

# Newsletter

## For Ophthalmologists

Edition 1

Editor, Karen McKenzie

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### *Joint Project*

The Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind (RVIB) and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) have both undertaken research regarding people with glaucoma.

Dr Julian Rait, RVEEH, and two RVIB social workers investigated the psychosocial responses of people with glaucoma.

Each organisation focused on different aspects of the research, but interestingly results were similar.

- Most people experience a psychosocial response to the diagnosis of glaucoma and require assistance with adjusting to the diagnosis.
- Some people would value the opportunity to meet others who have glaucoma to share the adjustment process.

These results inspired RVIB and RVEEH to develop a model of service delivery using a group format to meet the needs of people with glaucoma. The group has an educational and therapeutic focus and enables people with glaucoma and their families to share experiences and information.



**For queries relating to this newsletter or to receive RVIB referral pads, contact Karen McKenzie on (03) 529 3544.**

It is hoped that the existence of such a group will not only enhance a person's ability to adjust to glaucoma: it will also

provide a unique opportunity for RVIB and RVEEH to continue to respond to the needs of patients in a holistic manner.

The group will meet every two months at RVEEH on Saturday afternoons, starting in February. It will be conducted by RVIB social workers, Debbie Ling and Katerina Stavridis.

### *Bobbie Katz' Story*

Bobbie Katz is a man of 72, going on 21. Partially sighted from a stroke which occurred when he was 60, and with diabetes and arthritis, he maintains that he has found a new lease of life in the past decade.

After his stroke, Bobbie sold his thriving photography company and sought a way to live without being able to read or drive or do many other activities.

Bobbie was referred to RVIB and received information and counselling.



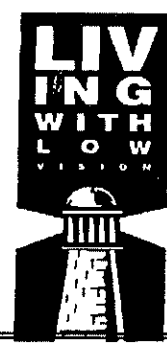
He joined an RVIB support group for newly vision impaired people.

"I got to share my experiences and make new friends. It was great," he says.

Bobbie has read hundreds of talking books borrowed from the RVIB Talking Book Library. Eight years ago he began studying philosophy at the University of Melbourne as a continuing education student. Now he is studying astronomy. Talking books and the assistance of the RVIB Education Consultant have been invaluable to him.

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***Karen McKenzie is available to talk to Ophthalmologists and related professionals about the services of RVIB and the needs of people with vision impairment.***



When asked what he thinks about RVIB, Bobbie says, "RVIB gave me an identity. Now I can go out and do what I really want to do. When I was young I never got to study, to learn. RVIB was the gateway to the learning. Maybe that's why I call my stroke a 'lucky' stroke."

***The attached simulation eye charts can be obtained by contacting Karen McKenzie***

### *Timothy's Education*

Timothy, aged four, has retinopathy of prematurity and now attends the RVIB Education Centre in Burwood. Timothy was referred to RVIB by his Ophthalmologist. He uses adapted play equipment and has teachers who understand the needs of children with vision impairments.

Before attending the centre, Timothy and his parents were visited at home by an RVIB Home Advisor.

Timothy's mother says, "When we first brought him home we had no idea of what to do. We knew nothing of blindness. RVIB showed us what is possible and encouraged us to help Tim to develop."

Next year Timothy will attend his local pre-school part-time, with RVIB support, and his parents' aim is for him to attend school full-time. "We know he is capable of this and with support he can make it."

**R A C O** - RVIB staff members, Leanne Thorpe and Karen McKenzie will be at the upcoming RACO(V) conference February 25 & 26. They will be presenting a paper and staffing a display.

### *Ray Dunn Learns to Spell*

Metropolitan RVIB workers often visit patients in their homes, by appointment, virtually anywhere in Victoria. Regional Rehabilitation Officers are based at key areas in rural Victoria. Recently RVIB expanded its country services.

The expansion of RVIB regional services played a significant role in assisting Ray Dunn to learn the alphabet for the first time and to spell his own name.

Forty-three year old Ray has been supported by Ballarat Regional Rehabilitation Officer Dawn Veale, who acted quickly upon hearing of Ray's situation.

Ray has been vision impaired since birth, and his sight has deteriorated to the point where he is unable to read large print. This has not stopped him learning how to read and write.

Ray is being taught literacy and braille at the Ballarat East Community House by volunteer tutor, Dick Luscombe. Ray's longer term goal is to use his new skills to find a job.

#### **Regional Rehabilitation Officers are located at:**

- Warrnambool, 241 Lave Street, Telephone: (055) 626 386
- Horsham, 79 Firebrace Street, Telephone: (053) 825 833
- Traralgon, Pergalias Arcade, Telephone: (051) 745 000
- Wangaratta, 25 Baker Street, Telephone: (057) 215 477
- Swan Hill, 47 McCallum Street, Telephone: (050) 313 875
- Ballarat, 33 Little Bridge Street Telephone: (053) 329 122