.org.au

Another organisation now making a big impact in the blind and vision impaired community is Achilles. This organisation, started in The United States, has spread worldwide and assists people with a disability to participate in running and walking events available to the general community. Achilles started in Canberra six years ago and has about 35 members, 12 of whom are vision impaired. Achilles organises sighted guides for people interested in running or walking in the Saturday morning park runs held at several locations around Canberra, as well as the various local and interstate running festivals. For more information about Achilles, contact Peter Ralston via email achillescanberra@gmail.com or via phone 6241 6288.

While running and cycling may seem a little strenuous for some people, there are other options available for our older and less active members. At last count, there are 19 sporting groups in the ACT that claim to have disability programs. CBS is in the process of contacting these organisations to see what they can offer to our community. We hope to expand the range of sport and recreation activities available in line with the objectives of our current funding which requires us to promote a more inclusive society.

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# 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 Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 21 November at 6:30 at the Griffin Centre in room number 4 on the second floor. Documents and notices will be sent out closer to the meeting. If you require the documents in large print, please contact the office and we will arrange a set of papers for you.

**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.

# Retina Australia (ACT) Inc

Widely regarded as one of the friendliest days of racing, this annual fundraiser is not to be missed. A luscious two course lunch, welcome champagne, raffle and tipping competition make it a fun packed afternoon. Please RSVP before November 12th by email mf\_jm@optusnet.com.au

**Date and Time**: Sunday November 17 from 12:30pm
**Venue**: Silks Room, Thoroughbred Park, Randwick Road, Canberra at information desk
**Price**: $78 include 2 course lunch with a complimentary glass of champagne **Keynote Speaker:** Dr. Riccardo Natoli – John Curtin School of Medical Research, ANU

# Festival One Queanbeyan

Seeking a volunteer to help CBS members, Lindy Hou and Dave Brown at the Combined CBS / Guide Dogs / ACT Blind Cricket stall at Festival One Queanbeyan. We are looking for someone to sit at our stall with others to hand out brochures and answer questions during this event. Anyone else who just wants to come along to the festival is also more than welcome.

**Date and time**: Friday 29 November 2019, 4 pm to 8 pm.

**Venue**: Queanbeyan Park, Lowe Street Queanbeyan

**CBS Contact**: Dave Brown. Ph: 0420 530 009

The following information has been provided by Queanbeyan Palerang Regional Council (QPRC). Queanbeyan and the surrounding townships have a diverse community with constituents from all walks of life. The Community will be holding the Festival ONE event to celebrate diversity and inclusion during Social Inclusion Week- on Friday 29th November, 4pm-8pm in Queanbeyan Park, Lowe street, Queanbeyan. The aim is to provide an event that is accessible and inclusive, encouraging everyone to reconnect with all cultures, age groups, nationalities and abilities.

We want everyone in our region to feel included, valued and given the opportunity to participate fully in society. Social Inclusion is about connecting our community, our workmates, families and friends in order to build and strengthen relationships and networks and to address isolation and exclusion of those who may be marginalised. Key communities who can often feel excluded include young people, jobless families with children, people with a disability or mental illness, LGBTI, those who are homeless, new arrivals, the elderly and Indigenous Australians.

This year we will have a party in the park with live music from local performers, food, children’s entertainment and a Q&A panel with local community members.

Hope to see you all there.

# 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

**CHICKEN SALAD WITH GARLIC AND BACON AND CRUTONS**

**Ingredients**

1 BBQ chicken shredded

Cos lettuce torn into large pieces

Punnet of cherry tomatoes halved

3 small Lebanese cucumbers sliced

4 slices bacon chopped

2 cloves garlic

2 crusty rolls cut into cubes

**Dressing**

1 cup mayonnaise

1 lemon juiced

1 teaspoon mustard

1/4 cup parmesan cheese

2 anchovies mashed (optional)

**Method**

Cook in non-stick frypan bacon, crushed garlic and cubed bread till brown approx. 3 mins

