

ROYAL GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND ASSOCIATION OF TASMANIA



Annual Review 2016-2017



Our Patron:

Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner, AM, Governor of Tasmania.



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Front cover image courtesy of Ian Hay.
Guests attending the 60th Anniversary
reception at Government House, April
2017.



Her Excellency, Dexter, Murphy

Annual Report 2016 - 2017

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Graduation



Morgan

p.2 President's Report

By Royal Guide Dogs Tasmania for the Blind Association of Tasmania President, Sue Shoobridge

I am pleased to present the President's Report for Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Tasmania for the year ended 30 June 2017.

This year has been one of great change for the organisation, following the decision to enter into a staged merger with VisAbility (formerly the Association for the Blind of Western Australia). This occurred through a motion to change our constitution allowing the merger, which was passed by members at a Special General Meeting on 24 June 2016. It has seen the transfer of most assets and liabilities as at 30 June 2016 to VisAbility, together with the transfer of many staff.

VisAbility now operates the brand of Guide Dogs Tasmania in Tasmania and upholds the values of that brand on an ongoing basis.

VisAbility also provides all the services previously delivered to our clients and has increased that level of service provision. It is very pleasing to note that client support hours during the past financial year have increased across all areas, with Orientation and Mobility and Activities of Daily Living totalling 2,130.5 support hours.

Particularly, our new services of Assistive Technology, Counselling and Occupational Therapy (Adults) have exceeded targets.

- The Assistive Technology service was initiated after receiving client feedback of an unmet need in this area. With the recruitment of a part time Assistive Technology Officer, services are delivered via face to face appointments, telephone and skype. Client feedback and the data shows how important this service is to clients in aiding their independence. Support of 96 hours has so far been delivered.



p.3 President's Report (continued)

- The Counselling service was also initiated in response to clients and staff identifying this unmet need. This service is mainly delivered by telephone, with some face to face consultation. As this is a very new service, to date 18.2 hours of service has been delivered, however as this service is further promoted, it will undoubtedly grow. Counselling plays a critical part in supporting clients to deal with grief associated with vision loss.
- Therapy services (Occupational Therapy - Adults) has exceeded targets and 169 hours of support has so far been delivered in this area.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plans have increased from 5 funded plans to 10 funded plans. As the age cohort for the financial year was for Tasmanians under 28 years, there will be a marked increase in NDIS plans as the scheme further rolls out in Tasmania.

VisAbility also acquired the Eastern Shore Children's Therapy Centre in February 2017. The fee-for-service Centre provides allied health services and we have strong relationships with service providers who lease rooms for therapy sessions. Over time, this Centre will further increase service delivery, as many children transition from Better Start funding to NDIS. This process will be overseen by the newly appointed Children and Youth Services (CAYS) Coordinator and Therapy Assistant. CAYS now stands at 115 active clients.

As advised last year, our Guide Dogs building at 164 Elizabeth Street, Hobart, was substantially refurbished; however, there have been a number of physical problems that have arisen since this refurbishment, which have meant that a portion of the building has had to be vacated, pending



Eastern Shore Centre



Eastern Shore Centre

p.4 President's Report (continued)

remedial work. This matter is ongoing between ourselves and the building contractors; however, for financial reporting purposes we have been required to impair the value of the building by \$320,000 and this is reflected in the Financial Report.

On behalf of the Board, I acknowledge the continuing contribution of staff and volunteers to the merged organisation, and the very important support provided by our donors, sponsors and those who have provided for us through their estates.

Vale, David Gordon

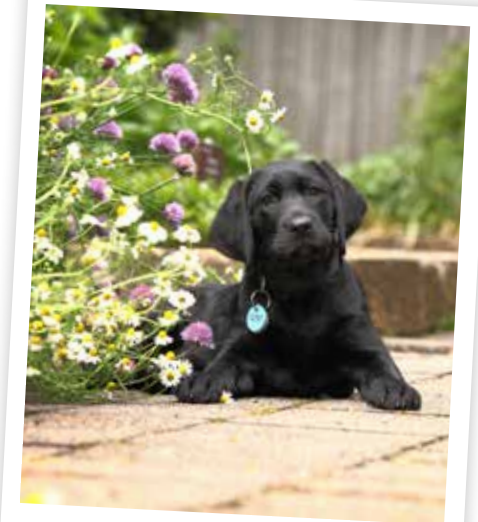
The Board wishes to acknowledge the sad passing of past Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Tasmania Vice-President, Mr David Gordon.

