### BEYOND BLINDNESS

### (BWA serving its Members for over 80 years)

**Magazine for Members of B B**

**Winter 2020**

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Welcome to the Winter edition of the Beyond Blindness Magazine. The weather has certainly come in colder much faster this year hasn’t it? Maybe it’s a year for being rather topsy turvy and the COVID-19 situation has certainly put a spanner in the works. No football so far, social distancing, no friends giving each other hugs (that we know of) but, restrictions in some instances are being relaxed a little bit so there will be some form of normality back soon although it may be slightly different from how we have known it. The Staff have been working towards helping Members as much as possible, so no matter what, the Beyond Blindness Staff have been contactable and the contributions below will help give you more information.

I am leaving out the information for the Beyond Blindness Travel Club this time and by the next edition we will have a better understanding of how things will be organised.

**Board Report**

Hello Members, I trust that you are all well and managing the current lifestyle restrictions. In S.A life is returning to normal slowly and hopefully during the next six months, face to face contact can resume and Members and Volunteers can once again interact with social distancing taken into account. Please be patient as Staff create procedures and processes to comply with S.A Health guidelines and meet our obligations to Members and Volunteers. The Board is pleased with the Staff response to keeping Members engaged through telephone contact and as this has proved popular this activity will become part of our normal offerings to Members.

During discussions with our Lawyers regarding the creation of the name Beyond Blindness, we were advised that our Constitution required updating to comply with new regulations under the Australian Charities and Non for Profit Commission and to update the style of language from less legal speak to plain English. Norman Waterhouse Lawyers have provided a revised Constitution with the same rules and intent of the old one. This revised document will hopefully be discussed by Members at a Special General Meeting in September if we are able to meet by then.

The Lawyers will be present and provide answers to any questions. Please note that no instructions have been given by the Board other than to ensure compliance, with no changes to the intent of the old Constitution. Until we can meet face to face stay safe.

**Tony Starkey**

President

**Manager’s Report**

What a changed world! Last time we were reporting the expansion of our small jobs program along with pub lunches. COVID-19 has stopped all that along with activities in our Centre, but it has not stopped the enthusiasm of our team to keep reaching out to Members via tele-conferencing and social media.

I am happy to say our SPWF payments, interest free loans, adaptive technology subsidies, friendly advice and support is all continuing as usual.

Luckily, we had begun to plan and equipped our team prior to the lock down as we have all been working from home. We have all been learning new skills like using Zoom and teleconferencing.

The good news is that Beyond Blindness remains in a strong financial position and both our Board and Staff have also been working hard to plan a way through the Covid-19 crisis and eventually return to some degree of face to face services and normality in the months to come. Some of the learnings we have made regarding teleconferencing and social media will make us a more accessible organisation in the future and maybe a model we can use to expand services to our country and remote Members. So, I remain positive that Beyond Blindness will continue to evolve to meet any challenges ahead and continue to use our resources to improve the lives of our Members.

Cheers Jim

**Member Services**

Hi everyone, this contribution to our Newsletter will be quite brief as I’m sure everyone is aware that our offices have been closed for a few weeks now due to the COVID-19 emergency. During this challenging time, Beyond Blindness is endeavouring to support our Members in as many appropriate and safe ways as possible. Staff are phoning those who may be isolated to discuss their needs and to try to assist them to resolve any issues they may be experiencing. We are aware that the social distancing rules can tend to result in anxiety and loneliness for some who have been used to more contact with their community and friends. For this reason, our Social Centre Coordinator (Trudy) has been making scheduled group phone calls, or teleconferences to include Members, who have expressed a wish to catch up and other Staff members have been making regular individual calls to other Members who have requested contact. Some of our Members have required specific information and linkages to other services that are operating to meet peoples’ needs at this time and if you are experiencing any issues, we encourage you to contact us on **8 3 6 7 6 0 8 8**.

Beyond Blindness is committed to the safety and wellbeing of its Members, Volunteers and Staff, and as such, we are following Government and Health Department directions regarding our ongoing operations. We will notify everyone if there are any further changes to our services. Meanwhile stay safe.

Debra (MSO)

**Southern Services Coordinator**

The past few months have certainly taken a very unexpected turn impacting on every Member, Volunteer and Staff Member. The BB team were able to respond quickly and effectively and I would like to send a word of appreciation to all colleagues and to the Volunteers for the teamwork which has enabled connections and support for Members to be maintained in some capacity.

