***CANBERRA BLIND SOCIETY (CBS)***

*Quarter 1 2022 Newsletter* 437

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**Canberra Blind Society (CBS) is closely following announcements from the Office of the ACT Chief Health Officer to finalise the COVID-safe arrangements for any event moving forward.**

**CBS thanks its members, carers, friends, volunteers and other visitors to the Griffin Centre for complying with all COVID restriction guidelines when entering the premises and attending organised activities.**

# From the President’s Chair – Heather Fitzpatrick

Welcome to the first quarterly newsletter from CBS. One change we have made is to make the CBS newsletter quarterly with editions in March, June, September and December. The quarterly newsletter will update the events and happening around CBS. During January we took the opportunity to clean up and organize the office and storeroom. The team also discussed office procedures and looked at the year ahead.

CBS will send out regular announcements with upcoming events and excursions and details on how to sign up. Our webpages and Facebook feeds will have all the details so don’t forget to like the Canberra Blind Society and the Eyes for Life Canberra Facebook pages to keep up to date.

I am really looking forward to our celebration dinner on March 5 to thank Peter Granleese and Scott Grimley for their commitment to CBS. Peter has devoted many years to CBS steering it though the turmoil of the introduction of the NDIS, our collaboration with RSB and recently the COVID-19 pandemic. His leadership has been instrumental in keeping CBS going.

Scott is the MAN when you want to talk about access. He is a font of information about tactiles, walkways and websites. Scott has decided to devote more time to his full-time work and further education and his gain is our loss. Both will be sorely missed.

# The Way I See It - Graham Downie

On its website, we read, “The ACT Government is committed to providing websites that are accessible to the widest possible audience.”

If only the reality matched this aspirational statement. Five or six months ago, I drew to the attention of Access Canberra, which has to be the most misnamed government agency, that the fix my street online form was no longer usable with a screen reader. It has never been the easiest form to complete and achieving the fix for which a form were lodged even more problematic, but with perseverance it was possible to file a request.

After a large limb from a street tree came to rest on the verge outside my house, somewhat naively I set about sawing it into manageable lengths to fit into my 240l green bin. It was soon obvious a far more capacious receptacle was needed. All I managed was to make my bin so heavy, I was concerned it would not be picked up with the Friday collection. Those hoists must be strong because the bin was emptied, but about 90 per cent of the limb remained on the verge.

Not only did I want it removed, but I felt the tree should be checked to ensure as far as possible the tree was safe.

The solution seemed simple enough - lob an inquiry into Fix My Street. Ah, but the website had been changed, making an entry using a screen reader impossible. Having ticked the appropriate category, users are asked, “tell us more”. Instead of an edit field, there is a search field not accessible by a screen reader.

I phoned a most helpful man, more about him later, who quickly arranged to have the remainder of the limb removed and to alert relevant people to the failure of the online form. This resulted in my being interviewed for about an hour as part of a survey into Fix My Street. I could not answer most of the questions because I could not complete an online submission.

Several months later, there has been no change. So, taking advantage of my representing CBS on the ACT Transport Canberra and City Services Reference Group, I asked that this matter be on the agenda of the February meeting. That resulted in my being telephone recently and asked to explain the difficulty. I trust the reason for the glitch is now understood. Just when it might be fixed is anyone’s guess. If it is anything like the time taken for a phone call to Access Canberra to be answered, a further considerable delay might be reasonably expected.

Of its website, the ACT government says, “This website aims to conform to Level A (and in parts, Double A) of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.” So it is concerning that this particular form, which is intended to receive notifications of immediate danger, excludes people who are blind and for whom achieving prompt removal of a danger can be particularly important.

It is perhaps unfair of me to pick on the ACT government’s website, because there are many which are far worse for accessibility with a screen reader. This is despite the quite widespread knowledge of the need for website accessibility. But with commercial sites, there is generally the option of using a competitor’s site if one is not accessible. Except for persevering with the notorious Access Canberra telephone call centre, there is no general alternative to the Fix My Street website.

However, I have provided CBS with a telephone number for the helpful person referred to above with city rangers. Rather than publish that number, if you need to report a hazard, phone CBS on 6247 4580 so someone can put you in touch.

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# Birrigai Camp 2022

CBS will be hosting a “Weekend to Remember” to be held at Birrigai Outdoor School on Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 March, 2022. The purpose of the weekend is to provide a range of less strenuous activities eg. Yoga, tye-dying and Aboriginal storytelling, be entertained by a choir and more. CBS invites members and clients who want to take things easy and to provide a comfortable venue for social events.

Volunteers and staff also attend the weekend to act as guides and to help out in all the activities. Come along and join in the fun. If you have a talent for trivial pursuit join us in a game on Saturday night.

To register, call Debra at the office on 6247 4580 and put your name on the list, or email events@canberrablindsociety.org.au. Further details about the facilities, activities and what you will need to bring with you will be forwarded once you register for Birrigai Camp.

