*CANBERRA BLIND SOCIETY (CBS)*

*March 2020 Newsletter* 415

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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. |

**A picture containing clipart

Description generated with very high confidence**

**Specsavers committed to supporting local community**

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Recently the dishwasher located in the CBS offices has been leaking and our Secretary Mr Graham Downie approached several Canberra businesses to ascertain could they assist CBS in a sponsorship capacity. We are delighted that Amy Timbs from Winning Appliances in Kingston was able to come to our rescue and have donated a new dishwasher to replace our 15-year-old one.

“Winning Appliances in collaboration with Smeg would like to supply and install a new dishwasher to help assist you and the society.”

*Amy Timbs Store Manager*

Canberra Blind Society wish to thank **Winning Appliances Kingston** and **Smeg** so much for their unbelievable generosity. It will be greatly appreciated by all our CBS members who use our services. The new Smeg dishwasher has recently been installed and is ready for use to all monthly program participants.

A close up of a logo

Description automatically generated

<https://www.winningappliances.com.au/>

# Notice Board

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| **March 2020** | | | |
| 4 Mar | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 5 Mar  12 Mar  19 Mar  26 Mar | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 20 Mar | Third Friday | 10:00 | Sense-Able-Cooking |
| **April 2020** | | | |
| 1 April | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 2 April  9 April  16 April  23 April  30 April | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 17 April | Third Friday | 10:00 | Sense-Able-Cooking – Nutrition ACT presenting |
| **May 2020** |  |  |  |
| 6 May | First Wednesday | 10:00 | Audio Book Club |
| 7 May  14 May  21 May  28 May | Thursdays | 9:30 | Braille Group |
| 15 May | Third Friday | 10:00 | Sense-Able-Cooking |

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

In the February issue of the Newsletter, I mentioned that the wheel has turned full circle back to a more traditional CBS, following the establishment of a retail outlet selling a range of low vision items and the appointment of an outreach officer providing information, counselling, referrals and other support. It is a case of turning back the clock to a time before the introduction of The National Disability Insurance Scheme NDIS when CBS was a hive of activity and the go-to place for a whole range of services for the vision impaired community.

Long term readers of the Newsletter will remember that the future of CBS has been shrouded in uncertainty ever since the Federal Government made an announcement in 2012, that it would be establishing an Australia wide disability insurance scheme.

At the time of The Government’s announcement, only the broad details on how it would work, were known to us.

We knew that organisations like CBS would lose ongoing Government funding and the money saved would be given direct to people with disabilities covered by The NDIS who could purchase the services they require from a provider of their choice. We also knew that the NDIS would commence in The ACT on 1 July 2014 as a pilot project to test how The Scheme would work and as a consequence, CBS would lose its funding after the commencement date. Apart from that, we knew very little on how it would work in practice and its affect on the long-term viability of CBS.

At the time of the announcement, I was a member of the ACT Disability Advisory Committee, established by the ACT Government to advise it on matters concerning the disability sector. Most of The Committee were made up of representatives from disability organisations providing services in the ACT and were greatly concerned at the impact the NDIS would have on their organisations.

For the next two years, the Committee spent a great deal of time seeking information on how The NDIS would work, without much success. This led to a widespread belief within the disability sector that the Government did not know what they were doing and were making it up as they went along. This was not too far from the truth as it turned out. I recall that a representative from the Productivity Commission summed it up when he likened the introduction of fhe NDIS as a bit like trying to fly a plane before the wings were attached.

In preparation for the introduction of the NDIS and the prospect of no government funding, CBS established a working party to examine the long-term future and sustainability of CBS. The Working Party found that although CBS was in no immediate danger of insolvency, without an alliance with a like-minded organisation, CBS could not continue or if it did, it would do so with greatly reduced services.

The like-minded organisation came in the form of The Royal Society for The Blind of South Australia, (RSB), who entered into an agreement with CBS to provide joint services. This arrangement worked well enough until RSB decided to withdraw its services in August 2017, leaving CBS without an income and no resources to carry on.