With the postponement of all programs and activities, the last outing in the South was a bus trip to McLaren Vale to visit Fox Creek Winery to sample the local wine and cheese and then on to the Courthouse in Willunga. We all felt we were on borrowed time that day as businesses and trade came to a standstill, which made the time out even more valued. We look forward to travelling out and about again in the near future. With the office closed and Staff working from home, the use of technology such as Zoom for meetings and conference calling for group chats has come to the fore and is now becoming the ‘’new normal’. With all adversity there is an opportunity to learn and grow!

National Volunteers Week was May 18th – 24th with the theme Changing Communities, Changing Lives. A novel idea to create some fun was to tie a red ribbon around a fencepost or letter box and post a pic on social media. A big thank you to Volunteers who have continued to provide support to Members through telephone chat. This has made a considerable difference in keeping people connected, so important for our mental health and wellbeing at this time when many who are more vulnerable have been unable to leave home at all. Once again, I extend a very big thank you to everyone.

**A Very Resilient Man**

Paul Cronin 62-year-old Member from Seacombe Gardens is presently counting his blessings from his lounge room chair. Paul has had many health challenges over the years including vision loss and a battle with Multiple Myeloma, an aggressive form of blood cancer.

“I have the aggressive myeloma gene with an average life expectancy of two years,” explained Paul. “I started chemotherapy straight away and had a stem cell transplant six months later. I’ve made it to a little over five years now and my haematologist said if I got to 10, it'd be a miracle,” said Paul.  Currently in remission and keen to make the most of life, this February Paul embarked on the adventure of a lifetime. He and a close mate had a whale of a time exploring the Antarctic, plunging into the exhilaration of icy cold waters and experiencing a close encounter with Artic penguins. It all took an unexpected turn when the time came to return. He was on his way back, travelling through South America, when he first heard of the global pandemic.

“We had basically been off the grid since we left for the trip at the end of February,” explains Paul.

“We arrived back to Ushuaia, South America a few weeks later from Antarctica and people were saying ‘don't you know there’s a pandemic, everything's started to shut down and the borders are closing’.

“A few days later it became clear I needed to get home. If I had been stuck there with the local healthcare I probably wouldn’t have lived.”

A cancelled flight, five stopovers, four days and $3,500 later Paul finally made it home. “My wife, Kathryn, and our 23 year old son, Daniel, had already moved out with friends for 2 weeks, before I arrived home so that I could do my 14 days’ quarantine at home just in case I did have the coronavirus.”

“A couple of days later I woke up lethargic and had trouble breathing. I couldn’t get any air into my lungs no matter what I did,” said Paul.

“I went to the hospital and they took the swab. Twenty-four hours later I was told I had tested positive for COVID-19.” After that he found himself in RAH and another battle on his hands. I was the first person in South Australia with both coronavirus and myeloma.” Paul spent19 days in hospital, two days in intensive care.

“I was very sick, lost around 13 kilograms and I was pretty close to death's door,” Paul added. “The time in total isolation was tough. Only the doctors and nurses in gowns and masks could come into my room”. Despite being extremely ill he was determined to get well.

He said he was given the best care and treatment and was finally able to return home after two negative tests. “During the first two weeks at home, I was still crook, very weak and couldn't do much. But now I'm starting to walk again,” said Paul.  “The coronavirus has affected my lungs, which we knew was one of the side effects of coronavirus. My breathing has got worse but I’m managing,” said Paul.

In another unexpected twist, Paul said with a gleeful chuckle, the weight he lost has freed him from Diabetes. Though still recovering, Paul is now keener than ever to enjoy what life has to offer and looks forward to future adventures including those through Beyond Blindness. We wish Paul all the very best in his recovery

**FROM THE MEMBERS**

**Peer Support for NDIS**

I would like to offer peer support to any of our Members who feel that they may benefit from a conversation regarding the NDIS. I am in no way a professional, but I am now into my fourth NDIS plan and have finally achieved what is best suited to myself, which was to rollover my last plan for 24 months and self-manage entirely. I am more than willing to share anything I may have learnt during my rocky road to understanding an NDIS plan.

Maree Fletcher – maree\_fletcher@yahoo.com.au

**A voice for change...**

Hallett Cove is 5km by 2km and over one year Christina, myself & my guide dog Viking have walked every street collecting data as to footpath integrity, posts in the middle of pathways, lack of pram ramps or placement in poor locations, as well foliage issues. Over 2000 photos were collected and submitted in many reports. From this, Marion Council undertook capital works programs to fix. I have received news that confirms Marion Council has allotted funds to undertake similar projects throughout its jurisdiction and asking residents to undertake the reporting. Being the catalyst for this has been acknowledged and Marion Council hopes other councils will now follow suit to make our environments more accessible.

