### EYE CONTACT

### BWA serving its Members for over 80 years

**Newsletter for Members of B W A**

# **SUMMER 2018**

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Welcome to the last edition of the Eye Contact for 2018. How time flies as we head into the hottest period of the year and for many, time with family and friends as the Festive Season is celebrated in our own special way. Greetings for the Festive Season and see you all next year.

Leonore Scott (Editor)

**Board Report**

Thankyou to those Members who attended our AGM. The Board was pleased to report that we were in a good position and our procedures and record keeping was given a thumbs up by the Auditor and our Audit by the Department of Health and Ageing was completed successfully. The Board and Staff will meet in early January to review services and where possible enhance our service to you.

I would encourage Members to take advantage of the accommodation subsidy at the Glenelg apartment. Being able to have a break during the year does everyone a world of good. Just to remind people of the offer, 3 nights for $100 (or part thereof) and an additional four nights at $80 per night on an annual basis to all Members. Prime dates will be shared to avoid continuous bookings each year.

The Apartment has two bedrooms with a king and queen sized beds. People with NDIS support may be able to use support funding to organise orientation to the facility or the area.

I look forward to 2019 being another successful year and hoping to offer Members some new and exciting services and experiences.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Tony Starkey, BWA President

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**Manager’s Report**

I am pleased to report that the Blind Welfare Association of SA has ended the 2018 financial year in a strong position in terms of our outcomes for members, financial stability and Quality Service Standards. We continued to support our members with volunteer transport, social support, individual support, no interest loans, Special Purpose Welfare Funds, recreational and educational grants and the subsidy of adaptive technology.

It’s been a challenging year for many of our members, particularly those under 65 years of age, whom have been transitioning to the National Disability Scheme as they get used to managing their own disability funding, new care staff and organisations. After some initial hiccups my team reports most members are now transferring smoothly and many benefiting from additional in-home support.

At Blind Welfare our Board of Management made the decision some time ago not to become an NDIS provider and as a result our team has been working hard to continue to fill the gaps and support not provided by the NDIS. For our members over 65 whom find themselves without the NDIS particularly in terms of Adaptive Technology funding, BWA is continuing to assist with our Equipment Subsidy of up to $3000 every three years and interest free loans.

Last year we began out Better Housing Project to find new accommodation for our members based at our Gilles Plains site. This project concluded this year with four of our long term residents moving to new and more suitable accommodation at Magill with The ACH group.

Our new holiday unit at Glenelg continues to be a success with many members taking advantage of our subsidised holiday stays. The unit is managed by the Oaks Group and has also been a great financial investment returning an income to support our activities.

One new initiative we have recently introduced is our dedicated transport phone line 8 3 6 9 1 3 5 0. This is the line to leave messages particularly if you are receiving volunteer transport to and from our Gilles Plains centre. So if you need to change or cancel transport leave a message on this new line.

I must again thank my small team of staff who use their skills and initiative to solve the many daily issues that arise and our team of 85 Volunteers whom transport, teach, shop, coach and cook for our members.

Jim Colligan Manager

**Member’s Services Officer Report**

This is an interesting and positive contribution

**NDIS Interview with Gerard**

Debra:- Hi Gerard, thank you for agreeing to meet with me to share your NDIS experience with our Eye-Contact readers.

Gerard:- My pleasure.

Debra:- Can I start by asking you if you had any expectations and views about NDIS before the process commenced for you?

Gerard:- Yes. I had a pretty good understanding of what to expect, but I was bit surprised when I received a letter from the Government, which said I was eligible and someone would contact me.

Debra:- Did you have any pre-planning assistance?

Gerard:- No. The letter I received was fairly self-explanatory about what I could and couldn’t get.

Debra:- What happened next?

Gerard:- I was contacted by an assessor to make a Home Visit appointment and was given a week’s notice.

Debra:- What was your assessment experience like? Was it friendly and relaxed?

Gerard:- Yes. I felt very comfortable.

Debra:- Did you feel after receiving your Approved Plan that you understood everything?

Gerard:- I gave the assessor a call back and he dropped in here and explained the whole thing word for word, because it was quite complicated. There are things which go to an agency and then you’ve got your providers. After that I appointed my Managers.

Debra:- So you chose to go with an agency to manage your Plan?

Gerard:- Yes I did.

