

The Australian Childhood Vision Impairment Register

September 2010 Newsletter

★ Welcome

Hello everyone – here is our third newsletter for the Australian Childhood Vision Impairment Register. We hope that 2010 is progressing well for you and your family.

This newsletter will provide you with information on our latest findings from the Register, some tips for attending eye appointments, a list of useful online resources, and other news.

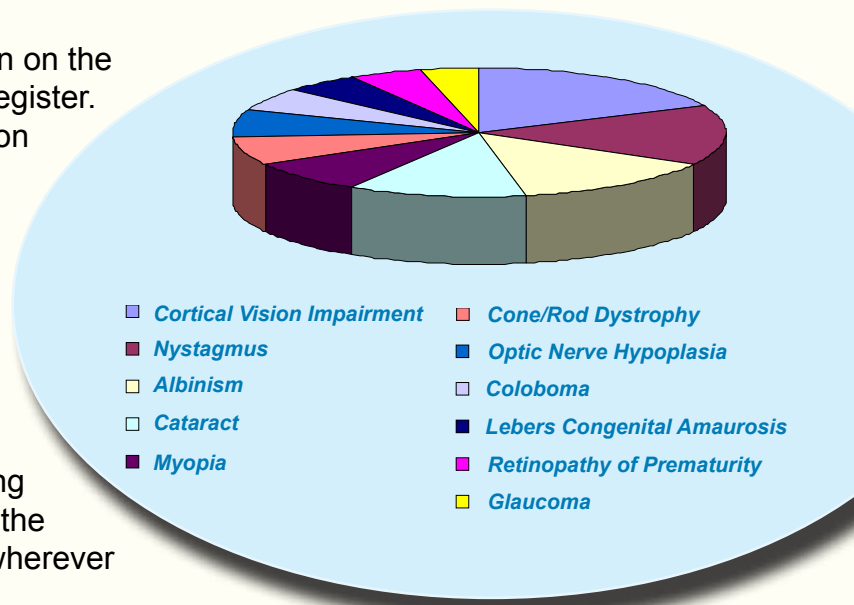
Please remember to pass on the details of the Register to families you know who have a child living with vision impairment. We have met many lovely children and their families so far and it would be great to include as many children as we can.

Best Wishes from Sue Silveira and Jill Watson

Whats happening with the Register?

We now have about 220 wonderful children on the Australian Childhood Vision Impairment Register. It is interesting to see that the most common conditions these children live with have changed slightly since our last newsletter.

Cortical Vision Impairment is by far our most common condition, but conditions like cataract and coloboma are now on the most common list. Hopefully we are now reaching a wider group of families, who are choosing to join. We are still having challenges with letting people know about the Register so please help spread the word wherever you can.



Online Parent Forum

You might remember from previous newsletters that we have been building an online forum for parents of registered children, to meet and talk to one another. We have already surveyed a small number of parents who were quite positive about the idea - thanks very much to those who responded, we have used your ideas and feedback. This online survey is still open, please visit the following to complete the survey and/or make a comment:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/N8TYXRB>

The objective of the Online Parent Forum will be to form a network for parents of registered children. It will be possible to view the webpage attached to the Forum, but only our parents will be given access to join the discussion areas. The Forum will also be a place to share resources and ideas.

If you would like to become involved, please contact Jill Watson so she can send you an invitation to join. You can email Jill using the following address: jill.watson@ridbc.org.au, or call on (02) 9872 0303.

We would like to be able to offer a similar online forum to our registered children. You would be aware that children need greater levels of protection online.

We hope to partner with the StarLight Foundation to provide a secure and safe environment for kids to talk to one another.



Tips for Attending Eye Appointments

Attending eye appointments can be tricky for you and your child. Here are some tips that you might like to use to make the visit enjoyable and useful for you, your child and the eye health professional (EHP).

It's not always possible to get an appointment at the best time of the day for you and your child, but try if you can. Pick the time of day your child is most alert and happy. Appointments will usually take a few hours - you might not be told this when you book in. The time you spend at the eye appointment might also impact on your availability to pick up other children from child-care & school – it might help to make alternative arrangements for the day.



Try to take the usual provisions – nappies, food, drink etc. You may find the eye clinic has a website that you can check prior to attending which will give you location maps, details of the clinic times & other useful information. The Children’s Hospital, Westmead has a “Visit to the Eye Clinic” story you can read at: http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/eye_clinic/.