Following the Society’s successful applications for grants totalling $860,000 under the 2019/20 and 2020/23 ILC funding rounds, CBS is back in business and able to plan ahead with certainty until the middle of 2023. The two grants com with strings attached however, requiring CBS to introduce a range of organisational capacity and individual capacity initiatives referred to in the grant literature as ILB deliverables. These initiatives or deliverables must satisfy the essential criteria providing information, linkages with other agencies to obtain the best outcomes for individuals and increase the capacity of individuals to live independent lives and fully participate in community activities.

To be eligible for ILC funding, the applicant must be a Disability Peoples Organisation (DPO), defined in the grant literature as an organisation run by and on behalf of the people with the disability. CBS being a community based organisation for many years, ticks this box.

As I write, we are half-way through the 12 month period funded by the 2019/20 grant. It is in two parts. the first part requires CBS to increase its organisational capacity to make it more efficient and better able to provide a quality service to the vision impaired community.

The initiatives completed so far include;

* refurbishment of the CBS Office, including the fit out for the retail outlet,
* installation of a new dishwasher, new signage and new furniture;
* linked computer system with Jaws, NVDA AND Zoomtext screen reading software and the capacity for vision impaired volunteers to receive electronic donations and payment for items from our retail outlet and issue receipts; and,
* properly trained vision impaired volunteers who answer phones, meet and greet visitors, answer routine enquiries and perform a wide range of administrative tasks involving the day to day running of the organisation;

These initiatives have been designed to assist vision impaired volunteers to fully participate in all aspects of the running of CBS, including the day to day running of the organisation, policy and program development, peer support and membership of the CBS Board. It is essential that vision impaired volunteers are fully involved in the Society’s affairs if it is to retain its DPO status. This is not to say that sighted volunteers are not welcome.

Historically, sighted volunteers have performed many tasks in the past and it was true to say that without their assistance, CBS could not have provided the level of services it was able to provide. With the appointment of the outreach officer, the establishment of the retail outlet and the introduction of new services, we will need a dedicated group of vision impaired and sighted volunteers to help take CBS forward into the future.

Watch this space.

# New typeface trial for the Newsletter

A new typeface – greater legibility and readability for low vision readers

Atkinson Hyperlegible font is named after Braille Institute founder, Robert J. Atkinson. What makes it different from traditional typography design is that it focuses on letterform distinction to increase character recognition, ultimately improving readability. The Braille Institute are making the typeface free for all to use. You can download the typeface to your computers here: <https://www.brailleinstitute.org/freefont>. Please let us know what you think of the new typeface – previously we used Arial

# 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.

# 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.

# National Gallery of Australia Descriptive tour review – Lindy Hou

I went along to the Descriptive Tour at the NGA on Sunday and this is Comet's description of his day.

Lindy and I went to the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) on Sunday 23rd February where NGA staff member Adriane Boag had organised a tour called ‘Descriptive tour of Belonging: Stories of Australian Art’.

This tour was led and described by Northern Queensland artist Arone Meeks. He gave a lively description of an art piece installed on the lawn of the NGA, a 2.7-metre diameter aluminium and bronze sculpture called ‘Eran’, a work created in conjunction with Thanakupi, the renowned Indigenous artist. Arone told us what a mentor and inspiration Thanakupi had been in his life.

We then went inside to see his wonderful lino print ‘Spirit Ark’. There was so much to see and hear about this very detailed and very personal work that I was more interested in it than looking at the camera.

At the end Adriane mentioned that there will be similar tours held monthly at the NGA. This is a wonderful opportunity for CBS members and friends to come along and be able to ‘see’ art through the words of the knowledgeable art describers.

The next descriptive tours are:

Sunday 29 March at 11am - Hugh Ramsay exhibition or Matisse & Picasso

Sunday 26 April at 11am – Xu Zhen exhibition (a contemporary Chinese artist)

Sunday 31 May at 11am – Know My Name exhibition of Australian women artists

# Simple and Healthy Eats for Seniors

On Friday the 17th April CBS is fortunate to have Leanne Elliston who is an Accredited Practising Dietitian with Nutrition Australia – ACT delivering a mobile cooking workshop at our CBS offices. The cooking class will commence at our usual time of 10am and finish at 12pm and is open to CBS members at no cost. The cooking class is open to a maximum of 15 participants and includes all food, consumables and cooking equipment. Participants receive a complimentary healthy eating handbook. The three-course cooking workshop will consist of

• Tomato bruschetta

• Asian chicken salad

• Berry parfait

# Cooking Class Recipes

SANG CHOI BAO CHINESE LETTUCE WRAPS

**INGREDIENTS**

1 iceberg lettuce

500g pork or chicken mince

1 bunch of shallots

1 small tin water-chestnuts

2 carrots

1 red onion

4 shitake mushrooms

3 garlic cloves

2 tablespoons ginger

3 tablespoon soy sauce

3 tablespoons oyster sauce

½ teaspoon sesame oil

4 tablespoon oil

1 cup bean sprouts

Small bunch of coriander

Chilli flakes to taste

**METHOD**

Pull apart lettuce into individual leaves and soak in cold water.