David was a Director for 15 years and contributed with his passion and commitment to ensuring the lives of Tasmanians with low vision/blindness were at the forefront of Board decisions. David was well known in the disability sector holding positions with Access Advisory Committees with local councils, coordinator of the 1998 Southern Cross Games for visually impaired children and was also strongly involved in a number of other volunteer roles in the community.

David's contributions to the Board and advocacy for Tasmanians with disability were highly valued.



Benji



Billie



Murphy

p.5 President's Report (continued)

Board of Directors

Sue Shoobridge

President
FCPA, FAICD, Retired
Director since 2013

Scott Marston

Vice President
Deputy CEO, Tas TAFE
Director since 2012

David Donato

Financial Planner, Strategic Financial Planning. ADFS
Director since 2012

Elaine Guy

Finance Manager, Contact Electrical Pty Ltd.
Honorary Life Member, Guide Dogs Tasmania
Director since 2011

Andrew Hogan

Optometrist, Optomeyes Holdings (OPSM Tasmania)
National President – Optometry Australia
Director since 2014

Debbie Schaffer OAM

Chair of VisAbility
Representative Director nominated by VisAbility
Director since July 2016

Sue Shoobridge,
President
Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Tasmania



P.6 Guide Dog Services

This year, we welcomed the creation of a Guide Dog Services Coordinator role in Tasmania. While the position reports to the Chief Operations Officer based in Perth, Western Australia, it enables elements of strategic and operational decision making regarding the Puppy Development and Guide Dog programs to occur here in Tasmania.

It should be noted that for the duration of this year, the Coordinator continued as the sole qualified instructor in the State, as has been the case since 2015.

The development of this role readies the Guide Dog Services department for growth in resources in the next financial year. We look forward to extending services in the North of the state, providing much needed administrative support, and sustainability through the introduction of a cadet program.

2016-17 at a glance

- Pups intake: 6
- Pups reclassified: 3
- Guide Dogs placed: 2
- Companion/Therapy Dogs placed: 1
- Guide Dogs Retired: 1
- Client Information Sessions: 13



Morgan & Murphy



Billie & Benji



Kirsty & Kobie

p.7 Guide Dog Services (continued)

Pre-Guide Dog Program

This year, we developed and introduced a new program for people preparing to get their first Guide Dog. The NDIS funded program provided training to our first potential young adult handler, teaching her prerequisite skills for working with a Guide Dog in the future.



Nicole with Taylor

For clients that are keen to proceed to a Guide Dog, but not quite ready or uncertain if they are able to commit to the long term program, this package helps them develop essential skills such as leadership, understanding of dog behaviour, dog welfare and care, and gives a clear overview of using a Guide Dog as a mobility tool.

The program proved a successful stepping stone for the client, Nicole, in her journey from long cane to Guide Dog mobility.

“Working with a dog like Taylor made me improve my overall confidence, independence and mobility,” Nicole said. “It’s definitely a big step up from a cane, as it will encourage me to be more community orientated.”

Volunteer Mentor Program

We also developed a volunteer mentor program to provide further support to our large team of committed Puppy Development volunteers. In particular, the introduction of volunteer mentors assisted those Puppy Raisers and Boarders in the north who are located further away from the Coordinator.

Four experienced Puppy Raisers were selected to become volunteer mentors. This group provides a huge support network to other team members, and hosts social outings and informal training sessions such as community walks, free-runs and coffee catch-ups. They also provide our staff with extra hands and help at formal group training sessions. The feedback since introducing this program has been positive and volunteers are feeling more supported throughout the program.

