

PERCEPTIONS

Acquired Brain Injury Mobility Service Newsletter

What matters most is how you see yourself.



An Acquired Brain Injury can cause damage to the cranial nerves which are responsible for controlling eye movements. When both eyes do not work together, visual images overlap causing double vision.

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Welcome to the thirteenth edition of the ABI Newsletter. Please contact **Lisa Brown** or **Gail Giletti** via phone on **9854 4467** or email if you do not wish to continue receiving this newsletter.

We welcome contributions to this newsletter. Please feel free to contact **Lisa Brown** or **Gail Giletti** with your article or submission on **9854 4467**.

Please note: We can also provide this newsletter in alternate formats such as **standard print, audio CD, Braille, large print or email.**

ABOUT US

Guide Dogs Victoria's Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Mobility Service provides a specialised assessment and training program to address the complex needs of people living with an ABI and vision impairment.

Damage to the brain can result in many different kinds of vision impairment, for which glasses or eye surgery cannot solve. We aim to help our clients optimise their use of remaining vision, other senses and cognitive skills to regain safe and independent travel.

If you would like more information about the ABI Mobility Service please contact **Lisa Brown** on **9854 4467**.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Top Dog Day

30th July



Brain Injury Awareness Week

15th – 21st August

Stroke Week

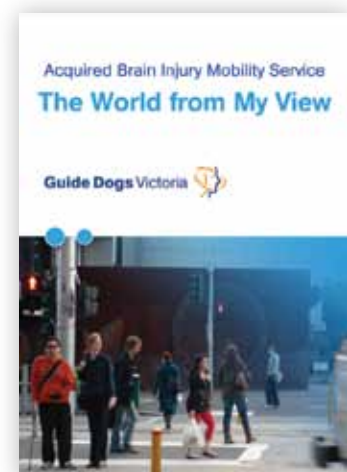
12th – 18th September

Living With Acquired Brain Injury and Vision Impairment

26th October

If you have not yet seen our ABI DVD or would like to borrow our vision simulators, please contact your Instructor.

If you borrowed one of our DVDs and have finished with it, we would appreciate it if you could please return it to us so we can re-use it for others that would like to view it.



STAFF NEWS

In May we farewelled Jess Williams, Referrals Officer, who has embarked upon a much anticipated European holiday. When she returns to Melbourne she will be seeking a full time role. We thank her for all her support and we wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Sadly, Jo Gray, our Orientation & Mobility Instructor, based in Ballarat, has left to take up a position with another organization. Over the years she has been a valuable team member and we will miss her commitment and great sense of humour. We wish Jo all the very best in her new role.

In June we welcomed the return of Erin Diaco, Orientation and Mobility Instructor. Since January this year, Erin has been busy teaching the O&M Course Guide Dogs Victoria runs in conjunction with La Trobe University. After six months of having one less Instructor in our team, we are so pleased to have her back!

Also in June we welcomed our new Client Services and Referrals Officer Gail Giletti. Gail will be working Mondays and Tuesdays. Welcome Gail!

5 MINUTES WITH GAIL GILETTI

Q. Tell us a bit about your professional background:

A. I worked for years in banking, and then more recently have worked in community care for the aged.

Q. A bit about your family, pets, etc?

A. I am married to an amazing man, Carlo and have two children – Emma, (13) and Marc, 10. Then to top off my family of individuals, I have a miniature dachshund with attitude – Bachley.

Q. What are your favourite past times?

A. Relationships and community are incredibly important to me, so my favourite past time is – Coffee! I love spending time with people. I'm also studying for a degree in psychology and counselling, so I would have to include that in my favourite pastimes as it seems to take up a lot of my time and thoughts.

Q. What is your favourite food?

A. It's still all about relationships – so I love food for the company and the sharing. As long as it's not too spicy and I didn't cook it, then it's my favourite.

Q. What is your favourite movie / song?

A. I don't really have one. But any movie that has a good story line and a happily every after theme works well. Slumdog Millionaire changed my life and led me to spend time in India, but it's also an uncomfortable film to watch.

