



BLIND SPORTS & RECREATION VICTORIA NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2019

Welcome to the second edition of Blind Sports and Recreation Newsletter (BSRV) for 2019.

As the end of the financial year is coming to a close, I would like to reflect on the wonderful support Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria has received.

On behalf of BSRV I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who has supported us both in kind and financially. It has enabled us to deliver our diverse and rewarding programs.

Everyone who has contributed is making a positive difference in the lives of people who are blind and vision impaired. It is so important to provide ways to create a healthy lifestyle. Health programs for people who are blind or vision impaired were previously not available and we are proud that now we offer more than 20 programs for all ages and abilities. Someone with a disability should not live in isolation, which is why it is so important to provide ways for people to feel included and have a sense of belonging. Our volunteers and financial supporters are such valuable assets in our pursuit to provide mental and physical well-being to blind and vision impaired people.

We are hoping that with our programs we can have a meaningful impact on those with more challenges in life.

We look forward to the next couple of months with great activities coming.

Maurice Gleeson OAM
President
Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria

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Thank You Volunteers

National Volunteer Week is the annual celebration to acknowledge the generous contribution by all our wonderful volunteers. We celebrated with scones and rich conversation at the Royal Botanic Garden Tea House Cafe. Seven wonderful volunteers attended, ranging in service from 6 months through to 19 years. Program Coordinator, Miriam Bilander, spoke about how valuable and appreciated their work is, and the positive difference volunteers make to the lives of people who are blind or with low vision.

Maurice Gleeson OAM, President: On behalf of executive members and staff of Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria, I would like to thank all past and present volunteers for the ongoing support you have given to our organisation and members. Without your input, we would not be able to provide sporting and recreational activities for people who are blind and vision impaired.

Volunteer in Vogue

Article written by volunteer Shobhna (participant Vicky)

I love to give something back to the community because it allows me to meet new people, provides a sense of accomplishment and makes me happy. I'm volunteering for almost 8 years. I met lovely Vicky in 2015 through Miriam (Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria). She has become a good friend of mine and I look forward to our fortnightly walks on Saturday. We meet around 11am and go for a one hour walk to Maribyrnong River. It's about 5km, but our

never-ending conversation makes it feel very less. I love Vicky's positive attitude; she is very understanding and open minded. She inspires me to enjoy life. After our walk when I come home, I feel more energetic and have a sense of achievement. Vicky herself is involved in volunteering. I believe volunteering is a circle, the more you give the more you get. It does not matter how busy you are or what situation you are in, volunteering is always beneficial, and it gives an opportunity to broaden a perspective and appreciate life more in general.

Thank you, Miriam for believing in me and giving me the chance to meet Vicky. I hope to continue my walk with Vicky for many more years.

Launch of new website

On Tuesday 16 April we officially launched our new website. A presentation by our Operations Manager Amanda Webb was held at our office. She has been working intensely with ID Digital to provide a comprehensive website to raise awareness, increase engagement and showcase our wonderful organisation. We now have AAA accessibility, so people with vision loss can access the site. Our patron Charlie Pickering joined us at the launch, speaking about his involvement with BSRV. Thank you, Charlie for your time and dedication.

After the presentation there was a lovely lunch and time to mingle and talk in an intimate setting.

We would like to thank Amanda and ID Digital for all their hard work, Doug Sloan OAM for being MC at the launch. Special thanks to Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation for your support in enabling us to create a great website. Thank you to all those who attended the launch and we look forward to your comments and feedback.

Please visit www.blindsports.org.au to learn all about our programs, how to get involved and to keep up to date with our events and news stories.



Photo above: attendees at the launch



Photo above: Harriet McCallum from Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation



Photo above: Maurice Gleeson, Amanda Webb and Charlie Pickering

A Vision for Connecting Up in Wyndham

Late 2018 saw the successful receipt of a \$5000 grant from Wyndham City Council to Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria, entitled "A Vision for Connecting Up in Wyndham". Program Coordinator, Miriam Bilander, lead this program by designing five exciting and distinct outings throughout the Wyndham locality, with an emphasis on physical exercise, emotional wellbeing, transport navigation and learning.

