



RVIB Carols by Candlelight 2003 draws full house

The Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) has thanked all Victorians for making the 2003 RVIB Carols by Candlelight one of the most successful ever – achieving both a sell out live audience and registering as one of the year's highest rating programs on the Nine Network.

The Christmas Eve event, broadcast live from the Arts Centre, Sidney Myer Music Bowl, has been a traditional part of Melbourne Christmas celebrations for 66 years.

Jeff Johnson, RVIB's manager of events, says that RVIB Carols by Candlelight is the organisation's main fundraising event.

"We provide services to children and adults who are blind or vision impaired across Victoria and proceeds from ticket sales, merchandise (including candles and candle holders) and donations benefit those RVIB serves," Mr Johnson said.

Most RVIB services are provided free and include training in literacy, adaptive technology and mobility, employment counselling, education services for children and library services.

"RVIB is indebted to all Victorians who have supported RVIB Carols by Candlelight this year and in the past," he said.



▲ One of the many families who came along to watch top Australian talent perform at last year's RVIB Carols by Candlelight at the Arts Centre, Sydney Myer Music Bowl.

"Without this generous support, RVIB could not provide the range and quality of services to people who need them to maintain their independence and quality of life."

RVIB Carols by Candlelight, sponsored by Qantas, the Nine Network, Southern Cross Radio, 3AW and Magic 693 among others, was attended by 30,000 people.

The event was broadcast nationally by the Nine Network and, among numerous performers, featured Guy Sebastian, Marina Prior, Toni Pearen, Sophie Monk, Hi-5 and Michael Cormick. To view photos from the event visit the Carols web site at www.rvibcarolsbycandlelight.com.au.

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RVIB

> Vision: To be the leading provider of services, resources and information which enable people who are blind or vision impaired to maximise their independence and quality of life.

CEO's message

Welcome to the first edition of RVIB News for 2004.



I hope you all had a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

We had another very successful RVIB Carols by Candlelight on Christmas Eve 2003 at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. A record number of people gathered to watch stars such as Australian Idol winner Guy Sebastian and old favourites like Denis Walter, Marina Prior and Silvie Paladino. I would like to thank all our major sponsors including Qantas, Nine Network, 3AW and Magic 693 for their generous support as well as all our other sponsors, volunteers and staff who made the night so magical.

I would also like to take this opportunity to give you a brief update on project Nexus and let you know what our plans are for this year. As you will have noted in previous updates, much was achieved last year towards the proposed merger of RVIB, VAF and RBS. The Boards of the participating agencies approved a Heads of Agreement, which has been signed by the three Presidents and a number of project teams have been established and are progressing well.

The Nexus Interim Board, which is made up of three nominees from each of RBS, VAF, RVIB and BCA, has met on three occasions over the past three months. Graeme Innes has been elected the acting Chairperson, with Mike Janes and

Kevin Murfitt as acting Deputy Chairs. Three sub-committees have also been established by the Board to oversee activities and issues relating to client services, organisational integration and finance.

The Nexus Interim Board has been briefed on the requirements of corporate governance, directors' responsibilities and the legal requirements for the Scheme of Arrangement. The Interim Board is also considering the proposed NewCo constitution and a number of options relating to the management of the consolidation phase. These issues need to be finalised prior to the commencement of the Scheme of Arrangement.

The project teams have been working on their respective projects and are well underway in identifying current processes, services and risks.

We are pleased to advise that at the end of January 2004 Royal Blind Society of New South Wales was incorporated as a public company limited by guarantee and has been registered under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth). This is a vital step forward for RBS as it will give members the opportunity to become more actively involved in the running of the organisation.

The Scheme of Arrangement process will move the proposed merger forward with formal information being provided to each of the agencies' company members, special general meetings and a vote on the proposed merger.



Although this Christmas period we have seen some of the project team activity slow down somewhat, we look forward to an energetic and early start to Nexus in the first quarter of this year.

Please be assured that I will continue to provide you with updates regarding Nexus and all other activities that happen here at RVIB. I thank you for your support last year and I hope that you will continue to support us in 2004. Your commitment to RVIB has a large impact on the lives of so many people who are blind or vision impaired.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Douglas M Kent
Chief Executive Officer, RVIB

▲ TOP

L to r: (rear) Chief Executive Officers Malcolm Daubney, Vision Australia Foundation, John Landau, Royal Blind Society and Dr Douglas M. Kent, Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind and (seated) Presidents Mike Janes, Vision Australia, Graeme Innes, Royal Blind Society and Dr Trevor Anderson, Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind.

RVIB Bursaries give students a helping hand



▲ RVIB bursary winners can purchase adaptive technology from RVIB's extensive range.

Ten students who are blind or vision impaired have each been awarded grants by RVIB for the purchase of adaptive technology that will assist them with further study.

The RVIB Bursary Awards are made available each year to students who display a passion for their chosen fields of learning and who may be unable to meet the high cost of adaptive technology.