Q. What is your funniest moment?

A. There are too many to think of one specifically. Laughing at yourself is an important part of life...

Q. What was the happiest day of your life?

A. I know I should say my wedding day, as it was amazing, or the birth of my children. Those days were also phenomenal. But specifically, the happiest day of my life, that's too hard to articulate. I try really hard to remember that every day lived is the happiest day of my life. Making a difference in people's lives... hmmm, that makes for a great day.



FUNCTIONS OF THE MENINGES

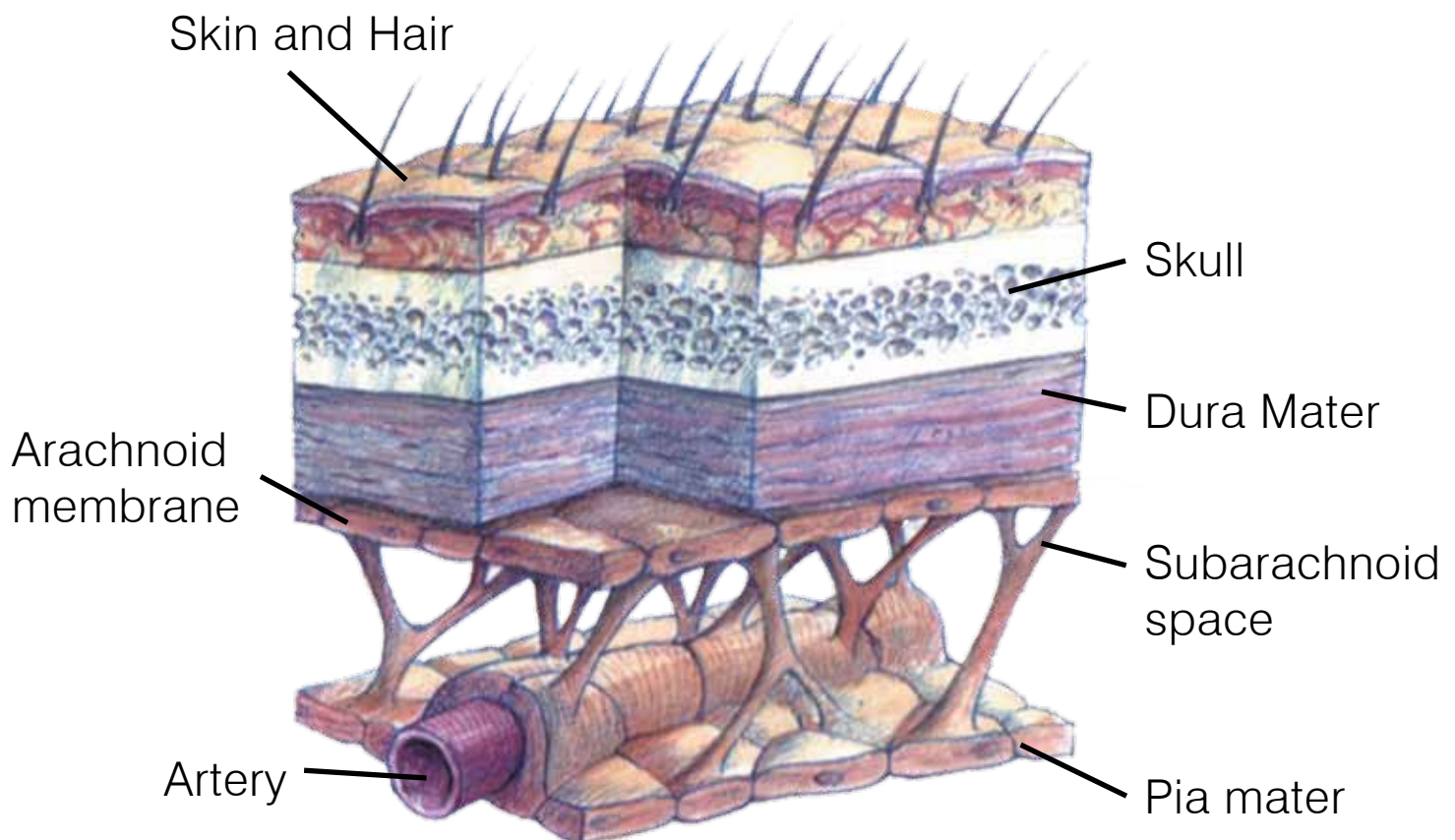
The meninges are the 3 layers that enclose and provide layers of protection against contact with the inside of the skull.