Children with VI may not be interested in any of the standard vision tests available in an eye clinic. So it will help the EHP if you can report what you have noticed about your child, the way they use their vision & what you think they can see. Remember you know your child better than any one else and you are the best person to explain about your child’s vision and how they use it. To prepare you for the visit, consider how you would answer some of the following questions which will help the EHP draw conclusions about your child & their vision.

Does your child:

- See better under certain lighting conditions?
- See better at certain times of the day?
- See better when sitting a certain way?
- See better when they are in a quiet environment?
- Make eye contact with you?
- Look at you in the face?
- Look at objects and visually track them?
- Have a preference for a certain colour?
- Reach accurately to objects they want?
- Respond better to objects close up rather than far away?
- Need time to see an object?
- Seem to see better at some times than others, e.g. worse when tired or unwell?

If you have questions you would like to ask, write them down before you go and ask the EHP at the eye appointment. This will help you remember what you would like to find out. Try to find out if anyone in your family or your partner’s family has vision impairment. It is helpful to be able to tell the EHP this information.

Write down all of your child’s health conditions, medications & doses & take this with you to give to the EHP for you child’s medical record.

If your child has a favourite toy or object that they like to look at, take this with you to the eye appointment. The favourite object can be used when testing your child. If your child has specific needs such as feeding, find out ahead of time if the clinic can help provide facility to help with this, e.g. appropriate feeding area.

If your child is given eye drops to dilate their pupils they may be uncomfortable in bright light, especially outside for the trip home – remember to bring a hat and sunglasses for your child to wear on the way home.

Sometimes it is necessary for the EHP to refer your child for more specialised testing which is done at another time. This can help reveal more information to reach a diagnosis. It can also help track your child's vision. The EHP may also suggest that your child will benefit from low vision support services – these can make a big difference to your child's quality of life and skill in using what vision they have.

All the best for the eye appointment!

Useful Online Resources

The following list of useful online resources has been compiled by Michelle Knight and Mike Corrigan, Vision Ed, RIDBC, in June 2010. They offer the following advice:

“Because links often change, this list will almost certainly be out of date in a reasonably short time. When you find a link has changed, update it in this list and update your Favourites.

“When you listen to audio or watch video on the Internet, you may be downloading at a significant rate. When listening or watching material on the Internet from home, make sure you don't exceed the usage your plan allows. “

“It's not advised that you watch or listen from work unless you have checked that your network has the capacity to accommodate the download you need without adversely affecting others. “



Important Note about the Following Resources: The following list of products and resources is not an exhaustive list.

No approval or endorsement is given or implied by RIDBC to any product, manufacturer or supplier whose name appears on the following list. Due care and consideration should be given to the selection of equipment.

If you add or change information in this list, change the date in the heading and in the file name so you can easily identify your latest copy.

Alternative Format Publications

Audible.com

audio books for purchase

<http://www.audible.com>

Assistive Media

source of free audio article downloads

<http://www.assistivemedia.org/>

Audio-Read

Books In the Sky recreational reading

<http://www.audio-read.com.au>

Project Gutenberg

source of free E-texts:

<http://www.gutenberg.org>

Vision Australia Information Library Service:

<http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/info.aspx?page=514>



Australian Software and Equipment Suppliers

HumanWare

- BrailleNote family of products
- ZoomText screen magnification system
- Trekker and Trekker Breeze GPS systems
- Victor Reader Stream for reading a wide range of audio formats
- A range of CCTVs.

<http://www.humanware.com/en-australia/home>

Quantum Technology

- Master distributor for Freedom Scientific Products including JAWS, MAGic, Wynn and Pac Mate
- Producers of the Mountbatten Braille
- Producers of Jot-A-Dot
- a wide range of CCTVs
- ClearNote

<http://www.quantumtechnology.com.au>

Spectronics

Inclusive learning technology:

<http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/>

Vision Australia

also supplies a wide range of access technology

<http://www.visionaustralia.org.au>

Visionext

Suppliers of Mimio:

<http://www.visionext.com.au/page.asp?id=238>

Early Childhood Games and Books

All Abilities Playground

A website is an initiative of the Gold Coast City Council supported by the Department of Communities (Disability Services) and created by Sonokids Australia. It is an online, interactive website that has devised games that are fun and accessible. You will find games that can be used by children who are blind. This website is relatively new so watch out for new developments!

<http://www.allabilitiesplayground.net.au>

cBeebies

The cBeebies website is part of the BBC website. It contains games, books and other resources for children and their families. The games are divided into sections, including switch accessible and keyboard accessible.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies>

ChooseItMaker Shared Activities (part of Inclusive Technology)

Activities to use with ChooseItMaker. Switch accessible.

