*CANBERRA BLIND SOCIETY (CBS)*

*May 2020 Newsletter* 417

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

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**Specsavers committed to supporting local community**

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# From the President’s Chair – Peter Granleese

Welcome to the May edition of the Canberra Blind Society Newsletter. I trust that everyone is staying safe and keeping well over the lockdown period. According to comments made by our Prime Minister there mey be some light at the end of the tunnel, so here’s hoping some restrictions will be lifted in the coming weeks.

As you can imagine not much has happened at CBs in the last month, so there is not a lot to report.

Just a reminder the CBS virtual office is still open for business between 10 and 4 Tuesday to Friday. If you have any enquiries you can contact us by email or telephone and we wlll see what we can do. As we are still in virtual reality mode there won’t be anyone staffing the office during the lockdown period. Those of us involved in the day to day running of the office have been keeping the organisation going in readiness for the time when restrictions are removed. Some of our volunteers have been updating the society’s data base to determine which of the 380 members listed as clients still require our services Its important that our data base is brought up to date in order that we have a better idea of our clients needs If you receive a phone call from one of our volunteers we would appreciate if you could take a few minutes to answer some questions. The information you can provide is important to us and will help us plan the kind of services our members require and deserve. Until next time, keep safe and well and continue to look out for each other.

# 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.

# 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.

# The Way I see It – Graham Downie

Changes adopted to deal with this social isolation will almost certainly become fixtures in the post-COVID-19 era, trusting there will be such an era.

Which raises the question, will these changes benefit people with a disability? Potentially at least, the answer is yes. Less than two months ago, most people expecting to attend an online meeting would probably have been regarded as lazy, anti-social or obsessed with technology. Yet over the past six weeks or so, I have participated in at least 10 online meetings, all of which would previously have required a physical presence. Certainly, some of these meetings have been required to devise strategies and processes to overcome social isolation.

The Canberra Blind Society Board, for example, had a couple of meetings to test the most suitable platform, before its April Board meeting was formally held. Having been held, using Google Meets, there was no obvious detriment to the meeting process and at least a few clear advantages, not least time and resources saved by not having to travel to and from the meeting. The possibility of not having to leave home on a cold, wet winter night to attend a meeting was, at least for some participants, quite appealing.

So far, all of the online meetings in which I have been involved have been with people well known to each other. Involving a new person or two, not otherwise known to the majority of participants, might be less comfortable for some and more challenging for the new ones. Nevertheless, especially for business-type meetings at least, it seems clear there will continue to be online meetings well after present social restrictions are lifted.

For people with disabilities, particularly for those for whom travel is difficult, the opportunity and acceptability of being included in a meeting, even where most participants are physically present, could be very welcome. A traditional, major concern about conferences by telephone has been that other participants cannot be seen. For many people, this is almost as important as hearing what those participants say. But this has been largely overcome by the numerous internet platforms and relatively inexpensive webcams, now in most households.

Many years ago, when a young journalist, I was told by the editor that best interviews were conducted in person. That there was something about a personal presence which brought out the best or worst of the interviewee. But the editor acknowledged conducting a personal interview had to be balanced against the cost, time, opportunity and importance of a face-to-face interview.

So it is with meetings or conferences. Given today’s sophisticated communications technology, scarcely imagined 30 years ago, it is remarkable that so many people, at least until March this year, travelled considerable distances to participate in meetings and conferences. The cost, financial and environmental, was enormous compared to having an online meeting.

However, having attended many national meetings, I attest much of the value came from private discussions over a drink or meal. Much of this is lost with an online meeting. So, there will continue to be a place for face-to-face meetings, but experience over the past six weeks or so, is that all it has been, will inevitably influence considerable change, not least in the opportunity and acceptance for people to work from home.

But humans are social creatures and for many, the end of social isolation cannot come soon enough. On retirement, my greatest loss was the daily conversations and banter in the office. I did, even then, do some work from home, especially when I needed or wanted quiet and time.

There will, or should be, after this COVID-19 crisis is over, a better balance between the need for social contact and the considerable waste resulting from unnecessary physical meetings. Meanwhile, anyone reading this newsletter needing help setting up online meetings is welcome to give me a call on 5100 7434.

# Updated ACT Assistance Animal Standards – Scott Grimley

In the last newsletter we introduced you all to the new ACT Assistance Animal Standards and urged members to apply for the new ACT Public Access Test accreditation card.

Shortly after the April newsletter went out, we were informed the implementation of the standards has been delayed because of the COVID-19 isolation requirements. Trainers and assessors of assistance animals are still able to put forward their case for accreditation, however all other aspects of the standards are on hold until further notice.

The increase to fines, protection for exercising access rights and dog guides in training are now in effect as they are part of the Animal Welfare Amendment Bill and not the standards.

We will continue to keep you informed of any changes that may affect you and your dog guide.

# Medical News

How to cook your vegies to maintain good nutrition and support your immune system during coronavirus.

