



BLIND SPORTS & RECREATION VICTORIA NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2019

As 2019 is rapidly drawing to a close and we are entering the Christmas and New Year period, it gives me an opportunity to reflect and review the past year and what a difference people's support has made to our organisation.

It is with tremendous pride and appreciation that I write this 'Seasons Greetings' for our end of year newsletter.

Thank you to our staff and volunteers. Their amazing range of skills and abilities have enabled our organisation to continue moving forward with confidence and belief that greater opportunities will be achieved. Their collective contribution and approach has proven beyond doubt that there is no "I" in the word "Team".

Thank you to our generous supporters who have enabled so many existing programs to be successful and have helped us to develop other exciting initiatives during 2019. With your support and assistance, we have been able to establish new programs and many of these programs will continue in the future.

I am extremely proud of our members who have often left their "comfort zones" to achieve personal goals and are wonderful role models for others. We have shown that inclusivity will be achieved by giving people increased opportunities and choices, greater control and voices that will be heard.

I thank you all for your enthusiasm, passion and commitment.

Wishing you a joyous and peaceful Christmas.

Maurice Gleeson OAM
President

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Heritage Walk at Royal Botanic Gardens

A wonderful day was had at the Royal Botanic Gardens in late November to take part in an Aboriginal Heritage Walk. Jakobi, a tour guide shared valuable knowledge with the blind community about the areas rich history and thriving culture. Miriam said, “We learnt about indigenous plants, their medicinal use, dietary value and ceremonial importance”.

“We experienced a traditional smoking ceremony and developed an understanding and appreciation for the customs and heritage of the local Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung people”.

Thanks to Perpetual Trustees for their financial support in making this outing possible.



*Pictured: Above -Participants at smoking ceremony
Below -Participants holding Aboriginal flag with tour guide, Jakobi*



Victorian Tennis Awards

Blind Tennis Program Wins Award

With great excitement, Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria (BSRV) attended the Victorian Tennis Awards dinner at The Pullman, Albert Park. We were thrilled to win the award for ‘Most Outstanding Inclusion Initiative - Victorian Blind Tennis Program’. Chris Cypreou, who is a player in the blind tennis program, was also a finalist in the ‘Most Outstanding Athlete with a Disability’ category’.



Pictured: Genamarie, Adam, Maurice and Chris with trophy

The blind tennis program offers people of all ages who are blind or vision impaired safe and inclusive opportunities to participate in tennis.

With support from VicHealth, Tennis Victoria and Tennis Australia, our aim is to increase participation levels amongst people who are blind and vision impaired. The program has helped to change the lives of some participants by giving them confidence, increased fitness, a sense of independence and positivity.

Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria President, Maurice Gleeson OAM, was thrilled to receive the award on behalf of the Blind Tennis Program.

“This is wonderful acknowledgment of the blind tennis program and everyone who has contributed in making it such a success. Thank you to all our participants, volunteers, coaches and those who have supported us. Congratulations to all finalists and winners in all categories,” Mr. Gleeson said.

Active kids, happy Parents - Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp

Article by Miriam Bilander – Photos courtesy YMCA



Pictured: Damper in the making over an open fire

Finding enough activities on the school holidays to keep the kids entertained that are affordable and fun, is hard enough, but try having the added dimension of a child who is blind or autistic or both.

In early October, with the support of the YMCA, families with children who are blind or vision impaired were invited to spend the day at the Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp, 1 hour east of Melbourne.

As people arrived, the excitement was palpable and the day kicked off with a smoky fire lighting and sticky damper making. What better morning tea than hot, charcoaled damper with honey and jam!

Next, helmets were adorned as kids tried their hand at the low rope course, navigating balance beams, sea-saw overpasses, flying fox pullies and tight ropes. After a much-needed lunch break, families reconvened in the Reptile Room where they had the opportunity to touch a vast array of taxidermied animals, as well as hold live tree frogs and venomless snakes. Last, but in no means least, harnessed kids and adults made their way to a giant swing 18 metres high. This activity was certainly the most frightening, but for those who saw it through, ear-to-ear smiles were proof of a deeper confidence attained.

In reflection, a parent writes “It seriously was the best day ever. The whole family enjoyed their day and we were given so many wonderful new opportunities to try and experience”.

Thank you to the wonderful staff of YMCA and for their YMCA Open Doors funding which made this event possible.



Pictured: Child with dad at Mount Evelyn Camp during vision-impaired family day (photo courtesy of YMCA)



Pictured: Child climbing the low ropes course (photo courtesy of YMCA)

Active Teens – Market Research Project



Do you have a teen that is blind or has low vision? We need your help!