<http://www.chooseitmaker2.com/shareactivities/shareactivitiesplayer.htm>

SwitchItMaker Shared Activities (part of Inclusive Technology)

Activities to be used with SwitchItMaker. Switch accessible.

<http://www.switchitmaker2.com/shareactivities/shareactivitiesplayer.htm>

Gary Bishop website

Includes HarkTheSound, an accessible game for children who are blind.

UNC Games:

<http://wwwx.cs.unc.edu/~gb/wp/research/>

HelpKidzLearn

Excellent website with a range of online activities for children with low vision.

<http://helpkidzlearn.com>

iBoardPlayer

Activities based on interactive whiteboards, however can also be used for children with low vision. They are clear and simple.

<http://iboardplayer.com/player/>

Online Interactive Story by Guide Dogs

<http://lookoutmarcus.com.au/meet-marcus>

Papunet Games

Games that may be suitable for some children with low vision, e.g. jigsaw puzzles and memory games.

<http://www.papunet.net/games>

Priory Woods School

Accessible education resources and games. Great resources that can be downloaded.

<http://www.priorywoods.middlesbrough.sch.uk/>

Starfall

This website contains games and books. The activities are all based on literacy.

<http://www.starfall.com/>

Sonokids

Games centred around sound and music, all for free

<http://www.sonokids.com>



Tar Heel Reader

A collection of free, easy-to-read, and accessible books on a wide range of topics. The books may be downloaded as slide shows in PowerPoint, Impress, or Flash format. Each book can be speech enabled and accessed using multiple interfaces, including touch screens

<http://tarheelreader.org>

Spoonbill Software

Freeware and games for sighted and vision impaired/blind players

<http://www.omninet.net.au/~irhumph/index.htm>

Special Education Technology. British Columbia

Accessible Books for free

<http://www.setbc.org/setbc/accessiblebooks/freebooksforyou.html>

Single Switch Games

Accessible Games Software

<http://www.arcess.com/index.htm>

Audio and Story Books

StoryLineOnline

A collection of books told by volunteers from the Actors Guild in the USA. Great collection, but be careful of your Internet plan!

www.storylineonline.net

Storynory

Collection of audio books.

<http://storynory.com/>

BookPop

Collection of audio books.

<http://www.bookpop.com/>

KiddieRecords

Collection of audio books which have been taken from records in the mid 40's to earlier '50s.

<http://www.kiddierecords.com/>

Freebies, Add-ons and in-built options

WordTalk

Free text-to-speech plug-in for Microsoft Word

<http://www.wordtalk.org.uk/Home/>

TechDis Toolbar

Reading and spell checking support on many web pages when working in the most commonly used browsers

<http://www.lexdis.org.uk/technology/112>

Note Takers

BrailleNote family from HumanWare

<http://www.humanware.com>

PAC Mate from Freedom Scientific

<http://www.freedomscientific.com>

Orientation and Mobility

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

<http://www.guidedogs.com.au>

K-Sonar from Bay Advanced Technologies LTD

<http://www.batforblind.co.nz/>

Miniguide from GDP Research

<http://www.gdp-research.com.au/>

StreetTalk from Freedom Scientific

<http://www.freedomscientific.com>

Trekker and Trekker Breeze from Humanware

<http://www.humanware.com>



Reading Systems

Finereader from ABBYY Systems

<http://www.abbyy.com>

OpenBook from Freedom Scientific

<http://www.freedomscientific.com>

Kurzweil 3000 from Kurzweil Educational Systems

<http://www.kurzweilededu.com/>

Research and Resources

Adobe Accessibility Centre

Includes guidelines on making accessible PDF and Flash

<http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/>

Apple Accessibility Webpage

<http://www.apple.com/accessibility>

American Foundation for the Blind

Includes research and JVIB (Journal of Vision Impairment and Blindness)

<http://www.afb.org/>

American Printing House for the Blind

Games and other products

<http://www.aph.org/>

Edsoft

Education software including typing programs

<http://www.edsoft.com.au>

Equal Access to Software and Information EASI

Education resources and webinars (webinars are seminars conducted over the Internet)

<http://people.rit.edu/easi/>

In Touch

A program about vision impairment related issues from the BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/factual/intouch.shtml>

Microsoft Accessibility page

<http://www.microsoft.com/enable>

Novitatech

Access technology and related information

<http://www.novitatech.org.au>

Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC)

<http://www.ridbc.org.au>

Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc

Organizations dealing with issues relating to access to print material and online information