Grate carrot.

Dice finely onion, spring onion, mushroom, coriander, water chestnuts and garlic.

Heat oil in wok stir fry garlic, onion, ginger and pork/ chicken mince for 2 min.

Add grated carrot, mushroom and water chestnuts.

Pour in soy, oyster, sesame oil and chilli flakes(optional) cook till meat is brown but still juicy.

Take off the stove and stir in coriander and shallots.

Serve in crisp lettuce cups when mixture has cooled a bit.

**Enjoy**

# The Way I see It – Graham Downie

Overseas travel alone might seem daunting to people who are blind or have limited vision, but it is manageable, especially with help by staff at airports.

During my recent excursion through numerous US states and the Province of Alberta, Canada, which included 11 flights, I found only one allocated airport assistant who found guiding a blind person uncomfortable. He said it would be easier for him if I sat in a wheelchair. After his struggle to manoeuvre the conveyance into and out of a lift, I stepped out, saying it was easier for me to walk.

Interestingly, few of my airport guides knew the correct method of guiding a blind person. That is, the blind person to hold their guide’s arm just above the elbow. This puts the guide slightly ahead of the blind person, who can easily follow without too many spoken instructions. After being shown the recommended method of guiding, most of my guides, some of whom spoke limited English, found it easy to navigate the labyrinth of very large airport terminals while chatting to me about my destination, Australia’s bushfires, or other items of interest.

Cabin staff on aircraft, particularly those on the long-haul Qantas flights, gave excellent orientation and, without being overbearing, were very helpful when needed. Similarly, staff in the four hotels in which I stayed, three in the US and one in Canada, were helpful when needed. Only once, after checking in, did I have to ask the otherwise helpful man if he could show me to my room.

I stayed in two hotels twice - one in Denver and the other in Calgary. On my return to Denver, I was allocated a room very close to the one where I had stayed a week previously. In Calgary, I was allocated the same room. Thoughtful acts such as these help to make travel a little easier.

An old trick, used by many blind people when staying in hotels, is to put a rubber band on the door handles of one’s room to quickly identify the correct room. Notably, of the four hotels in which I stayed, all identified room numbers with Braille and large, raised numbers.

While in Calgary, strewn with ice and slush from a recent snowfall, I learned about a remarkable provision for pedestrians which Canberra, with its obsession with planning for motor vehicles above everything else, might investigate. For in Calgary, pedestrians have the right-of-way at all intersections and crosswalks unless the intersection is controlled by a traffic signal or traffic control. While this can have unintended consequences, placing the needs of pedestrians above those of motorists would be a welcome change to Canberra’s slip lanes, designed to speed traffic at considerable risk to pedestrians and cyclists. Even crossing Civic’s so-called shared zone, pedestrians need to take considerable care to avoid motor vehicles. This would be a perfect place to impose the right of pedestrians over vehicles, but there are probably few votes in it.

The rule in Calgary is that, before crossing at an intersection or crosswalk, better known in Australia as a pedestrian crossing, pedestrians should:

* signal their intention to cross and ensure they are visible to traffic
* ensure traffic has stopped, and
* ensure that they will not step in front of a vehicle that cannot stop.

This seems to suggest applying common sense. The unintended consequences referred to previously includes the risk that not all vehicles will stop when signalled by a pedestrian. However, sound mobility training for blind people insists not to cross unless all traffic has stopped.

Anyway, giving pedestrians right-of-way over motor vehicles is something Canberra’s city mothers and fathers should consider, especially as the inquiry into vulnerable road users has not resulted in any obvious improvements.