BSRV Active Teens is undertaking a market research project to better understand the needs of teenagers aged 12 to 17 years who are blind or have low vision and their families, to engage with sport and recreation.

The second part of the Research Project will take place in late-January and February. We invite parents or guardians of teens from 12 to 17 years living around Australia to fill out an online survey giving a detailed account of

their experiences of blind and low vision sport and active recreation.

The survey should only take 10 to 15 minutes to complete and all respondents will go into a draw to win one of 10 gift vouchers worth \$80! If you would like to register to take part in the survey, please email activeteens@blindsports.org.au and we will make sure to email a link directly to you.

BSRV would like to thank Quantum Market Research for their support, and the 10 families who have engaged in interviews for the first part of the research project.

A swim program that's vital for Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria participants

Article and pictures by YMCA

Pictured: Participants of the learn-to-swim program at Hawthorn Aquatic and Leisure Centre.



Hawthorn Aquatic and Leisure Centre's (HALC) learn-to-swim program for blind and vision impaired participants has been heralded a success, and will be reviewed with the aim for it to be included as part of an ongoing offering at the centre.

After winning the 2018 National Aquatic Industry Safety Award for Excellence in Aquatic Safety by a large facility, HALC successfully applied for a \$1,000 Royal Life Saving Society grant to be used towards an aquatic based program.

HALC was successful and utilised the existing relationship with Blind Sports Victoria (BSRV) to create the four-week aquatic education program for BSRV participants. It was developed for participants with varying ranges of vision impairment and ran two days per week with two sessions on each day. The program started in early June and each session included two participants and two swim teachers, ensuring that participants felt comfortable and supported, and received a personalised experience.

HALC Director Michael Williams said the pilot program had already created a significant impact with participants and instructors forming great relationships based on trust.

“Participants have already built up confidence in the water and have improved their ability to swim varying strokes, rather than just wade in the water. They really enjoy being in the pool and look forward to sessions,” he said.

“It’s provided access to participants that might not otherwise be able to join our programs without personalised coaching.”

Mr Williams added that the goals of the HALC Learn to Swim program were to build confidence, promote physical activity, build

further awareness around water safety and teach and progress swimming strokes.

Food Bringing People Together - Victoria Market Discovery Tour

Everyone’s heard of the Victoria Market in the heart of Melbourne’s CBD and most people have been there before, but how much is really understood by the blind community about its interesting history, its stalwart shop owners and its broad array of produce? These questions were answered by three dedicated tour guides when a group of thirty blind and vision impaired people with their carers and volunteers, attended the Victoria Market Discovery Tour on the 25th of October, 2019.

Split into three even groups, participants started in the meat section, met Max the 76 year old butcher and reluctantly touched a sheep’s stomach. The fish section was abuzz with noise and salty smells, as the groups learnt about rare parrot fish and oyster harvesting. In the Deli section, bellies were filled with Turkish bread, dips, barbequed kangaroo in red wine sauce, goats cheese and quince paste. Most interesting of all, was hearing about the Indigenous Finger Lime in the fruit section, worth none other than \$250 dollars per kilo and making its way into the kitchens of all the top chefs in Melbourne.

To end the experience, each individual was given a hot jam doughnut to tuck into and free Sicilian gelato tastings. Thank you to Bettina, Tours Program Coordinator, for

embracing our group and providing such a memorable experience for us all.

Pictured: Participants enjoying their hot jam donuts



Active Teens Programs

"I like meeting new people at the Active Teens football program. I like stealing the ball from my sister and I have enjoyed playing soccer with her and getting taught new things at the same time." Ben, aged 12 years.

Funded by VicHealth, the BSRV Active Teens programs are designed for teens aged 12 to 17 years, but open to anyone who is blind or has low vision.

Do you want to have fun? Meet friends? Get fit? Improve your skills? These programs are social and fun and you can work at your own pace to meet your own goals.

BSRV Active Teens aims to develop a range of programs in Melbourne at times and venues that are easier for families to access. In term 4, programs were run in Cranbourne, Kooyong, Pakenham and Werribee, and activities included tennis, football (soccer), gym activities and table tennis. These

programs joined current tennis and football programs available to teens in Richmond and North Melbourne.

What's new in 2020?

In 2020, BSRV plan to roll out some great new Active Teens programs - but we would love to hear from Victorian families to tell us what your teen wants, and where you want it!

In 2020, BSRV will be developing gymnastics programs targeting teens who are blind or have low vision in partnership with Gymnastics Victoria. This will be in addition to the current junior program at Essendon-Keilor Gymnastics Academy.