P.8 Guide Dog Services (continued)

Southern Hero Program

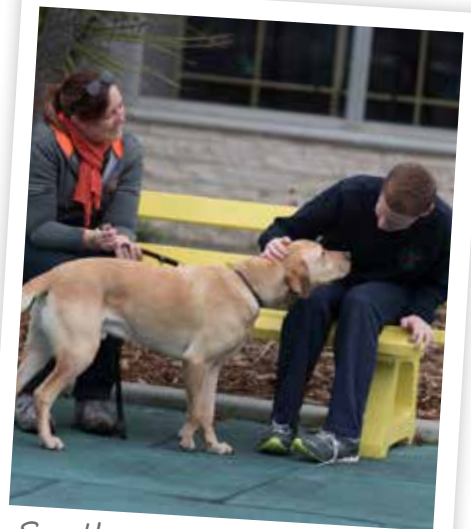
Through the “Southern Hero Program”, two Guide Dogs in Training have been visiting the Southern Support School, located in Howrah, on a fortnightly basis. Designed to give the students an opportunity to gain hands-on experience with dogs, the Program is also allowing students to develop skills that will help them contribute to their local community.

Principal of Southern Support School, Kate Wilson, was excited about the partnership and the longer term benefits it will have on the students: “Seventy per cent of our students are living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, which can make interacting with other children very challenging. Dogs have such a wonderful effect on people, and have proven to make a significant difference to children with a disability through their calming influence and ability to facilitate social interactions.”

It’s not just Southern Support School that gained benefits from this new partnership. For us at Guide Dogs Tasmania, it was a fantastic opportunity for our Guide Dogs in Training to further develop their socialisation skills. This is particularly important for those dogs that are unsuitable for guiding work and reclassified as Therapy or Companion Dogs.

The Southern Hero Program gives the dogs a wider variety of social interactions. Southern Support School provides a great environment for our dogs; they’re being exposed to something different than their daily lives, which makes them more adaptable. What’s even better is that through the Program, we’re able to start changing lives before our dogs have even graduated.

The visits took place with Guide Dogs in Training Archie and Taylor.



Southern Support School



Southern Support School

p.9 Guide Dog Services (continued)

Vanessa and Yuri – From Pinball to gliding

When 2016 started, Vanessa Ransley of Hobart was pushing everything uphill. But thanks to a loveable rogue named Yuri, that's not how the year ended. Guide Dog Yuri made everything better and brighter:

“When I'm with a Guide Dog, the world opens up before me. It feels like everything is moving out of my way, and the dog is guiding me through it. I'm gliding, not fighting through the journey; it feels seamless.

You're no longer a pinball bumping into things. It's actually a really nice way of travelling.

As a music teacher, I often work across two schools, and there are a lot of meetings and professional development activities over the two sites. A Guide Dog means I can do all these things more easily. I am able to negotiate my way through the hustle and bustle of a busy school environment far more safely and efficiently.

Guide Dogs don't help me teach; but they do get me from A to B without stress, which means I can concentrate on the actual teaching.

Yuri's very cute. He collects his toys to show visitors and he just wants to be near me. It's very sweet. I knew all this when we met, but there was one moment during our training together when it just clicked. I knew we were right for each other.

There was a sea of people around the entrance to the Cat and Fiddle Arcade. So many people – the perfect environment for a pinball! I tried to keep my voice calm:

‘Ok... Lots of people, but ok... We can do this... Keep going... And we made it through. And I remember thinking ‘I'm going to love this dog’.



p.10 Guide Dog Services (continued)

Yuri took the pressure off that day, and he continues to do that every day. I can enjoy the journey with him, not just survive it. Yuri has made a huge difference. Things are attainable. If I do feel a little anxious, I just pat Yuri and it is ok. He is soothing. And he doesn't want much in return; just food, love and care."

And he gets those in spades!



Vanessa and Yuri

p.11 Raising our Profile

With a focus on the way our dogs change lives, Guide Dogs Tasmania secured a remarkable level of media coverage throughout the year. Based on our media monitoring reporting, we pitched and secured coverage that reached an audience of 1,263,600 viewers and readers. The advertising space rate equivalent, or what this reach would cost us in advertising, was \$82,520. This does not include social media or website engagement, nor the in-kind advertising of a fully wrapped Metro Tasmania bus valued at \$35,000, which promoted access rights for Guide Dog handlers from April 2016 to January 2017.

Some of the media highlights from the year included:

Most Trusted Charity 2017 – 5th year in a row! May 22, 2017.

WIN News, Southern Cross News.

Guide Dogs Australia has just been announced as Australia's Most Trusted Charity Brand, maintaining their exclusive hold on the title for a fifth consecutive year. Guide Dogs received this honor as part of the annual Reader's Digest Trusted Brands survey, which added the charity category in 2013.