RVIB Education Consultant, Jo Webber says that the bursaries are designed to make tertiary education more accessible for people who are blind or vision impaired and help to create equity in the learning environment.

“The high cost of the technology, essential to students who are blind or vision impaired, prohibits many of them from participating in further education and ultimately pursuing their chosen careers,” Jo says.

“The RVIB Bursary aims to address this situation by enabling the students to

purchase adaptive equipment, such as Braille note-takers, computers with voice output, voice operated organisers and scanners.”

Bursary recipient, Brandon Ah Tong, is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Social Science at RMIT. Brandon has already completed four subjects with excellent results, however minimal access to technology has made it difficult for him to complete the required course reading.

“I've got retinitis pigmentosa, and my sight has deteriorated over the last five years,” Brandon says. “Reading, even with large text on a computer monitor has always been difficult and I often get headaches as a result of eye strain.”

Brandon says that he is enjoying his course and looks forward to approaching the next semester with the software he will acquire through the bursary.

“I'm going to use the bursary to acquire the JAWS software program

so that I can audibly navigate my computer, have my computer read back my course materials and get through them faster,” he says.

“RVIB have been such a help to me over the years and without their assistance I probably wouldn't be where I am at the moment. They've helped me get back to where I am now.”

Jo says that these awards have significantly reduced the barriers faced by people who are blind or vision impaired in the field of further education.

“As basic requirements, students who are blind or vision impaired need laptops, screen reading software and equipment to translate print into braille or audio formats just so that they are able to take and read lecture notes.”

Up to ten bursaries – each valued at up to \$4500 – are awarded annually and applications are open to students of any age. They must be able to demonstrate financial need, that they are enrolled in further education and that they are legally blind.



Lady luck



▲ Mrs Helen Desmond being presented with her new car by Gary Creaton of Lane Toyota.

Christmas came early for one Melbourne family this year, as they took out first prize in RVIB's raffle drawn on 18 December. Mrs Helen Desmond of Diamond Creek was thrilled when she received the keys to a brand new Toyota Camry Sportivo valued at \$35,000, courtesy of Lane Toyota. RVIB's Events and Projects team runs four major raffles each year to help raise funds and increase awareness of the vital services provided by RVIB to over 100,000 Victorians. For more information about RVIB's Events and Projects please call Jeff Johnson on (03) 9522 5292.

Dine in the dark!

As part of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival in March, Reserve, a 60-seat restaurant at Federation Square, is hosting a special evening of blind dining.

Guests will be served seven lavish courses in virtually complete darkness, allowing the other senses such as taste, smell and touch to heighten the dining experience.

Dinner in the Dark will take place on Monday, 22 March at Reserve, Upper Plaza at Federation Square at \$110 per person. For bookings please call **Georgie** on **(03) 9654 6002**.

RAVE challenge uncovers winners!



Three Melbourne Grammar students have received prizes after submitting winning entries to the 2003 RVIB RAVE Challenge.

Project Coordinator for The RAVE Challenge, Fiona Smyth said that the competition encouraged Victorian school students to think about what it means to be blind or vision impaired and design innovative aids to assist people with their daily or recreational activities.

"The project is important because it draws attention to the valuable contribution that technology can play in maximising the independence of a person who is vision impaired," Ms Smyth said.

Overall winner, year 9 student Richard Israel designed a fishing rod designed especially for people who are vision impaired.

"I really like fishing myself so I wondered what it would be like for a person who is blind," Mr Israel said.

Mr Israel developed his submission with keen attention to detail, building a prototype that runs the fishing line through the centre of the rod to minimise tangling and also creating safety hooks to hang bait from.

Alister King and James McIlroy won an outstanding achievement award for their fus-ball table and Jo-Min Ding for his game of Mastermind created with different textures and colours.

Thank you to Just Jeans for donating first prize in the form of a \$500 gift voucher.

The RAVE Challenge will run again in 2004. If you would like to sponsor or participate in the challenge, please contact Fiona Smyth, RVIB Community Education Coordinator on (03) 9522 5299.



▲ Melbourne Grammar student Richard Israel with RVIB's Fiona Smyth and his winning entry - a fishing rod designed for people who are blind or vision impaired.

Pedal power

Now in its twentieth year, the VicRoads Great Victorian Bike Ride continues to bring together fun-loving people from around Australia and across the world. Taking up the challenge this year was a small team of spirited RVIB staff and clients. Anna Maghanoy, O&M instructor, shares her travelogue with us.



▲ RVIB's dedicated team of cyclists at the 2003 Great Victorian Bike Ride.

This year's adventure covered 580 kilometres of amazing scenery from Mt. Hotham to Mornington - from the 'Summit to the Sea', from 29 November to 7 December 2003. Taking part along with myself were staff members Nicola Misso and Michelle Sharples, volunteers Louis Benalcazar and Renata, and clients Mark, Jarrod Gardner and Ashley Walker.