# Easter Lunch

The first social lunch for 2022 will be held on **Thursday 14 April** in Room 6, level 1 of the Griffin Centre at 12.30pm. This lunch will be our Easter celebration so get creative and design an Easter Bonnet, be in the running to win one of three best hats prizes. EFLC/CBS members and clients are all welcome to come along and share a scrumptious lunch with your friends at the Griffin Centre. Call Debra at the office on 6247 4580 and put your name on the list, or email events@canberrablindsociety.org.au

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GetAboutAble, pronounced “Get-About-Able”, is a social enterprise focused on improving travel and leisure options for people with disabilities. All profits are re-invested to empower people with disabilities to participate in travel and leisure activities, and to help the travel and leisure sector be more inclusive for people with disabilities

It is a powerful and useful tool to connect the inclusive travel and leisure sector with increasing demand from people with disabilities who don’t know what is accessible in any given location, not to mention how to organise it.

If you know of any places that have been accessible to you or your family, GetAboutAble would love to hear from you.

Please contact them at: <https://www.getaboutable.com/who-we-are/contact-us/>

You can subscribe to their newsletter on the website as well as join the Facebook community to keep up to date with new accessible places in ACT, Australia and the world.

GetAboutAble is also hosting a Conference called AITCAP which is about accessible and inclusive tourism, if you’re interested in attending the link to register is below:

<https://www.getaboutable.com/aitcap/>

# Project Update - CBS Mentoring Program

The Mentoring Program Team has had a productive time during January and February working on several areas of the project. The Mentor Team plans to collaborate with up to 15 organisations. These will include 5 in the Australian Public Service, 5 in the ACT Public Sector and 5 Private Sector Organisations.

After connecting with several supportive organisations in December and early January we have been able to share information and have positive discussions with 18 public sector organisations, both Federal and Territory. This culminated in a very successful Introduction and Information Presentation via Zoom on Tuesday, 15 February 2022. We had 26 people attend, share their interest in the program and ask some good questions. Everyone on the Mentor Team presented a section about the program as a way for potential participating organisations to find out more about all of us and what we were planning to do. We were also thrilled all the technology worked on the day.

We have also finalised our Mentoring approach where we will build trusted relationships through thoughtful discussions. We have designed the format to cover different themes including past workplace experiences and plans for future career development plus bigger issues around accessibility, inclusion, and empowerment. Our Mentors will be partnering with two employees. The first person will be a team member from areas such as human resources, diversity & inclusion, or capacity building. The second Employee will be a person with a vision impairment. We plan to start partnering our Mentors with different organisations by late February/early March.

After such a great response from public sector organisations our next target group is the Private Sector. We have had initial discussions with industry groups in Canberra including Canberra Women in Business, Canberra Innovation Network and Canberra Business Chamber. We have also started talks with the university sector and plan to follow up with all these groups in coming weeks.

If you would like more information about this project contact Claire Manning on project@canberrablindsociety.org.au

# Art by Description: Jeffrey Smart

Sunday 6 March at 11am – 12noon at the Gallery.

The program is free.

Please reserve a place by emailing Adriane Boag at Adriane.boag@nga.gov.au

The group will meet in the main foyer.

Adriane will have some props to assist with the audio description of Jeffrey Smart’s paintings.

# This ground-breaking device offers restoration of sight to people with vision loss due to dry AMD

In a study, Doctors from Moorfields Eye Hospital successfully implanted a microchip in a woman’s retina, restoring some vision to her blind eye. After having normal vision for most of her life, the 88-year-old suffered from dry age-related macular degeneration, causing her to lose sight in one eye.

**What does the study hope to accomplish?**

The study hopes to show that the implant can partially restore eyesight to people who suffer from geographic atrophy, a disease that currently has no cure. Geographic atrophy is an advanced type of dry age-related macular degeneration (AMD), in which retina cells waste away, resulting in a blind spot.

**How does the implant work?**

Surgeons from Moorfields Eye Hospital implanted the 2mm-wide microchip, which was developed by Pixium Vision in France, under the patient’s retina. The chip is a communication “liaison” between customized video glasses linked to a computer the patient wears like a fanny pack.

The camera in the glasses captures visual data, then sends it to the computer. The computer processes the video using artificial intelligence, then relays instructions back to the glasses, telling them where to focus.

After the camera focuses on the primary object, they send visual data — projected as an infrared beam — back through the eye to the chip, reports Science Focus.

At that point, the chip translates it into an electrical signal that travels to the patient’s brain via the retinal cells. The brain learns to interpret this electrical signal allowing the patient to see.

**Does the implant work right away?**

The microchip isn’t effective immediately. It takes up to six weeks and a post-surgery rehabilitation process before the patient can learn to use their newfound vision.

**When will the implant be available?**

The implant is being tested in clinical trials in Europe, but this is the first patient to receive it.

<https://coolblindtech.com/this-groundbreaking-device-offers-restoration-of-sight-to-people-with-vision-loss-due-to-dry-amd/>

# How to White List Senders in Mail App on iOS 15

The iPhone Mail app allows you to flag certain senders as “safe senders.” This is also called whitelisting. When you whitelist a sender, you’re telling the Mail app that emails from this sender are safe, so their emails will appear in your inbox instead of your junk mail.