<http://www.e-bility.com/roundtable/>

Royal National Institute of Blind People

Products, research, information and links to other vision-related organizations around the world

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/code/InternetHome.hcsp>

South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment (SPEVI)

Information and resources for South Pacific educators including a mailing list

<http://www.e-bility.com/spevi>

Texas School for the Blind and Vision Impaired

<http://www.tsbvi.org/>

Vision Australia

<http://www.visionaustralia.org.au/>

Screen Magnification Software

MAGic from Freedom Scientific

<http://www.freedomscientific.com>

System Access from Serotek

<http://www.serotek.com>

System Access To Go

Free online screen reader from Serotek

<http://www.satogo.com>

VoiceOver in the Apple operating system

<http://www.apple.com/accessibility>

ZoomText Magnifier/Reader from Aisquared

<http://www.aisquared.com>

Screen Readers

JAWS

Screen reader from Freedom Scientific

<http://www.freedomscientific.com>

System Access

Screen reader from Serotek

<http://www.serotek.com>

System Access To Go

Free online screen reader from Serotek

<http://www.satogo.com>

NonVisual Desktop Access (NVDA)

Free open source screen reader for the Windows operating system

<http://www.nvda-project.org/>

VoiceOver

Screen reader in the Apple operating system

<http://www.apple.com/accessibility>

Window-Eyes

Screen reader from Gwmicro

<http://www.gwmicro.com>

Whiteboard Capture Technology

Mimio

<http://www.mimio.com>

Omnipage 17 from Nuance:

<http://www.nuance.com/>



Other things you might find useful...

The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) have produced a series of booklets called “Understanding Vision Impairment” for parents and professionals who work with children who have vision impairment. These booklets aim to promote an understanding of key issues relating to functional vision and communication. The resources have been developed by Orthoptists and Speech Pathologists who work with children who have vision impairment and additional needs. There are currently 3 booklets available in the series, with more to come on near vision, assessment, ocular conditions and cortical vision impairment.

Understanding Vision Impairment: Visual Acuity Simulation

This booklet aims to provide assistance to professionals and families in developing their understanding of what their child can see. The simulations demonstrate the impact of environmental features, such as glare, colour contrast and size. The photographs provide an approximate simulation of different levels of reduced visual acuity.



Understanding Vision Impairment: Vision Impairment and Sign Language

This booklet aims to provide information for families and professionals about the impact of reduced visual acuity on the visibility of sign language. It provides photographs of individual signs viewed at simulated levels of visual acuity as well as the effect of lighting, contrast, and distance.

Understanding Vision Impairment: Vision Impairment and Picture Symbols for Communication

This booklet aims to provide parents and professionals with information that will assist to decide if picture symbols are a visually appropriate communication option for their child or whether alternate modes of communication need to be considered. It provides vision simulations and practical information on the impact of reduced visual acuity, lighting, contrast, and clutter, on the visibility of picture symbols. Picture symbol characteristics which enhance visibility such as size, colour, and visual complexity are also discussed. It also includes practical ideas for the implementation and use of picture symbols with individuals who have reduced visual acuity.



These Booklets can be ordered through the RIDBC website <http://www.ridbc.org.au/publications/books.asp>. For further information or for any questions relating to the content of the books please contact Annette Clarke, RIDBC Speech Pathologist on (02) 98720359, annette.clarke@ridbc.org.au or Alison Byrne, RIDBC Orthoptist on (02) 98720362, alison.byrne@ridbc.org.au.

If you live in Queensland...

Aid for the Blind Computer Club

Children who are blind or vision impaired and between the ages of 2 and a half and 5 years can receive opportunities to become familiar with the computer and keyboard.

To find out more details call: 07 3846 5559 or check the website:

<http://aidfortheblind.org>.

If you live in Victoria...

Statewide Vision Resource Centre. Their website offers activities and resources for students and families. Their web address is:

<http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au>

How to contact us

You are welcome to make contact with the staff managing the Australian Childhood Vision Impairment Register at any time. We are always happy to hear from you, especially if you have something you would like to share with the other families on the Register. Please feel free to call or email us:

Jill Watson
(02) 9872 0303
jill.watson@ridbc.org.au

Sue Silveira
(02) 9872 0248
sue.silveira@ridbc.org.au

Remember...

please contact Jill Watson if you are interested in joining our Online Parent Forum – we're very pleased to offer this service to our parents and it will only be successful with everyone's involvement.

Until the next newsletter, thank you for your ongoing support in this important project.