In February, the program kicked off with a yummy lunch at the welcoming Chatterbox Café in Werribee, followed by a ukulele performance in the Old Shire Community Room as part of the 'Tuesdaylele Music Concert Series'. The band, called 'Dafka', played Jewish, Gypsy and blues tunes, which incited toe-tapping, wide smiles and even some dancing amongst its crowd. In March, a large group descended on the Werribee Bowls Club for a celebration of Harmony Day and an opportunity to hit the greens and try their hand at lawn bowls. Due

to a unique partnership with Action on Disabilities within Ethnic Communities, members of the Chinese and Karen communities attended and valuable cross-cultural sharing ensued. Blessed with Autumn weather in April, seaweed expert, Chris Rockley, took the group on a guided foraging walk along Point Cook Coastal Park's beach. Laughter echoed as people tasted edible seaweed, squished Jelly Sacks and poked their fingers in Sea Anemones. Also in April, was a school holiday activity at the Werribee Zoo for blind and low vision children and their families. The reptile encounter was tense as kids apprehensively touched a python and a spiny-backed lizard, but the real highlight was a safari bus tour with a ranger and tactile objects on board. Soft Ostrich feathers were passed around, followed by sharp antelope horns and a giant giraffe thigh bone. The outings concluded in May with a visit to the Royal Australian Airforce Museum in Point Cook for an informative tour, picnic lunch and flight display. Individuals touched an amphibious plane, heard stories from World War One and watched an aircraft do thrilling aerobatics!

A core group of volunteers attended these outings, helping with transportation, sighted guiding, social inclusion and photography. Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria wishes to acknowledge their invaluable support, as well as the financial support from Wyndham City Council.



Photo above: kids and their families in Werribee Zoo



Photo above: one of the kids feeling an antelope horn



Photo above: kids brave enough to touch a python

Harmony Day Reflections

On Tuesday 19th of March 2019, sixty people dressed in vibrant orange descended on the Werribee Bowls Club in Melbourne's west to celebrate Harmony Day. With the support of a Victorian Multicultural Commission grant, Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria's Project Coordinator, Miriam Bilander, organised a day of cultural sharing, lawn bowls and delicious catering. The day was a particular success because of the partnership formed with Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities and their enthusiastic Capacity Building Officer, Fang Ji. Fang Ji brought with her 23 members of the Chinese community, as well as 10 members of the recently arrived Karen community from Myanmar.



Photo above: a warm welcome by the community

The day began with Miriam warming up the crowd by having everyone learn and call out "Welcome" in various community languages. President of Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria, Maurice Gleeson, then delivered a moving speech on the value of unity and love, emphasising our commonalities rather than our differences. Excitement built as the Chinese Choir then took to the stage to sing three beautiful folk

songs about village life and the countryside. Finally, each member of the Karen community stood up in their traditional colourful embroidered costume for us to admire. Lersay Wai, Karen Facilitator, explained to the audience about the Karen refugee journey and their culture, passing around traditional Karen items for people to feel. The blind and low vision community thoroughly enjoyed feeling these tactile objects, asking questions and learning about this group.

After the presentations, everyone hit the 'greens' and tried their hands at lawn bowls. A special thanks goes to Rhonda Edwards, Community Bowls Coordinator at the Werribee Bowls Club, who organised for an experienced group of volunteer bowlers to initiate our blind and low vision participants in the wonderfully accessible sport of lawn bowls. Rhonda's generosity also extended to her providing the venue, equipment and hot drinks free of charge. Thank you, Rhonda, it was a stupendous day had by all!

Photo below: playing some lawn bowls



Singapore visit paves the way for future blind tennis competition

In the week of 29 April to 2 May, Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria were delighted to welcome members from Soundball Singapore to Melbourne for a blind tennis exchange program. Soundball is the name given to blind tennis in Singapore. The two teams got together to share information and experiences. Four players from Singapore and five players from Australia were excited to train together at the National Tennis Centre. It was a great opportunity for friendly matches and for players to practise different styles before they head to Spain for the International Blind Tennis Tournament this June. The coaches also shared their knowledge in training techniques.