Phil and Yoda walk together - 21 May 2017 and 12 Feb 2017

Southern Cross News, Mercury.

At the starting line of the 2017 City to Casino Fun Run. An interview with Phil Menzie who is embarking on a series of fun runs this year, to raise awareness and much needed funds for the organisation that has given him so much.



p.12 Raising our Profile (continued)

60th Anniversary/International Guide Dog Day – 26 April-1 May 2017

Hobart Observer, Eastern Shore Sun, Southern Cross News, Examiner, Mercury, WIN News, ABC Radio.

Government House opens its doors to two legged and four legged friends this week, as Guide Dogs Tasmania celebrates 60 years on International Guide Dog Day. Volunteer Puppy Raisers, boarders and current pups will be presented with a special commemorative patch for the pups' learner coats, by Her Excellency, The Governor of Tasmania. Over 250 invited guests will be treated to a 'pup parade'.



Guide Dogs Tasmania's first Graduation Ceremony – 22 November 2016

ABC Northern Tasmania, Mercury, Southern Cross News, WIN News.

Three new heroes officially graduated today at Guide Dogs Tasmania's first ever graduation ceremony. Guests heard from Puppy Raisers about the personality of the cute canines, and new handlers Phil Menzie, Sara Waitzer and Vanessa Ransley spoke of the difference the dogs were making to their lives already. Guide Dogs Yuri, Yoda and Pepper will keep their handlers safe and independent for the next 8 – 9 years.



p.13 Raising our Profile (continued)

Guide Dog Tags Stolen from Garden of Memories – 10 August 2016

Mercury, Southern Cross News, 7HOFM, Examiner, 7LA.

“We are shocked that someone would want to take these tags from the water feature of the new Garden of Memories – a memorial garden to honour passed Guide Dogs and the service they provided. The tags serve no purpose than to honour those dogs and we would love to see them returned.”

Plea for return of guide dog tags

GUIDE Dogs Tasmania has called for the return of five memorial tags that were removed from a memorial in Hobart last week.

Five memorial Guide Dog tags, honouring deceased dogs, were noticed missing from the water feature at the Garden of Memories on Elizabeth St last Friday.

The garden is a space for people to reflect on the service of Guide Dogs, with a new tag added each time one of the dogs dies.

Guide Dogs Tasmania intends on paying to replace the tags but has asked for them to be returned to its office, even if it is under the condition of anonymity.



Missing tags

Puppy love this Valentine's Day

Enjoy some puppy love this Valentine's Day and meet Guide Dog Tasmania's (GDT) Ambassador Dog, Shook, at Channel Court Shopping Centre on Sunday, February 14.

GDT is the only organisation in Tasmania training Guide Dogs for people who are blind or vision impaired. It costs over \$20,000 to get each pup into its Guide Dog harness, and that's why the organisation is always looking to seek their hearts on February 14 by making a small donation or buying a plush Guide Dog for someone special, or signing up to their regular dog program, Puppy Love.

The Frizzle team Guide Dogs Tasmania used at their Valentine's Day is often commensurate, it doesn't have to be all about how much you spend on animals.

The happy donation or buying a plush Guide Dog on Valentine's Day, you can still give someone a special gift while knowing that you're helping to change someone's life.

“Already this year, 12 Tasmanians have requested a Guide Dog.”

“We want to ensure we can keep up with the demand and provide many more of these people with the service they require, but we can only do this with the public's help.”

Dexter is a gorgeous 6-year-old Labrador who has been trained as GDT's public relations dog, will be available for cuddles and photos from 11am to 5pm on Sunday, February 14.

You can find Dexter in Channel Court Shopping Centre between the Kingston Hotel and Townsley Way Cafe. To donate to GDT online, visit guide-dogs.com.au or to help out.



Community Fundraising



Dexter says thank you!



Christmas Event



WHAT A TEAM – Above, Karen Hesse with trainee Guide Dog Rode at Mount Field National Park. Left, Governor Kate Warner (left) and her aide-camp Flight Lieutenant Catherine Saunders meet Karen and one of her canine charges.

Volunteer week



International Guide Dog Day

New canine hero set to make positive change

STUDENT at Hobart's Southern Support School has been named the new canine hero set to make positive change.