The outermost membrane is the dura mater, which contains blood vessels that carry blood to the cranial bones.

The middle layer is the arachnoid which consists of webbed connective tissue.

The innermost and most delicate membrane is the pia mater which lines the cerebral cortex. Cerebrospinal fluid fills the ventricles of the brain and the space between the pia mater and the arachnoid.

These membranes can become infected and result in meningitis. And because the meninges are in direct contact with the brain, meningitis can be a very serious illness.



LEONARD'S STORY

In 2010 Leonard was working as an electrician, driving and playing tennis. In December 2010 he experienced an acquired brain injury called a Watershed infarct. This resulted in a left homonymous hemianopia (LHH) and left neglect. This means Leonard was unable to see off to the left and at times would forget the left even existed.



In the early days Leonard found himself feeling confused and disorientated in space and time. He was constantly bumping into things and felt frustrated and depressed about the circumstances he now faced. There were numerous hurdles now in place to challenge him daily. However, with the support of his wife, rehabilitation team and his own motivation, Leonard has made wonderful progress.

Leonard and his wife attended an ABI information day at Guide Dogs Victoria and have received help from a Mobility Instructor. Leonard has benefited from meeting other people with an ABI, increasing his insight and being constantly reminded to scan left by all those around him.

Part of Leonard's rehabilitation has been returning to tennis. This was deemed one of the most important steps in his return to post stroke normality. His vision has not improved and the left neglect still impacts on his daily life, but don't think an opponent can sneak a ball pass Leonard on his left! You would be mistaken to think he would collide with his doubles partner on the left or only play forehand shots. His speed of serving across court to the left was just as impressive as serving to the right. Leonard's ability to play tennis well with a LHH and left neglect is due to his motivation, communication with his doubles partner, and maintaining his eye on the ball, following it when it travels to his left.

Returning to regular tennis sessions has decreased his boredom, given him a sense of purpose in his weekly routine, increased his confidence and motivated him to continue living his life to the fullest. Leonard also participates in swimming and goes to the gym. He has identified the importance of recreation in rehabilitation not just for physical health but also mental wellbeing.

Whether you are returning to a recreational activity or taking up a new activity, the ABI Mobility Service would love to hear your story, as would our readers. Please send your stories, photos or ideas to **darlene.m@guidedogsvictoria.com.au**.



**Don't forget to visit our website:
www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au**



IT'S OK TO COMPLAIN!

THE DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSIONER

At Guide Dogs Victoria, we pride ourselves on providing a comprehensive range of mobility services and ensuring we meet the needs and expectations of our clients. Whilst it is our hope that we satisfy all of our clients, we are aware that on occasions we may not get things “quite right.” Perhaps expectations of our services might not fit what we have delivered.

We value your comments about our services whether it is positive or constructive feedback. If you have been disappointed by any aspect of our service we hope you are comfortable speaking with your Instructor or the appropriate Manager at Guide Dogs Victoria, so that we can resolve any issues.

Recently, Anthony Kolmus, Capacity Development Manager from the Disability Services Commissioner provided GDV with useful information related to the types of complaints service users commonly report and how to best manage the complaints process with our clients. Guide Dogs Victoria provides an annual report of complaints from our service users to this organization.

If you are unable to resolve any problems with us or any other disability service provider (as long as they are registered with the Department of Human Services) the Disability Services Commissioner can provide you with some advice and assistance where applicable.

- **A Message from Jenny Black**
Manager of GDV's ABI Mobility Service



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE DISABILITY SERVICES COMMISSIONER?

Do you need some assistance to resolve a complaint with a disability service or service provider?

The Disability Services Commissioner can provide a free and confidential service to assist you.

The Commissioner was established under the Disability Act 2006 to improve services for people with a disability in Victoria through the effective resolution of complaints.

There are many benefits to raising a complaint with a disability service provider and to resolving the matter as soon as possible. The Commissioner encourages and assists the resolution of complaints in a variety of ways including discussions, conciliation processes, or under certain circumstances, through investigations. The complaints process can lead to better services for people with a disability in Victoria, so coming up with solutions together is good for everyone.