The days were filled with training sessions and friendly matches in the B1, B2 and mixed categories. There was lots of laughter and an outing to Melbourne Park could not be missed.

The teams also had a lovely lunch with BSRV President, Maurice Gleeson OAM, who said: 'Organising these blind tennis exchange programs is of great value to players to gain competitive match experiences with others. Together with Tennis Australia, we would like to see blind

tennis grow in the Asia Pacific region; with the ultimate goal of someday holding a first Asia Pacific tournament.' Australian Blind Tennis Team Coach, Samir Mahir said: 'Our goals are to establish international connections among blind tennis organisations within the Asia Pacific region, share knowledge and experiences with the intention of building stronger relationships between Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria and other Blind Tennis Associations such as Soundball Singapore. With the support of Tennis Australia and Tennis Victoria, these types of initiatives contribute to the growth of blind tennis in general.'

Thank you to Soundball Singapore for a wonderful experience; and the whole organising team. A special thank you to Tennis Australia and Tennis Victoria for their support and help. We look forward to seeing everyone in Spain very soon.

Photo below: Team members from Singapore and Australia after a friendly match at the National Tennis Centre



Nelson Alexander's Foundation Day

Foundation Day is an initiative of the Nelson Alexander Charitable Foundation. It's a day where seventeen of their offices donate the professional fees from one of their auctions to a chosen local charity. We are delighted that Nelson Alexander chose to support our cause. The auction was held in Reservoir and had a great turnout. The property sold at auction resulting in a donation of \$11,685 from the professional fee.

We would like to thank Nelson Alexander for their fantastic support!



Photo above: BSRV President Maurice Gleeson OAM with Nelson Alexander's real estate agent

Blind Sports & Recreation keeps people with vision loss active and connected

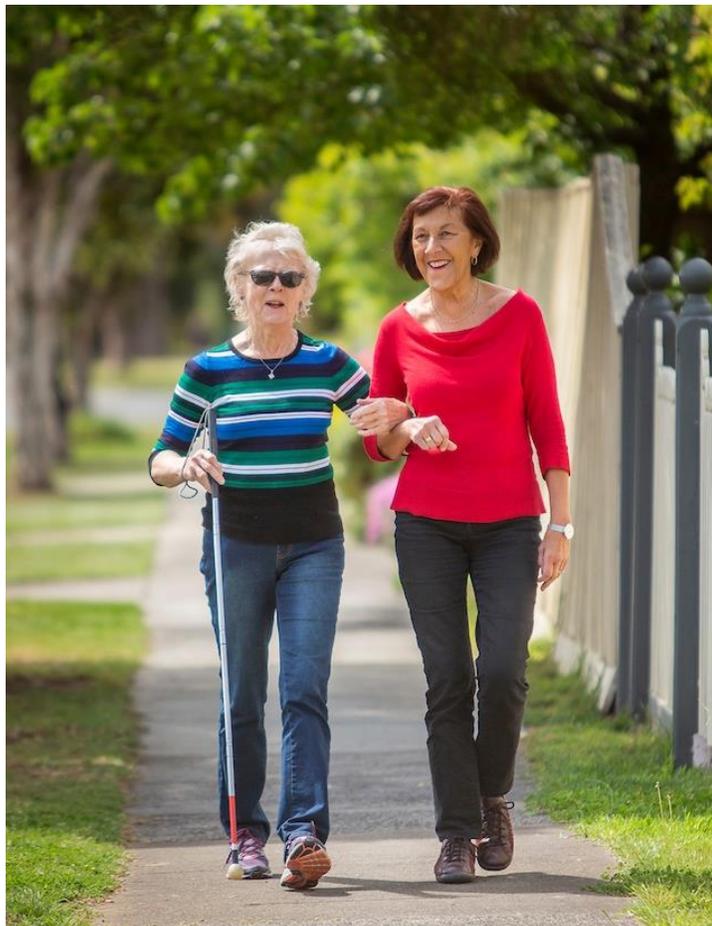
During Macula Month (1 – 31 May), Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria (BSRV) highlighted the range of sport and recreation programs available for people who are blind or vision impaired.