Day 1: Mt Hotham to Omeo - 55km

Most of the group met in the city at 4:30am. We loaded bikes and luggage onto cattle trucks, ourselves onto buses, and headed up to Mt Hotham. Apparently, we "rolled" down the highest sealed road in Australia. It wasn't all down hill though!



Day 2: Omeo to Bruthen - 95km

A few hill climbs today following the Tambo River. Beautiful scenery in this very isolated and quiet part of Victoria.

Day 3: Bruthen to Briagolong - 87km

"Watch out for the bike eating bridges" was the call of the day. We travelled through farms, native forest and rolling hills.

Day 4: Briagolong to Glengarry - 66km

This was probably one of the easier days with shorter, flatter riding, despite the heavy rain.

Day 5: Glengarry to Yarram - 73km

The 22km hill climb! Survived by all and certainly worth it. The rainforest in the Tarra Valley is a place not to be missed.

Day 6: Yarram

This was a rest day topped off by a fireworks display.

Day 7: Yarram to Inverloch - 101km

Most of us completed our first 100kms (well actually more like 112kms - but whose counting?) It

was a relatively flat route, which was made a little challenging with a head wind. We enjoyed great views of Wilson's Prom.

Day 8: Inverloch to HMAS Cerberus - 63km

The ride commenced with stunning views of the coast. Later we were grateful for a change from the saddle, catching the ferry to Stony Point and a bus to HMAS Cerberus.

Day 9: HMAS Cerberus to Mornington - 45km

Our last day! We had a great end to the trip, with rolling hills, wineries and view over the bay.

They did have to include one last hill though ... Arthur's seat! And luckily no one ended up in the bay!

All in all a great time was had by all. The RVIB team did such an amazing job. For most, the 2003 Great Victorian Bike Ride was their first and I'm sure all agreed it was a fantastic and worthwhile experience. Thank you to the RVIB Management Team for allowing us the opportunity to undertake such a large and invaluable program. Most of all, a big thank you to McCormicks for their sponsorship, without whom this adventure would not have been possible.

Little hands, big heart



▲ **Never too young to show your support:** Ben Breeden helps raise funds for an RVIB Auxiliary.

When given the chance, most eight-year-old little boys would spend their pocket money on lollies, toys or swap cards, but Ben Breeden of Sorrento has different ideas.

For the last two years, Ben has been RVIB Sorrento Auxiliary's youngest fundraiser. By regularly attending auxiliary meetings with his grandparents, Ben has developed a real interest in helping raise funds for RVIB, so much so that he recently even willingly used his own pocket money to buy items to help stock the street stall. Ben put his creative mind to work and bought a collection of little wooden toys and bundled them together with paint pots and paint brushes to create activity kits for children.

RVIB auxiliaries have given people like Ben the opportunity to raise funds in many interesting and varied ways for people who are blind or vision impaired in Victoria for over 70 years.

If you have always wanted to become more involved with fundraising and would like to learn about RVIB auxiliaries in your area, please call Community Development Coordinator **Kerri Guyett** on **(03) 9522 5232** or email kerri.guyett@rvib.org.au.

RVIB and CRS Australia focus on regional Victoria

Representatives from RVIB and CRS Australia (formerly the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service) met last month to discuss collaborative strategies that will maximise regional access to their services.

Both RVIB and CRS Australia are keen to ensure that people who are blind or vision impaired, living in remote areas of Victoria, have equal access to the best possible training and support so that that they can find and maintain open employment.

RVIB employment consultant, Mr Robert Allen says that it is tremendous that CRS Australia shares RVIB Employment Service's vision.

"RVIB Employment Services operates on the premise that people who are vision impaired can do almost any job they want to with the right equipment and support," Mr Allen says.

"We're looking forward to working with CRS Australia to achieve positive outcomes of employment for our clients."

Such support offered by RVIB Employment Services covers comprehensive career planning services, job search assistance and ongoing support with job placements to help clients meet their work goals.

CRS Australia worker, Mr Daryl Werner said it is great to see people making positive steps in their life and, with the two services working more closely, this can only be a positive for the person who is blind or vision impaired.

"Already, clients from CRS Wonthaggi are accessing training and support from RVIB Employment Services," Mr Werner said.

For more information about RVIB Employment Services please contact Robert Allen on **(03) 9520 5555**.

RVIB receives NAB donation



▲ RVIB Donor Relations Manager Jayson Hanrahan with NAB Projects Manager, Amanda Conroy.

The National Australia Bank presented RVIB with a cheque for \$50,000 early in January.

The generous donation comes as a result of a partnership between the NAB and RVIB to promote the bank's new

Mastercard Lenscard credit card, which doubles as a magnifier.

NAB Projects Manager, Amanda Conroy said she was pleased with the results of the promotion, which has already seen more than 200 applications for the card come in.

"We enjoyed working with RVIB and would like to continue the relationship," she said.

RVIB Donor Relations Manager, Mr Jayson Hanrahan said that RVIB will receive a further contribution from NAB in February as the bank is also donating the first year's annual fee for each of the cards that are approved.



RVIB

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