Debra:- Can I ask who you chose?

Garard:- Yes, in fact I want to mention it because their service has been excellent. It is called “People Come First”.

Debra:- Excellent, that‘s useful to know, thank you.

Gerard:- In fact the Managing Director actually came here, I set them up and they have been very helpful.

Debra:- In terms of the actual service providers, do you have several, or just one overall provider that organises everything?

Gerard:- I have one service provider that provides my Domestic help and that is “Calvary Care” but I also have Transport and Assistive Technology in my Plan.

Debra:- Did Calvary visit you and ask you to sign a Service Plan?

Gerard:- Yes they did, but in my case they had been with me throughout the old disability funding system, so there wasn’t much of a change. The NDIS however, did provide an extra hour of support.

Debra:- How many hours of domestic service do you receive per week?

Gerard:- 3 hours.

Debra:- Does Calvary provide you with replacements if your support worker is on leave or ill?

Gerard:- Yes, absolutely!

Debra:- So you haven’t had any problems with that?

Gerard:- No not really so far. Occasionally they will ring up and say that “they are so sorry” but the regular support worker is not available, so “can we send someone else tomorrow”?

Debra:- In terms pf transport for various things that you want to attend in the community, how does that work?

Gerard:- I let them know in advance and People Come First provide a driver.

Debra:- So they not only manage your finances but they also provide you with a transport service. Do you get monthly statements about your expenditure and do you know how much has been used from your Plan at any given time?

Gerard:- Generally “yes”, but I don’t bother to check, as my services are mostly fixed and regular. The new “text to voice” scanning equipment I have ordered, will read out my mail and bills and everything.

Debra:- So then you’ll be able to check how your Plan expenditure is going.

Debra:- What do you think are the worst and best things about the NDIS. Perhaps start with the worst. Is there anything at all you would like to share?

Gerard:- I think that the only complaints I have are that the process takes too long, otherwise It’s all been good.

Debra:- Also perhaps, as you have mentioned, the Plans are a bit hard to understand without assistance?

Gerard:- Yes, but as I said the Local Area Coordinator who assessed me, did come back and explain everything.

Debra:- And what was the best thing about the process, do you think?

Gerard:- Mmmm… I think the ease of access actually. Once they clarified everything and I gave the Plan to the Manager, they just took over everything.

Debra:- So it all flowed along quite easily for you from that point on then?

Gerard:- Yes.

Debra:- Well that’s very good to know.

Gerard:- There have been only one or two small hiccups but they were immediately dealt with.

Debra:- What sort of hiccups were they?

Gerard:- A couple of drivers didn’t turn up in the evening but I just took a taxi and came home. When I rang the next day and told them, they were really apologetic and they had a big meeting and the problem was resolved.

Debra:- Oh WOW! Well that’s responsive service isn’t it? So out of 10, with 1 being the worst NDIS experience and 10 being the best, how would you rate your experience?

Gerard:- 9 and a half to 10.

Debra:- REALLY, well that’s EXCELLENT!! Thanks so much for talking with me today Gerard.

Gerard:- It’s been a pleasure.

Debra:- I’m sure the readers will look forward to hearing all about their possible NDIS experience.

**Southern Services Coordinator**

As we start to move into the Christmas season and the end of 2018, there poses an opportunity for reflection over the events of the year gone by. This year, being my second year in the position of Coordinator for the southern area has provided a deeper understanding of BWA Members in this region and the challenges and needs of those members. The year has been full with the various programs offered, working alongside our team of Volunteers. The subsidies available have also been well utilized with some changes to applications due to many Members now having access to NDIS funding. This change has provided opportunity for forward planning and consideration of how we can best serve Members. One of the ways I have sought to do this is by promoting our Recreation and Personal Development Subsidy. This subsidy (up to $250 per term) allows Members access to activities, which improve personal wellbeing. It has been a pleasure to see Members enjoy activities such as a flight in a 1940’s style biplane – a wow of a time was had indeed! The fishing charter experience has also been very well received. We look forward to more opportunities for these and more adventures in 2019. If you would like to be included in the next charter, or enjoy a joy ride in the air, please let me know. I also look forward to hearing from Members with ideas for other experiences they might like to explore!