Place all salad ingredients into a large bowl add shredded chicken

Mix dressing ingredients together and pour over salad

Serve garlic, bacon and croutons on top

**DEVILLED EGGS**

**Ingredients**

Eggs hard boiled

Mayonnaise

Mustard

Tomato sauce and chilli sauce (optional)

**Method**

Boil eggs for 7 mins until hard boiled

Peel eggs and cut in half

Scoop out yolks and mash with mayonnaise, mustard salt and pepper

Fill mixture back into egg white cases

**CHOC CHIP COOKIES**

**Ingredients**

2 cups plain flour

1 cup choc chips

150g butter melted

1 egg

Teaspoon vanilla

1 cup sugar (white or brown)

**Method**

Oven 180 degrees moderate oven in 2 lined trays

Mix all ingredients together and roll into walnut size balls

Place onto lined trays and flatten slightly. Bake for 15 mins

# 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.

# The Way I see It – Graham Downie

A local agent agreement with Vision Australia now prevents Australians buying specialised equipment from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) in the UK.

This is particularly disappointing for those who for many years have sourced hard-to-get products from the UK operation, or have preferred the lower prices often available from RNIB. Vision Australia arguably has Australia’s most extensive catalogue for specialised equipment for people who are blind or vision impaired. With its relatively recent agreement with RNIB, it seems reasonable to ask whether it is using its dominant position in Australia unfairly. Though many people will no doubt prefer the ease of dealing with an Australian distributor, others are disappointed not to have the option of buying from RNIB.

The reason or motive for the agreement between Vision Australia and RNIB is not known, but the result, particularly for those who like to shop around to compare prices and products, is reduced choice. Whether this falls into the category of restrictive trade, frowned upon by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, is not known. But it is hard to see how such an agreement benefits blind and vision impaired Australian consumers.

Vision Australia was asked what had brought about the arrangement and whether it was a case of Vision Australia exercising its dominant power to demand high prices for goods?

A spokesman replied, “International suppliers often enter into local agent agreements with retailers in other countries. RNIB has entered into a local agent agreement with Vision Australia and refer customers to us to receive localised support and service.”

“As Vision Australia rarely buys products direct from manufacturers, our costs for products are not much lower than their recommended retail price. Vision Australia endeavours to provide retail items at the best possible price to our customers, however we do apply a small reseller margin to offset import costs, such as freight and other duties, as well as other overheads such as staff and storage costs. Currency fluctuations when dealing with international suppliers can also impact our pricing.”

Given its dominance in the Australian market, and its statement that it endeavours to provide retail items at the best possible price to its customers, it is unfathomable why Vision Australia rarely buys products direct from manufacturers. By largely sourcing products from other agencies, on its admission, Vision Australia is not getting the best possible price for the products it sells.

Importers of products are entitled to cover costs such as those described by the spokesman. However, as the following examples show, some of its prices reflect far more than “a small reseller margin”.

Colour detector from Vision Australia $200 - RNIB about $132.

Talking ear and forehead thermometer, Vision Australia $130 - RNIB about $56.

Talking food thermometer, Vision Australia $77 - RNIB about $56 including VAT (which Australian purchasers would not pay),

Talking Builder's Tape Measure, Vision Australia $225 - RNIB about $123.

Tape-King Talking Tape Measure with Spirit Level, Vision Australia $400 - From its supplier CareTec in Austria about $189 plus postage. Hard to calculate as the purchaser had other goods sent. Total postage about $66.

Draftsman from Quantum, owned by Vision Australia, $480 - CareTec about $178.

100 sheets for Draftsman from Quantum $55 plus postage - Caretec, about $28.

As mentioned in this newsletter previously, CBS bought 200 sheets of swell paper for tactile maps and images from a UK supplier for $208 which included postage. Quantum quoted $260 plus $30 postage for 100 sheets. Vision Australia lists this product for $260 for 100 sheets, not including postage. Bought in bulk, as presumably Vision Australia and/or Quantum do, the price of this paper reduces considerably.