**How to Mark Emails Not Junk on iPhone**

* Open the Mail app.
* Select Mailboxes in the top-left corner.
* open spam folder on iPhone.
* Select Junk.
* Select to open the email you want to mark as not junk.
* Select the Folders icon in the bottom menu.
* Select Inbox.

Now all future emails from this sender will appear in your inbox and stop going to your junk folder.

# Message from India

“Best wishes from Mr. Chandrakant Shukla from Mumbai, India (father of Niranjan Shukla, Volunteer with CBS). I am registered with the National Association for the Blind in India <https://www.nabindia.org/> . I listen to Audio Books in two languages — English and Marathi. When Niranjan was staying with us, he would borrow some audio books for me from the library.

I am happy to hear about your work and I wish you the best.”

# Audio Book Group

The Audio Book Group will meet again on Wednesday 2nd March 10:00am in the rooms of CBS for a lively discussion of the heart wrenching thriller “Piece of My Heart”. New members and enquirers are always welcome to sit in. There is a whole world of audio books available, and the group reads a wide range of literary styles, ask how you can find and start enjoying great stories. Our April book will be “The Dictionary of Lost Words” by Pip Williams

# Friends of Braille Group

The Friends of Braille meet on each Thursday of the month during school term time from 10:00am in the CBS office. Enquiries from new or existing members can contact Sharon Sobey on 0419 263 413.

# AT Training by Adam - Jaws certified 2020.

I have been blind from birth. I live on the Mid North Coast of NSW.

I started AT Training by Adam in 2016 to give people personalised paid training on a one-to-one basis to cover what they want and not work from a textbook.

I offer patient and thorough training for the following products:

**Jaws for Windows, Windows computer concepts, configuring windows and associated programs to run with screen readers more efficiently.**

**Victor Reader Stream, Victor Reader Trek and iPhone using Voice Over.**

To discuss your training requirements please contact me on details below**.**

**info@at-training.com.au** **PH: 0414 431105**

I can convert cassettes to cd or digital format. I charge $10 for a straight copy or $20 if tracks are named individually. Feel free to contact me.

Phone: 0414 431105 Email: adam@damorris.com

# Helpful email list for VIP and others

The below email lists are for people in Australia and New Zealand who are blind, low vision or people interested in what we do.

**ozApple**

A list for the discussion of Apple products using VoiceOver

To subscribe send an email to: ozapple-subscribe@damorris.com

**Accessible Technology Users Group**, (ATUG)

A list to discuss anything technical to do with vision impairment or blindness. Whether it be assistance with a screen reader, or which washing machine is accessible, this is the list for you.

To subscribe send a message to: atug-subscribe@damorris.com

**ozDiscuss**

This is a list for discussion of anything to do with blindness or low vision.

To subscribe send a message to: ozdiscuss-subscribe@damorris.com

**NDIS**

A list to discuss the Australian National Disability Insurance scheme.

to subscribe send a message to: ndis-subscribe@damorris.com

**BST**

A list to buy sell or trade any kind of technology relating to the blind.

to subscribe send a message to: bst-subscribe@damorris.com

**IDMate**

a list for those who have the iDMate barcode scanner.

To subscribe send a message to: idmate-subscribe@damorris.com

# For Sale

Classic books on CD in excellent condition need a new home. Books are unabridged and narrated by actors. Happy to negotiate a deal if someone would like to buy all books.

**Audio books for sale**

* Wuthering Heights 11 CDs $15 narrated by Janet McTeer and David Timson
* Tennant of Wildfeld Hall 14 CDs $15 narrated by Frederick Davidson and Nadia May
* Persuasion by Jane Austen 7 CDs $12 narrated by Juliet Stevenson
* Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen 11 CDs $12 narrated by Juliet Stevenson
* Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen 11 CDs $12 narrated by Emelia Fox
* Emma by Jane Austin 12 CDs $12 narrated by Prunella Scales

If interested, Maria can be contacted on 0432 798 808 or email papermoon6567@gmail.com

# Free to good homes:

***Smartview 360*** . Visual assistance provided by camera aiming at (eg) an item, computer, book, letter, or face which is magnified onto screen. Came out of its box but was barely used. Went back into its box and remains there. Perfect condition.

***Optelec Clearview*** - electronic magnifier.  Also in as new condition, in original boxes.  Its big and heavy but excellent product for assisting vision impaired.

Contact: Peggy Douglass, 0408427629, peggyd@gascoine.net.au

***Core Programs***

Special lunches – Easter, Melbourne Cup, Christmas

Friends of Braille – Thursday of each week during school terms

Digital Literacy Program – Wednesday of each week during school terms

Art & Craft Group – Wednesday, twice a month

Audio Book Group – 1st Wednesday of each month

Sense-Able Cooking – 3rd Friday of each month

# Thanks to our Sponsors

Canberra Blind Society thanks all our sponsors for supporting us.

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|  Southern Cross Club Community Rewards ProgramMembers of the Southern Cross Club can help us raise funds by taking part in the Southern Cross Club’s Community Rewards program |

 

  

  