



# Beyond Blindness

Welcome to a later than usual edition of your Beyond Blindness Magazine for 2021.

After a lot of feedback, we came to the conclusion the format of providing you with information wasn't working for the readers and there were some articles providing the same information, which made for boring reading.

As you will read below, we have employed Jayson Hanrahan in a part-time role as Marketing Consultant who is also helping to collate the Magazine with up to date information which pertains to Members' interests.

Congratulations have to go to Tony Starkey (Chairperson) of Beyond Blindness for being elected on to the World Blind Union along with Karen Knight.

## Inside this issue

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## Special points of interest

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- Welcome to Jayson Hanrahan
- In memory of Trish Dempsey
- Strategic Planning Workshop
- More for Members



## Message from the Board

Since its purchase in late 2016, many Members of Beyond Blindness have taken the opportunity to stay in our fully self-contained 2-bedroom Oaks Liberty Towers apartment at Glenelg.

The Board has recently reviewed its Subsidised Apartment Rental arrangement for this property and, I am pleased to advise that we

will be continuing to provide this service to Beyond Blindness Members into the foreseeable future.

It is important that as a Board we apply Good Governance practices and routinely review our services and operations to ensure we are supporting all our Members throughout South Australia.

*“Beyond Blindness needs to fill in the gaps and continue to ensure our Members can participate independently in the community with the supports they need.”*

### Strategic Planning Workshop

At its regular meeting in March, the Board agreed to undertake a forward-looking Strategic Planning workshop, the objective of which will be to develop a plan that positions Beyond Blindness as a sustainable, effective, and responsive Organisation within the Blindness and Disability sector beyond 2023 through to 2030.

Traditionally we have looked 3 years into the future but, as the changes in Disability and Aged Care Government sponsored services have, and will continue to be, developed based on the outcomes of the Aged Care and Disability Services Royal Commissions, Beyond Blindness needs to fill in the gaps and continue to ensure our Members can participate independently in the community with the supports they need.

This Strategic Planning work will continue through 2021/2022 ready for implementation in 2023. Naturally, the outcome will be based on financial sustainability, as well as being flexible to take advantages of opportunities and potential alternative income sources.



The Board will endeavour to keep Members informed and updated as we progress this important work for Beyond Blindness and our members.

**Tony Starkey**  
Chairperson

## From the Manager

After a difficult year, due to the unprecedented challenges of Covid, it's great to see our regular services returning to normal, Members back on Beyond Blindness buses and smiles and laughter throughout our Gilles Plains Centre.

One of the successful activities undertaken during this period, was our telephone contact service, introduced for those Members previously coming into the Centre.

Now that our Gilles Plains facility is once again up and running, we are actively working to establish a similar service for Members in isolated and country areas.

Our Small Jobs Program, introduced last year, has also proven to be very successful, with over thirty jobs completed last month alone. Each day, Volunteers head out from Gilles Plains with tools and skills to undertake small maintenance and other support tasks in Members' homes. Some of the jobs undertaken have included; patching a hole in a bedroom wall, fixing a bedroom door, setting-up menus and apps on a phone and new TV, providing tech-support for an Apple Watch, tactile marking of a microwave, pantry labelling and tidying cords behind a TV and stereo.

To ensure success of the program, Our Operations Coordinator, Visa, has been recruiting some wonderful new Volunteers with a broad range of skills. Some are retired and looking to use their talents in a new challenge, while others are students or working professionals keen to learn about blindness, or simply wanting to give back to the community.



## More for Members

As the end of the Financial Year fast approaches, we are well into planning and budget preparation for the new Financial Year.

Our aim is to offer more to isolated Members across the metropolitan area and to continue to make inroads into regional areas, in-line with our broader plan for service growth and expansion.

Last year, as part of our project to give better access to those Members not living close to our Gilles Plains centre, we started our Friday Pub lunch program.

While this has been well received, it became apparent Members may prefer day trips. As a result, we are developing a new day-trip program, to be introduced in the new Financial Year.

We will be compiling an annual calendar of up to 24 interesting day trips in and around Adelaide. We hope to offer most metropolitan Members access to 2 day trip options per month.

## Other News

In other news, the Beyond Blindness Board recently increased our subsidy for Adaptive Technology from \$3,000 to \$4,000.

This reflects the increasing costs of technology, particularly for Members requiring Braille equipment.



To simplify the process, we will now also pay the subsidy direct to Members rather than suppliers.



## From the Manager continued...

In the South, Tracy Reed continues to support our Southern Members, and the Southern Christmas dinner must have been one of the most attended Beyond Blindness events for some time.