The Vision Australia website says postage is free for orders of more than $150, but is followed by the caveat, ‘conditions apply’. I have not yet sought to find the nature of these conditions.

Supplying Australia’s relatively small market for specialise products for people who are blind or vision impaired inevitably has challenges. However, the use of a local agent agreement to restrict choice does not seem to be in the best interests of people who for many years have benefited by that choice. There are, of course, other Australian and overseas suppliers, and I will spend some time researching those able to offer their services.

# National Portrait Gallery Assisted Tour

The first live audio description tours of the National Portrait Gallery with a Learning Facilitator will take place onsite:

**Date and Time**: Sunday December 1 @ 11:30am – 12:30pm
**Venue**: Meet at information desk
**Price**: Free, bookings essential (02) 6102 7075

**Date and Time**: Tuesday December 3 @ 1:00pm – 2:00pm
**Venue**: Meet at information desk
**Price**: Free, bookings essential (02) 6102 7075

Café is onsite for after tour coffee and cake.

Current gallery floorplan <https://www.portrait.gov.au/content/gallery-map>

# Vision Research

**New gene therapy for wet age-related macular degeneration**

Gene therapy is showing promise for one of the most common causes of blindness. Data presented today shows that six patients with wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD) have, so far, gone at least six months without the need for continued injections to control a disease that typically requires treatment every four to six weeks. Researchers say the hope is that gene therapy will free patients from nearly monthly eye injections by offering a potential "one-and-done" treatment. It's not just about convenience; a more consistent treatment may also help people keep more of their vision. The research was presented at the 123rd Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Researchers expect a gene therapy for wet AMD could be available within the next three to five years, depending upon the results of further clinical studies and regulatory approvals. AMD is the most common cause of vision loss and blindness in the world over age 50, and the total number of people with AMD is expected to explode as the population ages. AMD is a degenerative eye disease that happens when part of the retina is damaged. The damage happens when new, weak blood vessels form behind the retina at the back of the eye. These abnormal vessels leak, causing scaring and killing off the cells that allow us to see.

The first revolutionary leap in AMD treatment occurred a little over a decade ago, with the introduction of a new medication called anti-VEGF therapy. It was the first treatment to inhibit the formation of those damaging, new blood vessels, allowing more than 90 percent of patients to keep their vision, according to clinical trials.

However, in the real world, the actual percentage is closer to 50 percent. One main reason why is that patients are undertreated. This is because most people with AMD must go to the ophthalmologist's office every four to eight weeks for an injection directly into their eye (oftentimes in both eyes). This can be a difficult schedule to maintain for many elderly patients struggling with other maladies and reliant on others to get them to their ophthalmologist visits.

Researchers have been searching for a better alternative to monthly injections almost from the moment anti-VEGFs were introduced. Gene therapy is emerging as one of the more promising alternatives to long-term anti-VEGF treatment.

The goal of the research is to develop a gene therapy that allows the eye to make its own anti-VEGF medicine. The ideal gene therapy would be administered not through a surgical procedure in an operating room, but through an injection into the eye that can be done in the doctor's office, just like routine anti-VEGF treatment is done today.

To do this, researchers’ colleagues have developed a next-generation vector that can insert into the cells of the eye, genetic material that makes a molecule like a widely used anti-VEGF medicine called aflibercept. Once inside the cells, the DNA sequence begins making the aflibercept protein.

Instead of taking a vile of aflibercept and injecting it into the eye, your eye makes the aflibercept. The goal is a potentially one-and-done treatment. You may need a booster occasionally, but this gene therapy could theoretically last a lifetime.

Source: American Academy of Ophthalmology Oct 11, 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 The group now has places available for new members, if you are interested please contact Bob.

Our December book is a gripping crime thriller set in the Riverina, "Scrublands", by Canberra author Chris Hammer. Join us for a lively discussion or just listen to this book for your own enjoyment.

Join us for this exciting read or just read along with us.

## 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.