BSRV will also create brand new tennis, football and gym-based programs in new areas of Melbourne, including an ongoing tennis program in Geelong (watch this space!).

If you know a teen who is blind or has low vision and you want to discuss opportunities to engage in blind or low vision sports, please contact Allie at activeteens@blindsports.org.au, or call 9864 9643 and we will get back to you as soon as we can.



BLIND SPORTS AND RECREATION VICTORIA
ACTIVE TEENS PROGRAMS
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Higgins Community Service Award

The Higgins Community Service Awards is a wonderful opportunity to recognise the work and dedication of the unsung volunteers who go above and beyond to help others and their community group.

Community groups were invited to nominate one individual to receive a Higgins Community Service Award and Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria nominated Mr. Doug Sloan OAM.

Doug Sloan has been a valued, committed, and loyal long-term volunteer with Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria (BSRV) for over 25 years together with being the President of Blind Golf Victoria.

Congratulations Doug on your well-deserved award!



Pictured: Carolyn Clark, Katie Allen MP and Doug Sloan OAM

Volunteer Morning Tea

To thank our wonderful volunteers for all their support and assistance, BSRV held a morning tea on 19 November.

It was a wonderful opportunity to catch up with new volunteers and those who have supported us for many years. Thank you to each and every one of our volunteers as without you, we couldn't provide the many and varied sporting and recreational opportunities to people who are blind or have low vision.

Pictured: Volunteers enjoying morning tea



Our thanks to Home Carers Direct who sponsored the morning tea.

www.homecarersdirect.com.au

Disability Advisory Committee – City of Melbourne

Aside from being President of BSRV, Maurice Gleeson is a part of many committees and recently helped the Melbourne City Council Disability Advisory Committee celebrate their 20-year anniversary.

The advisory committee meet quarterly and contribute in helping making the City of Melbourne such a well reputed accessible city. With Maurice serving on this committee for the past six years, he was asked to mark this outstanding achievement with the attendance of Lord Mayor Sally Capp and Cr Pinder by cutting the cake to mark this milestone as a commemoration of their 20-year history.



Pictured: Lord Mayor Sally Capp, Maurice Gleeson OAM and Cr Pinder cutting the cake

WA to follow in Victoria's Footsteps with talk of a Blind AFL

Journalist: Chloe Meakins

The vision impaired sport community looks set for a boost as Blind AFL in Victoria has taken off, WA have recently been in discussion to start up its own team.

Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria has been offering a variety of modified sports throughout Victoria for over 41 years with the support of Blind Sports Australia.

These programs provide opportunities for people to participate at national and international competitions.

WA's international athletes Steffan Nero and Bradley Brider met with Bradd Dalezeil recently to set in motion an AFL team for WA. "You need to experience things not just imagine what they could be," said Maurice Gleeson, President of Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria.

A few years ago, a member came to Maurice asking for an AFL team-Victoria now has four successful clubs.

"It's hard to say whether the public are more aware of Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria and Blind Sports Australia, however we have definitely found within the AFL community there is an increase in awareness of those opportunities for people with vision impairment to participate in sport" said Scott Nicholas, the AFL's Disability Programs Manager.

Blind and vision impaired athletes across the country say playing sports preoccupies their minds, keeps their fitness up, expands their skills and allows them to experience new things.

National coordinator of Australian Blind Football which is part of the Football Federation Australia, Dave Connolly, says having a new sport will maintain current members along with attracting new members.

Steffan Nero and Victorian athlete Steve Obeid recently arrived home after touring England with the Australian futsal club –

Steffan being the only Western Australian representative.

Steffan says he'd like blind sports to be showcased more so that the public can see that people with disabilities can achieve things and for more vision impaired people to join.

If you, or someone you know would like to donate, volunteer or join a club contact Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria or Blind Sports Australia.

Francois verses the 'Stair Monster'!

Journalist: Chloe Meakins

Some of the things we do seem simple enough in themselves, but often they have far greater effects than just the obvious. In June this year I read in a BSRV bulletin about weekly circuit training at the Hawthorn Aquatic and Leisure Centre. At the time I was still unemployed with only very occasional casual work, and I was finding it hard to stay positive given my frequent failed attempts at finding work.