It is not just the school that has granted the honor, but the entire community.

The Guide Dog Program, an organization that trains guide dogs for people with vision impairment, has named the dog as its new canine hero.

Craig Fife, the school's principal, said the dog's arrival was a significant moment for the school.

“This dog is a real hero,” Fife said. “It will help a lot of people who are blind or vision impaired to live their lives more fully.”

The dog, named after the school's founder, will be used to help students with vision impairment to navigate the school grounds.

Fife said the dog's arrival was a significant moment for the school, and he hoped it would inspire other students to make positive changes in their own lives.

“We are very proud of this dog,” Fife said. “It is a true hero, and we are excited to have it at the school.”

Southern Support School

p.14 Our Volunteers

Thirteen Volunteers in Hobart and Launceston regularly clean and repair collection dogs, place collection dogs, and man 'pup-up' merchandise stall and community events. This is a combined average of 75 hours per week, or the equivalent of two full-time positions!

In the Puppy Development Program, 39 families supported our pups and training dogs, 15 in a full time 24/7 Puppy Raising role, and the remainder in a part time boarding capacity. The program is also supported by four volunteer mentors who provide extra support and time across the year. Guide Dog Services was also supported by two volunteers performing general admin duties providing an estimated 260 hours across the year.

Some of our wonderful volunteers include the Hosie family, who were part of the first ever group of Puppy Raisers in Tasmania 20 years ago with pup Duncan, and they have remained connected with the Puppy Development Program ever since.

There are also volunteers like Elizabeth Swingler, who not only comes into the Hobart office every Friday morning to count coins, pack envelopes, and do whatever tasks she's asked to do; she also collects and sorts stamps at home so that they can be exchanged for money. A modest, yet steady stream of income is the result. Who would have thought there would be a connection between philately and Labradors?

We sincerely thank volunteers like photographer Kirsty Pilkington, who donates her time and



Karen Hosie



Elizabeth Swingler



Sara and Mary Dane, with Mr Wuppy

p.15 Our Volunteers (continued)

expertise. And Sara Dane, who some months after commencing with Guide Dogs, roped her parents Peter and Mary in to helping as well. And volunteers like Linda Pridham, Peter Green, and Aniko Taylor, who have been such stalwarts of the Launceston Puppy Raising group.

These are just a few fine examples of our wonderful volunteers who have supported us this year. To do this is selfless and inspiring.

Thank you all.



Aniko Taylor



Peter Green



*Kirsty Pilkington
(and Kirsty Pup!)*

p.16 Our Supporters

We are so grateful to the organisations and individuals who have provided such generosity this year. Because of this support, we have brought six puppies into the program, placed two Guide Dogs and placed one Therapy Dog.

It certainly takes a community to raise and train each pup into a wonderful dog that will change the life of a Tasmanian. Whether someone places a coin in a collection dog, returns a Puppy Bank, organises a community fundraiser, donates online, is a member of Puppy Love, or sponsors a Guide Dog, we are truly grateful.

We are also thankful for the generosity of those Tasmanians who have left a special gift to us in their Will. These gifts signify a lasting contribution to the future of our children and the generations that follow.

Our Local Corporate Supporters

The generous support of organisations, foundations and community groups across Tasmania allow us to provide the gift of independence to Tasmanians living with disabilities.

Thank you to the following organisations that provided financial, in-kind, advisory, and material support to make our vision a reality.

- Rappaw Prints
- Metro Tasmania
- VetCentre Montrose
- Specsavers
- Fairbrothers Foundation
- Bruce Wall Trust
- RF & RF Cane Charitable Trust
- Commercial Travellers Association
- RACT
- Harcourts Foundation
- Wilson Homes
- Village Cinemas
- Tasmanian Government - DHHS



p.17 Our Supporters (continued)

Guide Dogs Australia Partners

Guide Dogs Tasmania belongs to the Guide Dog Australia alliance, and works collaboratively with the five other Guide Dog schools across Australia.

Our collaboration ensures a high standard of service delivery across the nation. Thank you to the national partners in 2016/17 who supported this alliance and allow us to provide life-changing services to people across Australia.

- Mars - Advance
- Coles
- Woolworths
- Merial
- Idexx Laboratories
- Joseph Lyddy Pet Indulgence