There are around 357,000 people in Australia who are blind or have low vision that cannot be corrected. Given the population is ageing and eye diseases are strongly age-related, this is expected to increase to 564,000 by 2030. One of the leading causes of blindness and vision loss is macular disease; and the most common forms are age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and diabetic eye disease. Macula Month, an initiative of Macular Disease Foundation (MDF) is a timely reminder to reflect on the many support programs available for people with vision loss. Living with AMD can have a great impact on many aspects of life.

BSRV President, Maurice Gleeson OAM, says: 'We support people who are blind and vision impaired to take part in a wide range of sports and recreational activities. All sports cater for beginners through to advanced players – with specially trained volunteers providing support and companionship. The benefits include improved health, a boost in well-being and confidence, and a decrease in social isolation'.

BSRV Company Secretary, Kaye Speed who is vision impaired says: 'In the earlier years of losing my vision it was overwhelming and difficult to adjust and develop new ways to communicate with people. I had to find a way to deal with it, because losing my vision is one medical condition, but it is important to still keep the rest of the body and mind active and healthy.

Photo below: Kaye and her regular walking buddy, Maureen



So I joined the BSRV community and took on walking, swimming, Spin classes and ballet. BSRV organise various trips and excursions, accommodating all levels, which is a wonderful way to connect with people who have a similar condition'. Kaye adds: For people who are losing their vision I would wholeheartedly recommend contacting BSRV. The biggest problem is

feeling isolated, so talking to someone who is vision impaired or blind is important, because you are not alone. Knowing that you can still be independent and active is encouraging'.

For more information about our programs please visit www.blindsports.org.au and follow our Facebook page @blindsportsvictoria

For more information on Macular Degeneration: www.mdfoundation.com.au

Active Teens Programs

The Active Teens programs have been funded by VicHealth and aims to increase the participation of teenagers who are blind or vision impaired in physical activity and sport.

In Term 2 the Active Teens program commenced 2 pilot programs, the Active Teens vision impaired table tennis (Swish) program in Kooyong, and the Active Teens tennis program in Hoppers Crossing.

The Active Teens football program in Cranbourne has been postponed until Term 3.

Active Teens vision impaired Table Tennis (Swish) program

The Active Teens Swish program is running weekly at Vision Australia in Kooyong on Saturday afternoons from 1 pm.

The Victorian Vision Impaired Table Tennis Association (VVITTA) invites teenagers to

come along and learn how to play the fast and furious game of Swish. Long standing VVITTA members are on hand to teach you the ins and outs of the game, and participants have a lot of fun learning new skills and challenging each other.

Venue: Vision Australia
454 Glenferrie Rd, Kooyong
(easily accessible from Kooyong
Railway Station)
Dates: Most Saturdays during Term 2
Time: 1 pm onwards

To register for the Active Teens Swish program, or for more information, please contact Allie at:
activeteens@blindsports.org.au

For information about dates of the program please contact Robyn on: 0417 159 106

Active Teens Hoppers Crossing blind and low vision tennis program

Hoppers Crossing Tennis Club is running a fortnightly blind and low vision tennis program during Term 2. All ages welcome. Program participants, Cara and Elijah have been having a great time getting active and learning new skills from the wonderful coaches Jasmine and Carim.

The final two sessions for Term 2 will take place on Sunday 9 June and Sunday 23 June from 2.30 pm to 3.30 pm.

Come along and have a go before the term finishes!!

Venue: Hoppers Crossing Tennis Club
corner of Hogans Rd and
Woottens Rd, Tarneit
Dates: Sundays 9 June and 23 June
Time: 2.30 pm to 3.30 pm

To register your interest in the Term 2 program, or if you would like to join in during Term 3, please contact Allie at activeteens@blindsports.org.au



Photo above: Carim and Elijah practising tennis

Breast, Cervical and Bowel Cancer Testing Information Sessions and Workshops

'Keeping an eye out for cancer prevention'

Together with Breast Screening Victoria & Cancer Council, BSRV organise several information sessions about the benefits of cancer screening for breast, cervical and bowel cancer prevention.

