

Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Tasmania

Annual Review 2017-18



President's Report

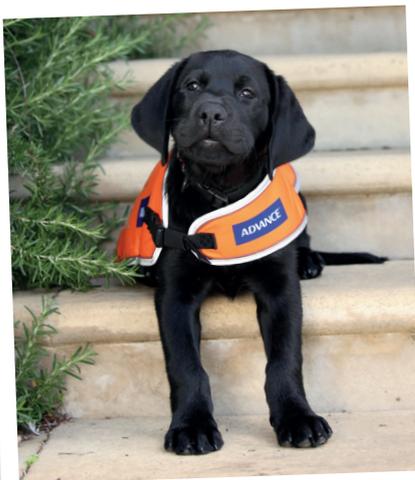
By Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Tasmania President, Sue Shoobridge.

I am pleased to present the President's Report for Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Tasmania (RGDBAT) for the year ended 30 June 2018.

This year has been an exciting year where we have seen some significant growth in our service offerings, as we continued the staged merger with VisAbility Ltd. The rollout of the NDIS across Tasmania remains a significant driver for change and we have needed to adapt and shape the way we work to meet the needs of the clients we serve.

Service offerings have grown in line with our strategic direction, particularly in the area of children's therapy, occupational therapy, assistive technology and counselling services. It is also exciting to see our Guide Dog services expand, with the greatest number of puppies entering our program since the commencement of the program, as well as for the first time in our history, the training of dogs in Launceston for those clients in the North who need them.

Our building at 164 Elizabeth Street, Hobart, I am pleased to report, is now fully functional. Staff, volunteers, clients and visitors alike truly appreciate returning to their "home" base.



Vinnie

As we continue to adapt and change to meet the new world in which we operate, I would like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the VisAbility management and staff for their continued hard work, energy, commitment and dedication. I would also like to express my gratitude to our volunteers; without their support and time donated the provision of services to our clients would not be possible.

A special heartfelt thank you to all our benefactors, donors and sponsors. It is the generous ongoing support we receive through the Tasmanian community that allows us to support those that need it most, and for that we are truly grateful.

Sue Shoobridge
President

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Sue Shoobridge

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Director since 2011

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Director since 2014

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Chair of VisAbility since 2011
VisAbility Board member since 2016
Representative Director July 2016 to June 2018

Kym Georgiou

Speech Pathologist, Churchill Scholar and published researcher
VisAbility Board member since 2015, Vice-Chair 2016
Representative Director since June 2018

Our Patron

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

Our Journey 2017-18

2017-18 was a big year for Guide Dogs Tasmania, with new puppies, new staff members and new events all resulting in an exciting year for the organisation.

Guide Dogs

In the Guide Dog Services department, the addition of a Cadet Guide Dog Mobility Instructor resulted in more dogs being trained during the year, quicker services to clients, and the expansion of services within our Companion and Therapy Dog Program.

During the year we welcomed 11 new pups onto our program; almost double the number we took on the year before, bringing the total number of dogs on the training program to 14. Thanks to the Blind Foundation New Zealand, we were able to source a more continuous supply of pups that will help ensure we keep up with the demand of Guide Dogs in Tasmania well into the future.

To support the additional puppies joining the program, we had an increase in Puppy Development volunteers with 23 new families coming on board. We also saw a high retention rate of current volunteers at 86%.

During the year we placed four Guide Dogs with clients across Tasmania, along with one Companion Dog in the North. Our total number of working Guide Dogs at the end of 2017–18 was 21, an increase of three from the previous year. We're excited to see this number steadily grow over the next few years to reflect the recent growth in puppy numbers.

Due to the growth in the Guide Dog department, we were able to hold our first Test Drive a Guide Dog Day for young Tasmanians living with vision impairment. This full day, hands-on workshop was a huge success, generating several Guide Dog referrals and promoting our services through the extensive media coverage on the day. Out of the six participants, aged 14–21 years, 66% have gone on to pursue a Guide Dog as a mobility option.



Derek

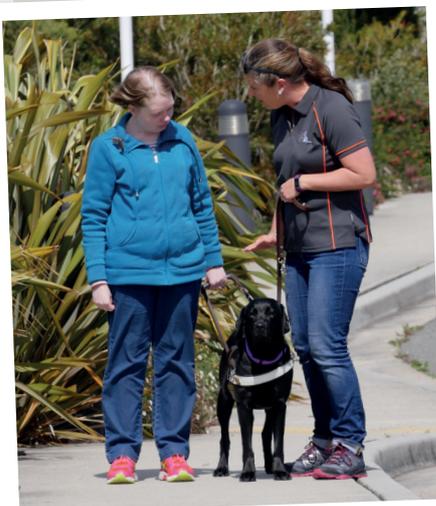
Client Services

Taking a look at services offered through VisAbility, we were pleased to see an increase in client support hours during the past financial year across all areas, totalling 2,782 support hours.

Our Assistive Technology service continued to grow with 246 hours of support delivered to clients across the state. With services delivered via face to face appointments, telephone and skype, client feedback has shown us how important this service is to clients in aiding their independence.

Our other relatively new services of Counselling and Support and Occupational Therapy also saw an increase, with 32 hours of Counselling delivered (almost double the previous year) and 805 hours of Occupational Therapy delivered to adult clients.

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Test Drive a
Guide Dog Day

Our Journey 2017-18

Continued...

This was more than four times the previous year, and accounted for the majority of client support hours delivered in Tasmania. To top off a big year in service delivery, staff also delivered 737 hours of Low Vision Services and 469 hours of Orientation and Mobility to clients across the state.

Our Children's Therapy Centre continued to provide vital services to Tasmanian children and their families, with 494 hours of client support delivered. We're looking forward to being able to grow this number in the future as more children transition to NDIS funding.

Engagement and Development

Our Engagement and Development team raised \$650,000 in donations and bequests across the year, to support our Guide Dog services. Part of this revenue came from our iconic Collection Dog program, which continued to perform outstandingly thanks to the steady stream of donations coming in from the 1,983 sites hosting Collection Dogs.

The Department went through a restructure at the start of the financial year, with the result being the creation of three new roles and one new full time staff member. With more resources, we were able to hold our first Street Appeal in November 2017. This brought in just over \$13,000 from generous Tasmanians on the day.

Assisting staff were our dedicated volunteers, who were vital to the success of many fundraising events. We also had great support from our corporate volunteers, who contributed a total of 80 hours during the year. In fact, across the whole organisation, volunteers contributed an amazing 139,776 hours.

That concludes the highlights from 2017-18; a year of growth and new opportunities in many areas of the organisation.

Let's bring on an even better 2018-19!



Thanks to the following sponsors:

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Guide Dog sponsors:

- Mrs Bridget Stott
 - Guide Dog pup Derek
 - Guide Dog pup Gemma
- Mrs Barbara Self and Tony and Felicity Walch
 - Guide Dog pup Frankie
- Midway Point Seniors Group
 - Guide Dog pup Elly

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