Tracy continues to innovate and develop new activities for our Southern Members; whether it is a fishing charter, a coffee chat group, or a trip on the Cockle train and lunch at the Goolwa hotel, Tracy, as with all our Beyond Blindness Staff, is always there for our Members.

All in all, as the current Financial Year draws to a close, Beyond Blindness is once again in a strong financial position.

We are well placed to look to the future and build on this with new programs and targeted assistance for Members, particularly those who may be experiencing isolation.

**Jim Colligan**, General Manager



## Around the Office

### Welcome Jayson Hanrahan

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We recently welcomed Jayson Hanrahan to the Beyond Blindness Office team.

Jayson's part-time role as Marketing Consultant aims to raise the profile of Beyond Blindness in the broader community, put new marketing systems in place and introduce a culture of marketing and promotion of our activities.

Jayson brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from his background in marketing and communications with; the Sydney Paralympic Games, Guide Dogs, Uniting-Care Queensland, and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).



**Jayson Hanrahan — Marketing Consultant**

### Member Engagement Officer

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Our long-term Staff Member, Deidre Gavros, will be taking up a new position with us as Member Engagement Officer. This reflects Deidre's dedication and many years of experience working with our membership.

As part of our Member services team, Deidre will be looking to help isolated regional and city Members, adding to the valuable work she has already undertaken recently with Debra Beeby, working with our Northern Groups and establishing links with our Barossa Valley Members.

Given Deidre's long association with Beyond Blindness, our Board will also continue to look to Deidre to support them in the preparation of board materials and to maintain our links to our history as Blind Welfare.



**Deidre Gavros**

## Around the Office continued...

### **In Memory of a Devoted Volunteer**

Patricia Dempsey, who we fondly know as Trish, commenced volunteering with Beyond Blindness in early 2017. She started as a driver assisting our members with transport to shopping and medical appointments.

With over thirty years' experience in office administration and accounting, Trish soon became an invaluable member of the extended office team, assisting with reception and administration tasks 3 days per week. She was an efficient individual with a tremendous work ethic, helping with a wide range of administration tasks and making a significant contribution to the smooth running of the Beyond Blindness office.

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*“May she rest in peace knowing that she helped so many during her lifetime.”*

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Sadly, Trish passed away unexpectedly on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, just 3 weeks after being diagnosed with a rare kind of terminal cancer. Trish's diagnosis and subsequent passing has greatly impacted many of us at Beyond Blindness, particularly our office staff who worked closely with her.

An extremely active individual, Trish was also heavily involved in CFS and COTA and ran fitness classes for mature adults at Strength for life.

She was also a Justice of the Peace, and we regularly utilised her services for our members and volunteers.

She will be fondly remembered as a bright, energetic and helpful individual who always liked to keep herself busy.

Trish's passing will be a huge loss for all of us at Beyond Blindness and she will be greatly missed. May she rest in peace knowing that she helped so many during her lifetime.

## SECTOR UPDATE

### Changes to the NDIS

In a proposed change to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), those applying to the NDIS for the first time, and some existing participants having Plan Reviews, will be required to undertake an Independent Assessment.

In a recent announcement by the new Minister for the NDIS, Linda Reynolds, these changes due to be introduced in July this year, have now been put on hold until further trials have been undertaken.



Independent assessments will provide the NDIS with an understanding of your functional capacity.

Things like how well you are able to function at home and in the community, as well as the overall impact your disability

Independent assessments



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*“These assessments are free and will take around 3 hours to complete”.*

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Independent Allied Health Professionals (i.e. Occupational Therapists and Rehabilitation Consultants etc), will conduct these assessments. They will be using a number of internationally approved tools, in order to ask questions about your current abilities/capacities. **Your independent assessment will focus on your capabilities, rather than your disability.**

These assessments are free and will take around 3 hours to complete. You can choose to do the assessment in the way that best suits you; on the same day, or over a number of days, either face-to-face, or by video call. Remember that you can choose to have an advocate or support person with you during your assessment.

## SECTOR UPDATE continued

### Organisations that can assist

Organisations that can assist with the NDIS application process include Feros, Mission, BaptCare and Guide Dogs SA.

Beyond Blindness can of course assist you to fill out some of your application form, although your treating health professional will need to finalise it by providing accompanying reports.

If you have any queries, please contact the Beyond Blindness office on 8 3 6 7 6 0 8 8.