Wherever possible, a complainant (the person making the complaint) and a service provider should try to resolve a complaint together. Where this has not been possible or where there is a particular reason a person does not wish to raise the complaint directly with their service provider, the Commissioner may be able to assist.

The Commissioner is independent of government, the Department of Human Services and disability service providers and provides a free, confidential and supportive complaints resolution process.

Please visit our website

www.odsc.vic.gov.au or call **1800 677 342**

if you would like to know more about the Disability Services Commissioner.



The Disability Services Commissioner can assist you, in your language, to resolve a complaint you may have about your disability service.

We can provide you with information about the Disability Services Commissioner in the following languages:

- Amharic
- Auslan
- Arabic
- Chinese
- Croatian
- Greek
- Italian
- Khmer
- Macedonian
- Polish
- Russian
- Turkish
- Serbian
- Somali
- Spanish
- Vietnamese

If you speak a language other than what we have printed material for, the Disability Services Commissioner can organise an interpreter at no extra cost. This information is also available online at **www.odsc.vic.gov.au** (on the left of our home page) or you can call our office and request a brochure.



BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS WEEK

15th – 21st August

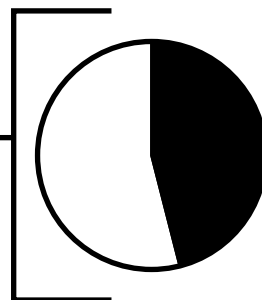
Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) is injury to the brain which results in deterioration in cognitive, physical, emotional or independent functioning. ABI can occur as a result of trauma, hypoxia, infection, tumour, substance abuse, degenerative neurological diseases or stroke. These impairments to cognitive abilities or physical functioning may be either temporary or permanent and cause partial or total disability or psychosocial maladjustment.

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 1999

Some interesting facts:

- According to Brainlink, the number of people with an ABI in Victoria is approximately 73,000. About 31,000 of these people require a degree of personal assistance or supervision.
- The incidence of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) increases dramatically at around 20 years of age.
- Stroke is the leading cause of ABI, and the prevalence of strokes will increase as the population ages.
- Falls are the leading cause of TBI.
- Head injuries are the second most common falls-related injury after hip injuries.

Approximately 73,000
people in Victoria
have an ABI



31,000 require some personal
assistance or supervision

STROKE WEEK 2011

12th – 18th September

The aim of Stroke Week is to raise awareness of stroke as well as the warning signs of a stroke. According to the Stroke Foundation the following symptoms in isolation or in combination can be signs of a stroke:

- Weakness, numbness or paralysis of the face, or one or both arms or legs
- Difficulty speaking or understanding
- Dizziness, loss of balance or an unexplained fall
- Loss of vision, sudden blurred or decreased vision in one or both eyes
- Headache, usually severe and abrupt onset or unexplained change in the pattern of headaches
- Difficulty swallowing

The signs of stroke can last between a few seconds to up to 24 hours. Sometimes symptoms disappear within 24 hours and this is referred to as a Transient Ischaemic Attack or TIA. If you or anyone you know experiences any of these signs for any length of time, it is important to call 000 without delay.

Facts about stroke:

- In 2003 approximately 146,400 Australians had a disability resulting from a stroke.
- 1 in 6 people will have a stroke.
- More than 60,000 strokes occur every year.

Guide Dogs Victoria

Stroke Week Activity 2011 – Monday 12th September

Over the years GDV has run Stroke Week Activities which have become a much anticipated annual event. Participants have been staff members from all areas of GDV including kennels, Marketing, Mobility Services, the Bequests Team and Telemarketing. Activities have included egg and spoon races, soccer and food preparation with partakers wearing vision simulators and having various temporary physical 'disabilities'.

This year we are planning a lunch making activity and participants will be required to wear hemianopia vision simulators and have an arm temporarily immobilized (this will not be painful!). We are encouraging family members of our clients, as well as Allied Health Professionals / Rehabilitation professionals to attend.

In the past we have always had a good turn-out for this activity and it has generated much discussion. The activity is a great learning opportunity and because it is conducted in a group setting, it is also a lot of fun. This year we are opening the activity up to Allied Health Professionals and our client's families. There are only a limited number of places available, so if you are interested please contact **Darlene** on **9854 4428**. RSVPs are needed no later than Friday 26th August.