The Christmas Long Lunch has been well attended for many years with over 60 people attending from the southern region. Perhaps it was the menu or the entertainment but all in all it has been great to have such a turnout. Wishing everyone a wonderful holiday season and look forward to new opportunities in the New Year.

Tracy Reed

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**Volunteer Officer**

This month has certainly seen an uptake in people interested in becoming Volunteers for us. I currently have five people going through the process. Previously when a cost was involved for clearances, careful consideration was given to each individual as to whether they were just going through the motions or were seriously interested in volunteering. With the decision to make clearances for Volunteers through the Department for Human Services at no cost, it has made the judgement easier as to whether we obtain clearances for them. Our gardening Volunteers have made a huge impact on the garden around the centre. The four raised flowerbeds are now full of herbs that can be used by tenants, Volunteers and Staff. We have also made improvements to the front garden making it look aesthetically more appealing.

The Volunteers’ Christmas celebration was held on 15 November at The Windsor Hotel and this was the first evening function, I think ever. From my point of view, I thought it was a huge success and everyone seemed to have a good time from the feedback I received. Tony Starkey, our President, attended and gave out the gifts to the Volunteers and Jim Colligan our Manager, presented the certificates.

Much to Gunter Bottcher’s surprise, I told him that at the recent AGM, he was nominated to have his name put on our Honour Board. This is the first time a Volunteer has been awarded this honour and a special framed certificate was given to him. He accepted the award and was, as always, very humble.

We have a total of 82 Volunteers at the moment, 61 in the north east area and 21 in the southern region. As mentioned, this hopefully will be boosted once the pending Volunteers have fulfilled our requirements. As you all know without our Volunteers we would not be able to provide the services that we do.

**THANK YOU TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS AND HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.**

Jackie McEwen Volunteer Officer

**Honour Board Award**

Gunter Bottcher joined BWA in March 2005, providing over 13 years’ service with us. He has always been reliable and willing to do over and above his usual volunteer duties. His usual duties include Wednesday night bowls, monthly outings with the Travel Club and any driving jobs that might be asked of him.

Apart from driving he is always looking out for any repairs that might need to be done around the centre. He has repaired and varnished our outdoor settings, he checks our First Aid Kit, cleans the buses inside and out and supplies us with endless amounts of grapefruit from his garden. He is very helpful, friendly and knowledgeable. For some years as a Volunteer he taught First Aid for St John’s and he is a Fire Spotter for the CFS during bush fire time. He walks every morning at 6am without fail for an hour or more to keep fit. Catherine, Gunter’s wife, is also a Volunteer for us and she coordinates the Travel Club outings.

Gunter was awarded the Premier’s Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Volunteer Service in 2013 and accepted the award very humbly. You can always rely on Gunter to let you know if something is not quite right and, not only that, he will fix it for you.

**Blind Welfare Association Travel Club 2018 Program**

Dear Members and Friends our programme for 2019 is yet to be finalised.  The Committee will be doing this in January as we don’t start our outings now until the 2nd week in March.  We are hoping to have a varied programme again next year and we are very appreciative of Franca Lombardi for all of her work in sourcing out places that may be suitable for us to visit.  Often it is difficult to have a variety of places to visit and not just be “re-visiting” over and over again, so Franca’s research has been invaluable. Information on the incoming committee is as follows: Wendy Carter President, Margaret Cumming Vice President, Catherine Bottcher Treasurer/Secretary/Transport. Committee members are Kath Murrell, Steve McPhie, June Goodhand, Brian Murdock and Gunter Bottcher (it is always a good idea to have the drivers know where we are planning to go!!!!!!!!) Kath Murrell decided not to take on the role of President again, having been in that position for a number of years, probably about 10.  I for one am very glad that she has elected to stay on as a committee member, and we thank her for all the years she has presided over our meetings.  We look forward to 2019 and wish every one a very happy Christmas and New Year.  Stay safe, but enjoy!!!  
Regards, Catherine

**The Blind Welfare Association’s Hot Weather Policy is strictly adhered to i.e. in the event of the forecast temperature being 36o or above on the previous night’s 6pm news, the trip will be cancelled. There will be no further notification.**

Do you fancy a break or have a special occasion coming up? Why not book a short holiday at the Oaks Liberty Towers apartment in Glenelg to relax and unwind? The apartment is fully self-contained with 2 bedrooms and is close to the beach, marina, Jetty Road shops and plenty of restaurants and cafes. Call Deidre on 8 3 6 7 6 0 8 8 for all reservation enquiries.