### Changes to the NDIS continued

Those applying to the NDIS for the first time will still need to complete an Access Request in one of the following ways:

Phone 1 8 0 0 8 0 0 1 1 0 and make a verbal access request. Download and **complete** the Access Request Form (ARF) on your computer and email it to the **NDIA** with supporting information, or Download the ARF on your computer, print it out, and mail it to the **NDIA** with supporting information.

ndis

## Access Request Form

If you need any further clarity, you can contact the NDIS on the above phone number, or you can check out all of the information at [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au).

There is also a handy Q&A at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/independent-assessments/independent-assessment-q-and>

Organisations that can assist you with the NDIS application process include Feros, Mission, BaptCare and Guide



## ADAPTIVE TECH CORNER

### ENVISION GLASSES – LET YOUR GLASSES SPEAK TO YOU!

A new hi-tech product for people who are blind or vision impaired is now available in Australia. Envision Glasses are described as AI (Artificial Intelligence) for your eyes. They use the power of speech to make everyday life more accessible for any vision impairment.

With features ranging from real-time text recognition to video calling, Envision Glasses opens the door for the future of wearable assistive technology.



**Hear what you want to see.**  
Envision empowers visually impaired people to become more independent by speaking out the visual world around them.

Envision App    Envision Glasses

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*“They use the power of speech to make everyday life more accessible for any vision impairment”*

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“Envision was born from our desire to empower blind and vision impaired people with greater independence and access to the visual world, including things many of us take for granted, like reading text from a book, newspaper, magazine, computer, tablet or smartphone screen, perusing a product label, opening and reading a handwritten card or letter from a loved one, or running a business meeting without the need for assistance,” said Karthik Mahadevan, CEO and co-founder of Envision.

Envision Glasses are a wearable device that provides the wearer to access all kinds of visual information around them. The glasses can recognise and speak out text, objects, people, colours, products and much more.

## ADAPTIVE TECH CORNER continued

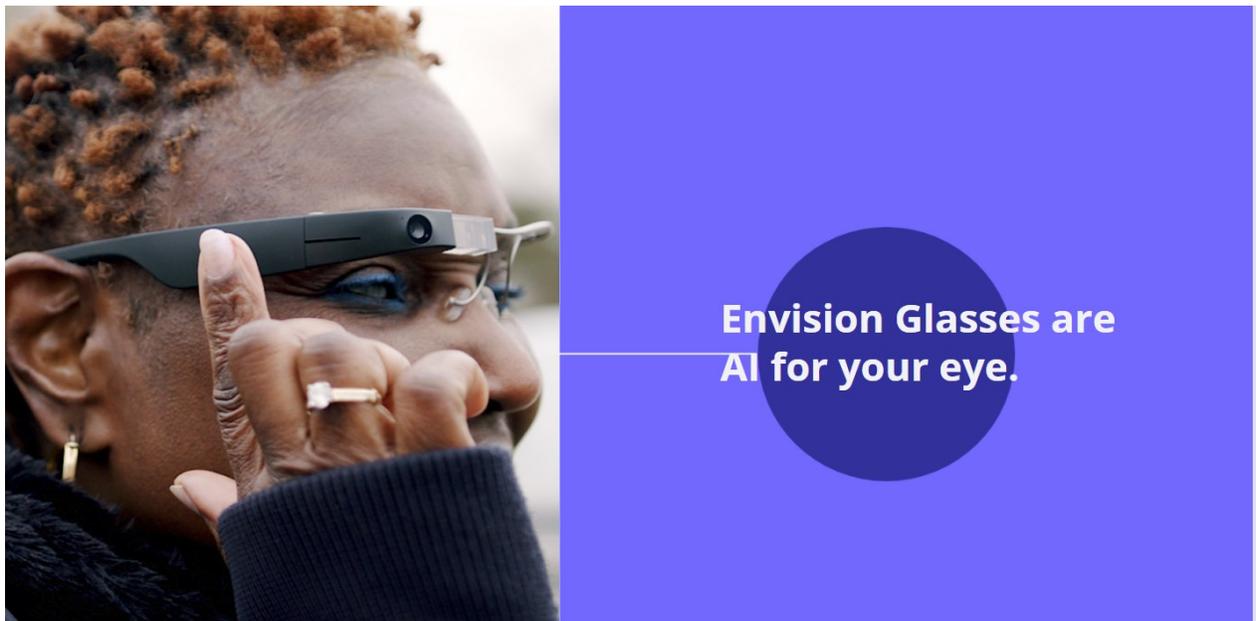
“The glasses are light-weight, comfortable, have a six-hour battery life, and through audio can assist with a variety of tasks, including reading pantry items, documents, describing your environment, finding objects, and calling trusted friends or support workers. Best of all, you don't have to ordinarily own or wear glasses to take advantage of their form factor. The learning curve is very minimal, and if you can use the basic iPhone gestures, then you can operate Envision”, says Sam Taylor from Pacific Vision Australia.