# What I got for Christmas – Bose Frames! by Scott Grimley

What are Bose Frames? They are a pair of sunglasses with speakers in the arms that allow you to listen to music, screen readers and take calls with no one else hearing what you hear.

They also link to the Microsoft Soundscape app and tell you landmarks and other features the app provides.

The Bose Frames link by Bluetooth to your device and you can download an app that allows you to set maximum volume, sync settings for Soundscape and access a variety of apps that work specifically with the glasses (some of which only work in the US). The app is available in the App Stores and is called Bose Connect and it is fully accessible with Voiceover

**How to use it**

Make sure the device you wish to link them too is on with Bluetooth active. Turn the Frames on by pressing the only button on them under the right arm and hold it until you hear ‘Pairing’. Find Frames listed in your Bluetooth settings on your device and connect. You should now be good to go.

The button on the right arm also controls audio playback and calls. One press will play or pause playback, answer a call or end it. A double press will restart the current track or jump back to the previous track and a triple press will skip forward a track.

You can control volume with the buttons on your device and or the Bose Connect app. You can also restrict the volume by setting the volume in the app and then using your devices volume control.

Charging is through the usual USB power connection with a magnetic multiple stud end to the Frames. The multiple studs end slides easily onto the connection on the inside of the right arm. Battery life is around 3 hours with constant playback and about 5 hours with Voiceover and calls.

There are two models and three sizes. The Altos have a rectangle shape to the lens and come in either large or small and the Rondos with a round lens shape and only one size.

There are a variety of lenses with a brown tint be the default set. Others are available from Bose or online with Fuse Lenses. I found the Yellow foil lenses were best for me and cost an additional $50 from Bose.

**Some downsides**?

The plastic feels a little cheap, but it is all about the tech inside. I do recommend getting some nose pads from a Sunglasses or Optical shop. There can be some sound bleed depending on the volume setting you have in the app and on your device. Keeping the app at 50% will allow you to set your device at maximum and have little escape of sound.  You may find that on some public transport it is difficult to hear a phone call, even at high volume.

**The Upsides**

The Bose Frames are simple to use, have a good sound and can be worn for extended times. I find they are good for those of us who want to wear sunglasses, keep our ears free for passive wayfinding and use our devices at the same time. I also found the sound quality for various music types to be enjoyable, clear and of a good quality.

**The costs**

They cost around $300 and are available from JB Hi-Fi and online with Bose. Additional or different tint lenses are available online from both Bose and Fuse Lenses.

**Seeking CBS members help - Tactiles**

**Can you help with dotties and lines?**

I and a few colleagues are putting together an informal paper about good and poor use of tactile, also known as tactile ground surface indicators and even dotties and lines. Basically, the dots you find at the tops of ramps, stairs, edges of train platforms and wharves and the lines that take you to the bus stop or edge of the road from a building wall etc.

**What are we looking for?**

Images and descriptions of good or bad use of tactile indicators in and around public transport in particular and especially light rail. Additionally, roadside kerbs, road crossings (marked and unmarked), heavy rail and wharves.

If you wish to help, please email me at scott.grimley@gmail.com with a description of good or bad examples, why it is good or bad, location and if possible, an image. If you cannot send an image, a street location will allow us to use Google Earth and get the image we need.

As this is an informal paper, it does not need ethical approvals but please be assured we will not identify anyone or group and will maintain your privacy

It is hoped the paper we create may assist various industries on when and how to install tactile. Really hoping you can help with the development of this informal paper with your thoughts and experiences. Thank you so very much in advance for your help.

Scott Grimley

# Medical News – Laser Eye Surgery

**Laser eye surgery FAQs** *Source: Vision eye institute, Victoria, December 2019*

**Is laser eye surgery permanent?**

LASIK, ASLA and SMILE® permanently reshape the cornea. Some people may require a follow-up procedure to enhance or improve the initial results. It’s important to be aware that presbyopia can develop at around 40–50 years of age. Presbyopia is an age-related condition of your lens, which reduces your ability to focus on near objects and will occur regardless of whether you have laser eye surgery or not. Presbyopia does not involve the cornea.

Laser eye surgery will not prevent the development of presbyopia, although it is sometimes used to delay the need for glasses.

**Does laser eye surgery hurt?**

Laser eye surgery isn’t painful. Most people report feeling mild pressure on their eye. However, all patients are given local anaesthetic drops and often a mild sedative.