**Fact Sheet: Information for Students**

# Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples’ Education Fund

This fund was set up to assist indigenous and non-indigenous people with a disability to participate in education programs through small grants of up to $2500. Grants are provided every sixth months with applications being considered at the end of March and September each year. For further information, phone 9429 4210 or visit <http://www.adipef.org.au/>

**Austudy**

# Austudy provides financial assistance to individuals aged 25 and above who are studying fulltime or undertaking an apprenticeship. To claim Austudy, you will also have to have been living in Australia as an Australian resident for a minimum of two years. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services on 13 23 00 or visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au)

# **Communities and Social Inclusion Assistance**

# The Department for Communities and Social Inclusion administers a range of financial support payments and concessions for household and other expenses and also provides financial counselling and advice for anyone experiencing financial difficulties. For further information go to: [www.dfc.sa.gov.au](http://www.dfc.sa.gov.au)

# **Concessions on Tuition Fees**

Students are eligible for concessions if when enrolling into an eligible government-funded course, they hold a current: Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card. A concession card must be presented at time of enrolment. If you are not in possession of a valid concession card at the time of enrolment, you will be obliged to pay the full fee rate. If you are unsure of your eligibility, you can contact Centrelink before your enrolment on 131 021. For further information, visit the TAFE SA website: <http://www.tafesa.edu.au/apply-enrol/fees-payments/concessions>

# **Disability Liaison Officers**

# Disability Liaison Officers are available to assist students to access and fully participate in study by negotiating their support needs and clarifying the information that will be passed on to academic staff. If you are studying at a university or TAFE, you are able to contact the disability liaison unit to help you with accessing information in your correct format or other disability needs. Contact the university or TAFE institution for further details.

# **Education Entry Payment**

If you are already receiving a payment such as the Disability Support Pension or Newstart Allowance and are enrolled in an approved course, you may be eligible to receive the Education Entry Payment to help cover your study costs. Your eligibility for this payment will be determined when you provide Centrelink with proof of enrolment in an approved course. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services on 13 23 00 or visit [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/)

# **Mature Age Study Resource**

# The mature study website is a resource that is designed to provide information to mature age people with disability considering tertiary education at TAFE, university or Registered Training Organisations (RTO’s). The website provides information on all aspects of tertiary study in Australia including scholarships, financial assistance and other key information.

# Visit the website: <http://www.adcet.edu.au/Mature/>

# **Newstart Allowance**

**If you are aged 22 or over and are currently looking for work, studying or training, you may be eligible to receive the Newstart allowance. If you have not yet completed year 12 or an equivalent certificate II course, you will be required to undertake further training before being considered eligible for the Newstart Allowance. For further information contact the Department of Human Services on** 13 23 00 or visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/)

# **Pensioner Education Supplement**

# The Pensioner Education Supplement is available to individuals already receiving a pension such as the Disability Support Pension, Disability Support Pension (blind) and the Carer’s Payment. The supplement aims to assist recipients with the cost of full or part time study. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services on 1 3 2 3 0 0 or visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au).

# **Quantum Reading Learning Vision Print Disability Scholarship Program**

This program awards adaptive technology prizes to successful scholarship applicants on an annual basis. Winners may choose the form of adaptive technology that will best suit their needs from a set prize list, which includes:

* Desktop and handheld electronic magnifiers
* Text-to-speech devices
* Book readers
* Daisy players/recorders
* Magnification and screen reading software

You must be a permanent Australian resident with a print disability to apply for this scholarship program and must also fit into one of the following categories:

* Primary education
* Secondary education
* Tertiary education/TAFE

To apply for the program, you must fill in an application form and attach a supporting letter explaining in 500 words, how having a print disability affects you and how the adaptive technology offered under the program would assist you in your studies. For more information contact Quantum on **1 3 0 0 8 8 3 8 5 3 or visit** <http://www.quantumrlv.com.au/scholarships/>

## Royal Society for the Blind – Cowan Trust Scheme

This fund assists in providing necessary adaptive equipment and software to vision impaired students who would otherwise be financially restricted in undertaking their studies. Applications usually close in mid-January each year. For further information, contact Carolyn Phillips on (0 8) 8 2 3 2 4 7 7 7 or visit <http://www.rsb.org.au/>