Imported and distributed in Australia by Pacific Vision, the Envision Glasses have a retail price of \$4,995. For more information on Envision Glasses visit: [https://au.1lowvision.com/index.php?route=product/product&product\\_id=302](https://au.1lowvision.com/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=302)

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*“Best of all you don't have to ordinarily own or wear glasses to take advantage of their form factor”.*

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## A SPOTLIGHT ON...

In each edition of Eye Contact, we will be featuring a story on one of our wonderful Beyond Blindness Volunteers for Members to get to know them a little better. Our volunteer for this edition is **Robyn Doudle**.

A long-term Volunteer, Robyn has been part of the Beyond Blindness family for more than twenty-eight years. Robyn commenced her volunteering career with Blind Welfare (Beyond Blindness) when her husband Bob, who served in the Royal Australian Airforce (RAAF), was transferred back to Adelaide from Wagga NSW some 29 years ago.

During her time in Wagga, Robyn volunteered on-base for the RAAF Women's Association, providing assistance and support to the wives of servicemen. "I was interested in joining the same Association here in Adelaide, but it was a long way to the RAAF base and the Women's Association here operated differently".

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*"A long-term Volunteer, Robyn has been part of the Beyond Blindness family for more than twenty-eight years".*

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## A SPOTLIGHT ON...continued

Robyn responded to an ad she saw for Beyond Blindness in the local newspaper; the Messenger, seeking volunteers to assist with craft groups.

“With my children at high-school and Bob working I had time on my hands. I wanted somewhere I could help as well as a way of meeting local people” she said.

Robyn would work at Beyond Blindness each Wednesday, commencing in the morning with the weekly Craft Group and then heading across the road in the afternoon to the Warehouse. Here she would assist with the sorting of donated items from the collection bins that would then be sold at the Opportunity Shop.

“We would get clothing and furniture items as well as a range of other things, even someone’s marijuana stash on one occasion” she said.

After the closure of the Opportunity Shop and warehouse, Robyn continued to volunteer with the craft group on Wednesday mornings.

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*“I wanted somewhere I could help as well as a way of meeting local people”*

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## A SPOTLIGHT ON...continued

“We would have 20 to 30 people attending; making bath mats from huge bales of nylon thread that had to first be detangled, canework baskets, knitting, crocheting rugs and beadwork”.



Robyn's husband sadly passed away a little over 18 months ago after a long period of illness, the result of his exposure to Agent Orange during his RAAF service

in Vietnam.

When asked what have you gained personally from volunteering with Beyond Blindness, Robyn, choking back tears, replied:

“Beyond Blindness is like family. The whole purpose is community and friendship. Volunteers get as much out of it as the Members. We get back what we give, and we get it back in spades.

When my husband got very sick, I was given the opportunity to have a Carer to help me. I picked Wednesday mornings to have the Carer so that I could keep coming into Beyond Blindness because I knew the people here would help me. Many knew my husband and the situation. So, as you can see, I've got as much out of this as anyone, and more... I'd recommend volunteering at Beyond Blindness to anyone”.

*“I'd recommend volunteering at Beyond Blindness to anyone”.*



## OAKS LIBERTY APARTMENT



Whether it's just an overnigher or for a week, many members have taken the opportunity to stay in our Oaks Liberty Towers apartment in Glenelg. The fully self-contained 2-bedroom apartment is the perfect place to relax, unwind and enjoy a break.

A 3-night stay will cost you \$120 with any extra nights costing \$80 per night. Members can stay in the apartment for a total of 7 nights per year at this ridiculously reduced rate. To ensure fairness only 1 stay during a peak period such as Easter, Christmas and New Year's Eve is permitted.

If you are considering a stay or have any queries, please give Deidre Gavros a call at the Beyond Blindness office on 8 3 6 7 6 0 8 8.



“Eye Contact” is a Newsletter for Members of Beyond Blindness

Beyond Blindness (previously Blind Welfare Association of SA Inc) has been serving its members for over 80 years.

OTHER SERVICES PROVIDED:

- ◆ Transport for medical appointments
- ◆ Personal shopping assistance
- ◆ Grocery shopping assistance
- ◆ Social support home visits

## Editors Comment

I hope you enjoyed this edition of your Beyond Blindness Newsletter. If you would like to make a contribution to our next edition, please forward it on to the Beyond Blindness office or call

**8 3 6 7 6 0 8 8**

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### Beyond Blindness

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**Beyond  
Blindness**

Supporting Independence and Inclusion  
for Blind South Australians