The workshops include time for questions and the ability to feel the equipment. The goal is to provide information for blind and vision impaired to be at ease about testing, and making the information more accessible through info sheets in braille and large print.

The workshop held in Kooyong on 22 May, was a successful and interactive session. The 15 participants found the information helpful. There was room to discuss different ways of testing and it was beneficial to hear what works and where it can be improved, as getting screened and tested is challenging for the blind and vision impaired.

More sessions will be organised. If you would like to attend one of them please contact Sandra at BSRV by e-mail: sandra@blindsports.org.au or phone: 9822 8876.

Victorian State Goalball Title 2019

The Victorian State Titles were held June 1 & 2 and organised by The Victorian Goalball Association.

Congratulations to City of Boroondara (Mixed Division) & ExSight Sports (Men's Division) who claimed the title of 2019 Victorian State Titles Winners.

Thank you to all wonderful volunteers for helping out.

Blind Golf try out Day

If you are blind or vision impaired and would be interested in trying your hand at golf, why not come along to Blind Golf Victoria's Come and Try Day.

If you are travelling by public transport, the closest train station is Cheltenham and then by bus to the venue, or BGV could arrange to pick you up from the station with prior notice.

All equipment and coaching will be supplied at no cost. Bring a friend or family members along with you.

Come along and have a chat with some of our Vision Impaired Blind Golfers who'll be there on the day.

Venue: Melbourne Golf Academy
385 Centre Dandenong Road,
Heatherton

Date: Sunday, June 30

Time: 11 AM – 2 PM

If you are interested in coming along or need further information please call President Doug Sloan on 0418344243 or email Secretary Jo Delaney at blindgolfvic@gmail.com

Please RSVP by 16th June:
www.blindgolf.com.au

Blind Tennis International Tournament 2019

The 3rd International Blind Tennis Tournament is being held 12-16 June 2019 in Spain and will have over 80 participants from 15 different countries playing. We are excited to send our team of seven players:

Michael, Chris, Genamarie and Adam with coach Samir from Victoria. And Ricky, Marc and Dragan with coach Nicholas from South Australia.



Photo below: the players and team ready for the tournament

The players have received a Wilson Ultra 25 tennis racquet each, thanks to the generosity of Amer Sports Australia and Tension 24. The team will be well equipped for the upcoming tournament! They will also be looking very sharp in their new runners that were kindly provided by Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club.

Be sure to keep following our Facebook page the coming weeks for updates on our team in Spain.

Thank you to everyone who has donated for the Australian Blind Tennis Team to compete at the 3rd International Blind Tennis Tournament. You truly have made a difference.

National Blind & Vision Impaired Tennis Camp.

Thank you, Tennis Victoria for hosting the

National Blind & Vision Impaired Tennis Camp. Adults, juniors, and coaches from several states attended the camp. This final training opportunity enhanced the skills of the players who are heading to compete at the

International Blind Tennis Tournament.

It was wonderful to bring all the players together, have them play alongside the juniors, and help grow this tennis community and share valuable knowledge.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are the life blood of this organisation and without their help we would not exist.

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers.

You can become involved in a number of ways. If you are interested, please visit our [website](#) or give us a call on 9822 8876 to see how you can make a difference.

Sponsorship

Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria invites interested individuals and companies to contact us about sponsorship in this newsletter, a quarterly publication distributed widely including all three levels of government and various departments including Department of Sport & Recreation, VicHealth and Department of Education.

The newsletter is well circulated through the Australian Sports Commission, a number of generic sporting organisations, numerous corporate partners – both small and large, and other disability sporting groups as well as the Victorian Institute of Sport and to members of the general public.

If you would like to discuss the opportunity for sponsorship, please contact Susan on 9822 8876 or email info@blindsports.org.au

Yes, I would like to support Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria

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