David Squirrel – BB Member/ Blind Citizens Australia (Adelaide Branch) President

**Ode to Pearl – Pam Burton**

In Loving Memory of my dear Pearl. It’s hard to say goodbye to one you love so dear. Dear Pearl, you guided so lovingly, taking great care, kept me safe wherever we travelled, never complaining, gave me your all with unconditional love.

Goodbye my special friend, keeping you always deep in my heart.

RIP. March 2020

**Operations Coordinator’s Report**

Greetings to you all. Like many of you, we have been trying to readjust our office and home to the new world we find ourselves in. In three months, this COVID 19 has turned the world upside down. Well, we have had to adapt to innovation and change as COVID 19 has changed the way we work transforming our job routines.

Our team has been busy behind the scenes adapting to run tele groups to engage our Members. Some of our IT Volunteers are indeed active providing phone support to our Members to resolve any IT issues they may have.

Before suspending our centre activities, our enthusiastic Volunteers had been actively attending the small jobs and busy in assisting our Social Centre activities. It is quite phenomenal that they have attended to 64 small job requests from Members in one and half months. We have been receiving good feedback from the Members about their services. We have 110 Volunteers on board including five new volunteers who have just finished their training and were about to start before we cancelled our activities. Our Volunteers are being kept in touch through phone calls and/or emails to check on how they were doing. It is good to know that some of our Volunteers have been busy on their home front doing some minor projects but several have been eager to lend a helping hand to our Members in case they are running out of supplies. Thank you all. We are so lucky to have you on board. Without you, none of the work we do would be possible.

This month we have celebrated the annual National Volunteers Week (May 18th -24th). Due to this pandemic situation, we couldn’t celebrate the way we do every year, however to acknowledge and appreciate our Volunteers’ unwavering support and generosity, we have sent an e-Certificates of Appreciation and are planning to meet up virtually using technology.

As restrictions begin to ease across the country, while physical distancing and hand washing are still the order of the day, all our face to face activities are still on hold at this stage. Meanwhile, to facilitate the small job services, we have been focussing on implementing safety measures to keep both Members and Volunteers safe.

Also, please go to www.facebook.com/Beyond-Blindness and like us on Facebook to receive latest updates. In the meantime, please stay safe out there. We’re in this together.

Visa Neelam

**Community Educator**
Beyond Blindness has identified a gap in services whereby people who need to assist you may be unsure of where to begin. To this end, Beyond Blindness is working on a draft Information Guide which aims to contain some general suggestions on ‘how to help a person who has vision loss or blindness’. Anyone in the public will be able to obtain and read a copy of this Information Guide, so the audience will potentially be broad. It may include GPs, Optometrists, family members, carers, friends, residential care home staff or other service providers.
Another of the aims is that this Information Guide should be representative of the lived experience of being a person with vision loss or blindness. Sandra Holmes, who previously worked at Beyond Blindness is currently collating the experiences of you, our Members, to draft the Guide. If you would like the opportunity to contribute to the Information Guide, Sandra would be pleased to hear from you via sholmes@beyondblindness.org.au by Friday 29th of May. Sandra will respond to all emails to pick your brains and hear your suggestions. Many thanks to those who have already contributed, we look forward to receiving your comments.

**Oaks Liberty Apartment**

Whilst the world has been ‘re-setting’, our apartment, as with many others, has not been getting much use. Hopefully with the easing of restrictions and the re-opening of restaurants and cafes, the demand to stay in the apartment will rise. If you would like to make a reservation, please give me a call to discuss availability. Please note that there has been a slight increase in the overnight rate however this is the first since the apartment was purchased in 2016. From July 1, the cost for a 3-night stay will be $120 with the cost for any extra nights remaining at $80. Members can stay in the apartment for a total of 7 nights per year and to ensure fairness for all members, a stay during a peak period such as Easter, Christmas or New Year’s Eve, is only permitted once. Give me a call me on 8 3 6 7 6 0 8 8 for all your reservation enquiries.

**DEIDRE GAVROS**

Administration Coordinator

**Editor’s Comment**

I hope you enjoyed this edition of your Beyond Blindness Newsletter. If you would like to make a contribution to our next copy which is due out in early September 2020 please forward it on to the Beyond Blindness office or speak to one of the Staff and they will do the rest. Contact details are as follows:

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