# **Scholarships**

A range of scholarships and grants are available to eligible students to assist with the costs of study. More details of these, and other information relating to fees and fee assistance, can be obtained from the Money Matters brochure located on the TAFE SA website: <http://www.tafesa.edu.au/apply-enrol/before-starting/scholarships-grants>

# **Sickness Allowance**

# While this short term allowance is primarily targeted at individuals who are temporarily unable to work due to injury or illness, in some cases it may also be available to students who are enrolled in full time study. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services on 1 3 2 3 0 0 or visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au).

**Student Start-up Scholarship**

If you are a full-time student undertaking an approved scholarship course at a higher education institution and are receiving Youth Allowance, Austudy or ABSTUDY Living Allowance, you will receive the Student Start-up Scholarship. You'll receive this scholarship at the beginning of each traditional tertiary semester to help with the up-front costs of studying, such as textbooks and specialised equipment. If you're eligible you'll receive the full amount of the Start-up Scholarship, even if you're not on the maximum payment rate from Centrelink. For further information, contact the Department of Human Services on 1 3 2 3 0 0 or visit [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au).

# **Student Support**

Some Further Education Providers, such as TAFE and University, provide special assistance for students with a disability. Students may be eligible to receive course material in an accessible format and may also seek extensions with assessment tasks or special provisions for exams to allow them to complete their studies in a fair and equitable manner. To find out more, simply phone the TAFE or University you wish to enroll in ask to speak to a Disability Liaison Officer or Teacher Consultant for Vision Impairment.

# **Vision Australia Further Education Bursary**

Each year, Vision Australia awards further education bursaries to a select number of students who are blind or vision impaired to assist them in purchasing adaptive technology to assist them in their studies. Bursaries are available to students of any age who are enrolling to study in a certificate IV TAFE course or higher, or an under-graduate or post-graduate degree through university. For further information, contact Vision Australia about the application requirements for the further education bursary and upcoming bursary application dates on 1 3 0 0 8 4 7 4 6 6.

**SCAM ALERT**

Another timely reminder from police to take the following precautions to reduce the risk of being scammed by cold-callers:

* If you receive a threatening phone call (and demanding money), hang up immediately
* Do not disclose personal details to the caller
* Never provide your personal or banking details to a person who calls you
* Never provide your financial PIN or account passwords to anyone
* Do not make any payment to the caller, either via phone, internet or cash
* If you are suspicious about the credentials of a person on the phone, ask questions of them. If they avoid answering or refuse to provide information to you, hang up
* Don’t let scammers pressure you – scammers use detailed scripts to convince you that they’re the real deal and create a high-pressure situation to make a decision on the spot
* If you think you have provided your account details to a scammer, contact your bank or financial institution immediately and
* Contact police immediately to report the incident

To find out more information about scams or other ways to protect yourself visit [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au)

**SUBSIDY GUIDELINES**

Please remember the guidelines when accessing our SPWF subsidies, specifically the Home Maintenance and Adaptive Technology subsidies. You must apply for these subsidies and have your application approved before engaging a service provider or purchasing any equipment. BWA will not repay you if you purchase new equipment or have any maintenance work done at home without first being advised of approval. Application forms are available on our website or by contacting the office.

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

The social centre will be closed from Thursday 13th December until Tuesday 29th January 2019

One on One Volunteer services will cease Monday 17th December and recommence Monday 21st January 2019

Office will be closed from 24th December until Monday 7th January 2019

At this time the Social Centre activity program for Term 1 next year has not been finalised. This information will be available in the new year once everything has been confirmed.

**Editors Comment**

I hope you enjoyed this edition of your Eye Contact. If you would like to make a contribution to our next copy which is due out in February 2019, please forward it on to the BWA office or speak to one of the staff and they will do the rest. Contact details are as follows:

**Telephone:** 8 3 6 7 6 0 8 8 **Fax:** 8 3 6 9 0 0 6 3

**E-mail:** [info@blindwelfare.org.au](mailto:info@blindwelfare.org.au)

**Web site:** [www.blindwelfare.org.au](http://www.blindwelfare.org.au)

**Merry Christmas and happy New Year to you all from the staff at BWA**