I know how physical activity can keep up motivation and overall mental wellbeing and it was affordable, so I jumped at the opportunity to participate in the weekly circuit training. There, I met the lead trainer Bob and the amazing crew of BSRV volunteers. We would typically all meet at the centre on Tuesday at 3pm where Bob would pair us up with volunteer buddies for the session who assist the blind and vision impaired participants navigating around the exercise machines and setting up the weights for the exercise. I found it very

liberating not having to worry about getting to the next machine or trying to remember the weight setting from the previous week, as the volunteers had it all handy. I soon also began personal training with Bob twice a week, as I realised how the progress in my physical fitness also motivated me in other aspects of my life to keep at the job hunting with a positive attitude.

When I heard about the Eureka Stair Climb it sounded like just the motivation I needed to set a personal goal for myself. I mentioned this to Bob at one of our sessions and was pleasantly surprised to learn that he had done it before and enjoyed it immensely, so it was a done deal. He knew this super fit crazy fitness fanatic called Adrian who would do things like sign up for a 210km cycle event on the spot, so Adrian was promptly recruited to be my guide for the event.

From the beginning of October, we started incorporating twice a week workouts on the Stair Master which I soon dubbed the "Stair Monster". It was gruelling and never got any easier, but over time I realised that it made me a much better runner up Anderson Street on Sundays with the Achilles group.

On the Saturday night before the event I felt convinced that I was not ready, typical pre-race nerves that comes with inexperience. But hey, I thought, there's many others just like myself so let's just do it. The weather on the morning was perfect and the company even better. Fellow Achilleans Kevin and Karen would start in the same wave as me with my two member crew Bob and Adrian, and before I knew it we were off. We passed a few climbers, and others passed us, but it

was such a friendly affair, and everybody just encouraged everybody else all the way up. The view at the top... I don't know much about that, but what I do know is that I very much felt like I was on top of the world when we reached the sky deck in under 20 minutes. What surprised me most was the next morning when I wasn't even sore at all. Personal trainer Bob was obviously good at his job!

A huge thanks to all our supporters, some with donations to the Fred Hollows Foundation, some stopping by to say hi at the Stair Monster and others with messages of encouragement on Facebook. You all made us feel like we were doing something worthwhile.

The cherry on top is probably the fact that I finally found fulltime work, with the only downside being that I can no longer attend the circuit training because of it. I miss the Tuesday afternoon catch-up with my fellow participants, but I will always remember how instrumental it was in getting me to the next chapter of my story. I have no doubt that the program has similar benefits for others just like myself.

Pictured: Francois (left), Kevin (2nd from right) and their guides



Volunteer in Vogue

Article by Carmel Kozolup

About 10 years ago I started Volunteering with Vision Australia. I started volunteering because of my personal experience of providing support for my father who had macular degeneration. With support from my sister and me he was able to stay active and independent at home until he was 90. When he passed away I wanted to provide that same sort of support to other people.

There are so many simple actions that most of us take for granted, but make a big difference to someone with impaired vision. So I volunteered with Vision Australia, and through this I became involved with Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria about 12 months ago.

Not being a sporty person I signed up for the walking activities. Now I go on the monthly group walks that Miriam organises and are always interesting and fun.

I did some one-on-one walking with Elsa and we discovered a shared love of music and theatre which led to us going to Morning Melodies at Hamer Hall throughout the year. We take the train to the city, enjoy the show and then stop for a light lunch and coffee before heading home on the train. It's such an easy way to travel.

The benefits are probably the same for both of us: being active, having new experiences, learning new things, meeting new people and having fun with like-minded people.

I am constantly amazed at how many different and interesting volunteering

opportunities exist. Once you get started you never know what will come your way.

Thank you Miriam and BSRV for giving me these volunteering opportunities



Pictured: Carmel & Elsa walking through Queen Victoria Market

Volunteering Opportunities

If you have ever thought about volunteering, we would love to hear from you and discuss with you the many options we have available. We are always looking for volunteers to assist us in the many sporting and recreational activities we have available.

Some of the areas BSRV and their affiliates require volunteers are:

- Achilles Melbourne (running guides)
- Blind Bowls Victoria (lawn bowls)
- Blind Golf Victoria
- Victorian Blind Indoor Bias Bowls
- Victorian Blind Cricket Association
- Victorian Goalball Association
- Victorian Vision Impaired Table Tennis
- Victorian Vision Impaired Tenpin Bowling
- Tennis

- Walking
- Swimming & fitness programs
- Soccer
- AFL
- Education Awareness to community groups and expos about BSRV
- Drivers to assist on organised outings

To find out about these and other volunteering opportunities, why not call us on 9822 8876 or email

Maddy@blindsports.org.au

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

Find us on Facebook



[Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria](https://www.facebook.com/BlindSportsRecreationVictoria)

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