*Source: ABC News Science, April 2020*

Ever had a meal where the vegetables were so overcooked and tasteless that you wondered if there was any nutritional value left in them?

Vegies are a good source of fibre, vitamins, minerals, and a group of substances called phytonutrients or phytochemicals.

Getting the most out of our vegetables is critical to support our immune system during the coronavirus pandemic.

While cooking makes many vegies easier to digest, cooking them for too long at high temperatures, or with too much water turns them into a tasteless mush and leaches away nutrients.

This is especially so for vegies that contain water-soluble vitamins (vitamin C, B1, B2, B3 and folate).

Minerals such as calcium, potassium, iron, zinc, which are not very water soluble, can also be leached out when the plant structure breaks down with extended cooking times

On the other hand, cooking can increase the availability of specific vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients (compounds that often give plants their colour and have antioxidant and other health benefits) that are bound to structures within the vegetable including different types of fibre or structures inside cells.

The impact of cooking and food processing on total vitamin, mineral and phytonutrient depends on which you cook, how you cook them and for how long.

**Pros and cons of different cooking techniques**

If you want to retain a range of water-soluble vitamins, ﬂavonoids (antioxidant phytonutrients found in spinach, onions, blueberries, apples, tea) and glucosinolates (sulfur compounds found in broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage cauliflower and kale) steaming, stir-frying and microwaving are the best techniques to use.

Steaming is fairly quick, but you need to check regularly to make sure the vegetables don't overcook.

Many appliances can be used for steaming, from a metal steamer inside a regular saucepan, to a bamboo steamer placed over a wok or saucepan, to a steaming oven.

By placing vegetables over the steam with the lid on, and not in the water, you retain more water-soluble vitamins.

Stir-frying cooks vegetables with a small amount of oil over high heat for a minimal amount of time before being served. This means a large proportion of the nutrients are retained.

The only disadvantage of stir-frying is that it may not cook some vegetables such as sweet potato enough for your liking.

Microwaves heat the water molecules inside the vegetables so you don't need to add any water.

To make sure they cook, and retain nutrient evenly, cut vegies into same-sized pieces and cook in a microwave-safe dish with the lid on for 2 - 4 minutes or until cooked.

Unlike the previous methods, stewing causes loss of water-soluble nutrients because of the heat, water and long cooking time.

But the good news is that you can include lots of vegetables, herbs or spices, with the other ingredients in a stew.

By adding a bigger volume and range of vegetables your dish will have a high nutrient content, even if some water-soluble nutrients have broken down.

Also by eating the stewing 'gravy' you will consume the nutrients that have leached into it.

Surprisingly, stewing or a slow-cooking increases the availability of carotenes. These pigments give plants their colour and are used in photosynthesis. They are found in asparagus, broccoli, carrots, corn, kale, pumpkin, red capsicum, spinach, sweet potato and tomatoes).

Frying at a high temperature for a short time will lead to loss of water-soluble vitamins compared to stir-frying or microwaving, though not as much as boiling or cooking for longer periods of time.

While frying oil can be a good source of vitamin E and leads to an increase in vitamin E content of fried foods, the oil absorbed by fried foods means it is much higher in kilojoules and lead to weight gain.

A small boiled potato (50 grams) contains about 130 kilojoules but dipped in batter and fried, a small potato scallop (70 grams) contains 950 kilojoules.

Frying has no impact on mineral content (potassium, iron, zinc, calcium), but fried foods are not usually a good source of minerals to start with.

**Vitamins and minerals in vegies**

• Vitamin B (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin): green leafy vegies such as spinach

• Vitamin C: capsicum, spinach, broccoli, cabbage and other green vegetables)

• Folate: green leafy vegetables

• Beta-carotene: dark yellow, orange and dark green vegetables, including carrots, sweet potato and pumpkin, spinach and broccoli. Beta carotene is converted to vitamin A in the body

• Calcium: leafy green vegetables such as broccoli, bok choy, Chinese cabbage and spinach (but the high oxalate in these means calcium is not well absorbed)

• Iron: Legumes including dried beans and lentils. Vitamin C from fruits and vegies can boost iron absorption

• Zinc: Legumes

• Potassium: Leafy green vegetables such as spinach, silverbeet, kale, carrots, potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, eggplant, beans and peas.

**Tips to boost your nutrient intake**

• Have a variety of vegetables regularly

• Have some vegetables raw each week

• Don't soak vegetables in water before cooking

• Use an oil-based salad dressing to boost intake of those soluble in fat

• Vary your cooking techniques

• Add extra vegetables to stews and casseroles to boost overall nutrient intakes

# Audio Book Club – Bob James

The audio book club met in April in eight living rooms across Canberra by  
teleconference. We all felt the value of togetherness, the pleasure of  
recognising voices, a helpful exchange of survival hints and a book chat.  
  
Please consider joining us on the first Wednesday in May when we will  
discuss the much acclaimed , quirky novel, "Eleanor Oliphant is  
Completely Fine" by Gail Honeyman.

For information contact Bob James on 6296 2644.