Our annual activity is only one aspect of Stroke Week at GDV. We also have quizzes, email interesting facts, and attend other organization's Stroke Week activities. If you have any ideas for Stroke Week this year or next year, please email **Darlene** at **darlene.m@guidedogsvictoria.com.au** or call on **9854 4428**.



STROKE WEEK ACTIVITY 2011

FREE LUNCH WITH A TWIST!

In recognition of Stroke Week, Guide Dogs Victoria is inviting people who receive our Perceptions newsletter to join us in a fun, practical activity on Monday, 12th September.

The activity involves participants wearing hemianopia vision simulators, having one arm immobilized, and making and then eating a sandwich! You might be surprised how difficult this can be, and how we can take routine tasks such as food preparation and eating for granted. This activity will highlight some of the many challenges our clients face on a daily basis.

All participants will be well supported by ABI Mobility Specialists as well as our Occupational Therapist.

We are encouraging the family, friends, and Carers of our clients to participate, as well as Allied Health / Rehabilitation Professionals. We will also welcome other individuals who receive Perceptions newsletter.

This activity is provided free of charge, but numbers are strictly limited to 20 participants, so get in quick! To reserve your place please contact **Darlene** on **9854 4428** or at **darlene.m@guidedogsvictoria.com.au**.

Time: 12 O'clock noon

Date: 12th September 2011

Venue: Guide Dogs Victoria OT Kitchen



CHILDREN WITH ABI AND VISION IMPAIRMENT

- HOW WE CAN HELP

Guide Dogs Victoria provides a range of specialist mobility services including Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Mobility services and Children's Mobility services. This specialised ABI and vision impairment knowledge attracts a broad range of referrals from the acute hospital setting through to community rehabilitation services, and self referrals. The services receive referrals for people of all ages throughout Victoria, including children who have developed a vision impairment as a result of a brain injury such as stroke, tumour, virus or traumatic injury.

Our specialised ABI Mobility Service works collaboratively with the Children's Mobility Service in providing a thorough assessment of a child's residual vision as well as their visual processing and visual attention skills. If required, a mobility program can then be developed taking into consideration the child's specific learning needs.

In- services can be provided to a child's school or other significant community services, in order to help with understanding the impact that an ABI and resulting vision impairment has on a child. An environmental assessment of the school can also be provided through the Children's Mobility Service. This report provides the school with specialised recommendations to make the environment more accessible for someone with vision impairment.

All services through Guide Dogs Victoria are provided free of charge. If you would like further information on the services provided at Guide Dogs Victoria for children who have an ABI, please don't hesitate to contact **Rachel Morgan** (Team Leader of the Children's Mobility Service) or **Shelley Pannier** (Team Leader of the ABI Mobility Service) on **9854 4444**.

INSIGHT INTO MY FIRST FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX WITH AN ABI

Written by Meindert Withoff

We (a mixed group of Adrenaline and QJ's men) met at 10AM at the Loco bar, Southern Cross train station. The place was buzzing with people getting excited about watching the cars and cheering on their favourite teams. Lots of people have a coffee there before they go to the circuit. I met people from Perth and Sydney, and needless to say, they were interested to find out that just because we have low/no vision and some of us also have arm and leg paralysis, we are still men and love motor sport!



To support people living with disabilities, the Australian Formula One provided free accessible shuttle vans to transfer us to the track from the train station. When we arrived at Albert Park, unfortunately it started raining, however we ended up at the race drivers' entrance and one of the guys spots Rubens Barichello (famous driver) and he gave us all a thumbs up! Is he confident about the race? Or is he happy to see us here?