**How long does laser eye surgery take?**

You will be in the clinic for around 2 hours, but the surgery itself only takes about 20 minutes for both eyes.

**How quickly does laser eye surgery work?**

Many people are surprised that they can see distant objects, such as a clock on the wall, as they are leaving the laser suite. Most people can legally drive without the use of glasses or contact lenses 1 to 2 days after having LASIK or SMILE.

ASLA (PRK) ultimately provides the same outcome as LASIK and SMILE, although recovery time is longer. Your vision can fluctuate for up to 6 weeks before it settles.

Your eyesight will be checked during the post-operative review. This is usually scheduled for later that same day or the day after surgery.

**What happens if I blink during laser eye surgery?**

You don’t need to worry about blinking during laser eye surgery. During the procedure, an instrument is fitted over your eye and holds it in place. A speculum is also used to keep your eyelids open.

The laser is highly sophisticated and fitted with an infrared eye tracker. This tracker constantly measures your eye movements during surgery. Even the smallest movement will be detected, which the laser will compensate for.

**What are the side-effects of laser eye surgery?**

Laser eye surgery is a routine procedure. However, like any surgical procedure, there are always potential benefits and risks.

Minor side-effects are seen in around 1–2% of patients. For example, a less-than-expected visual result that requires an enhancement or temporary dry eyes that require drops.

Very rarely, some patients can get infections or suffer complications that are more serious. The chance of having a serious vision-threatening complication is extremely small (very much less than 1%). Selecting the correct procedure for your eyes (which sometimes means not having surgery at all) minimises the risk of a serious complication. The experience of your surgeon and the clinic staff are also very important considerations.

Vision Eye Institute surgeons and clinics adhere to strict sterility and surgical processes and have access to the latest state-of-the-art equipment and technology. Patients are discharged with the appropriate post-operative medication, which may include antibiotic drops and pain-relief medication.

Always have a comprehensive discussion about the benefits and risks of surgery with your ophthalmologist before proceeding.

**Can I go blind from laser eye surgery?**

No patient in Australia has ever become blind from laser eye surgery.

The laser cannot cause blindness as it only acts superficially – it targets the outermost layer of the eye (the cornea). If the eye itself develops an infection, which is not treated or managed properly, then there is a risk of significant vision loss. Choosing a reputable laser eye surgeon and clinic reduces your chances of serious complications. Our surgeons and clinics maintain the highest standards of sterile and surgical protocols.

Your ophthalmologist should discuss in detail the potential benefits and risks before you decide whether to proceed with surgery.

**How much does laser eye surgery cost?**

As a rough guide, laser eye surgery can cost between $2600 to $3400 per eye. However, it’s important to understand the true value of your surgery. This means knowing what type of laser eye surgery you are having (e.g. LASIK, ASLA, SMILE), the experience of your surgeon and clinic staff, and whether there are any additional costs (e.g. medications, enhancement procedures, theatre fees).

**Does Medicare or private health insurance cover laser eye surgery?**

Medicare does not rebate any of the cost of laser eye surgery (apart from some of the cost of the pre-surgical consultation).

Some private health insurers provide cover for laser eye surgery in some of their products e.g. BUPA members with [Ultimate Health cover](https://www.bupa.com.au/health-insurance/cover/ultimate-health-cover-gold) and [Medibank Gold Ultra Health](https://www.medibank.com.au/health-insurance/cover/gold-ultra-health/) members are entitled to 100% cover for a laser eye surgery procedure (waiting periods apply). This does not cover consultation and diagnostic tests.

Check with your health insurer if your level of cover includes rebates for laser eye surgery.

**What if laser eye surgery isn’t recommended for me?**

There are several reasons why laser eye surgery may not be suitable for some people. Depending on the reason, other vision correction options may be suitable. Examples include replacement lens exchange or implantable lenses. Once you have had your eyes tested and examined, your ophthalmologist will be able to discuss alternative treatment options with you.

# 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](mailto:randjjames1@gmail.com) The group now has places available for new members, if you are interested please contact Bob.

"The book for March is "Becoming", by Michelle Obama, read by the author. This was the most popular book for Canberra Library users last year. It's not too late to join us 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](mailto: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.

## 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.