The track also supported great accessible transport so we could quickly get from one viewing area to another. On foot (or in my case, wheels) we're off exploring the best spots for us along the circuit, trying to get familiar with the area, identifying landmarks, and basically applying the skills we have learnt from the Orientation & Mobility and Occupational Therapy sessions. Although pre-warned and well aware, the place is crowded, noisy and very different to the Albert Park we all know. Getting around this place is harder said than done. We watch a little bit of the racing but the F1 cars are not coming out on Thursday, so we check out

the merchandise and enjoy the food on offer. Shane is able to get us in one of the many marquees away from the crowd to dry off and enjoy a hot drink as we are all soaked from a massive storm! I was only suppose to go for the Thursday race day, but what fun we had and reflecting on how much I learnt I was lucky enough to get another spot in the group for Saturday. Saturday, a kind of similar story, accept this time it's dry and sunny and the F1 cars are out! Amazing to see and hear the world's fastest cars! Hear those cars roaring and kind of coughing, when the drivers change down in gears! Highlight on this day for me is a meeting with V8 supercar driver Todd Kelly, his girlfriend /wife shows us around in the pit lane and tells us about the V8 supercars, we find out very interesting facts about the cars, for example they spend a fortune on making the cars as light as possible with ultra light carbon fiber parts, then they attach strips of lead to the bottom of the car, because the rule is that these cars have to weigh 1355 kg! We get to feel the different tires and other car parts that we all enjoy talking about.

Then off to our favourite spot to watch the qualifying! Now the drivers push their machines to the limit, Mark Webber misses corner 13, which is where we were watching from on Thursday! We decide to leave half way through qualifying, this is a tough decision but makes sense when you have low vision and drive a powered chair but important to miss the big crowds exiting at the same time.

The Formula One was a great experience, firstly it is the first time I have exposed myself to a major busy community event that is on unpredictable environments. Secondly I am finding ways and developing confidence to do the hobbies I love (and I'm sure most men out there love their cars too)! Major learning lessons for me, I have to be extra careful driving my powered wheelchair when I am tired and loosing concentration, but I also feel confident that I can handle these big sporting events and can start doing more of the fun things in life that I have been ruling out because I have low vision and use a powered wheelchair!

Just in time I catch the bus home tired but very satisfied after a beautiful day full off lots of impressions, I would love to come back next year!

Written by Meindert Withoff

Meindert is a client of the Occupational Therapy and ABI Mobility Service and lives with a hemianopia, leg and arm hemiplegia, and drives an electric wheelchair. Meindert is one example of the many motivated clients that participate in the QJ's group who is focused on overcoming unexpected life hurdles, maximizing life opportunities, and finding a way to do the things he wants in life. QJ's welcomes enquires to **Shane McSweeney** (OT) on **9854 4448**.

OTHER GDV PUBLICATIONS

Guide Dogs Victoria also publish a range of other newsletters. If you would like to receive one of these other newsletters please make contact with appropriate staff:

Children's Mobility Service

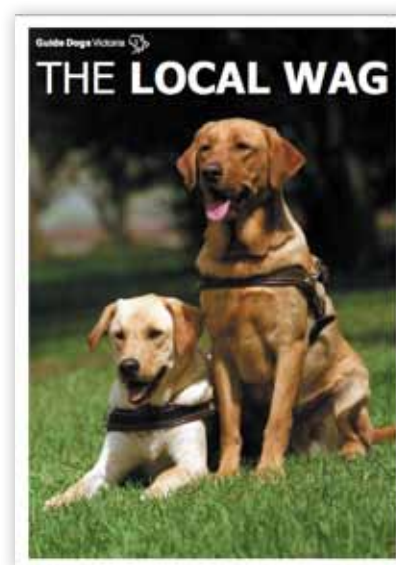
Getabout – Contact Gail Giletti 9854 4467

Orientation & Mobility Service

On The Move - Contact Rose Gordon 9854 4456

Guide Dog Mobility Service

The Local Wag – Contact Donna Murdoch 9854 4422





CLIENT INFORMATION DAY – LIVING WITH ABI & VISION IMPAIRMENT

Do you, your family, friends, or Carers have trouble understanding all the details of Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and vision impairment? Too much information, countless questions and no one to answer them?

Then perhaps Living with ABI & Vision Impairment, a client and carer information day is just what you're looking for?

Held three times each year at the Guide Dogs Victoria campus in Kew, the information day includes speakers from a broad range of rehabilitation professionals including an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Instructor, Orthoptist, Neuro-Physiotherapist, Counsellor (ABI specific) and Occupational Therapist. Each speaker will discuss their specialty area with a particular focus on the impact of ABI. Topics covered include:

Topics covered include:

- Understanding ABI related vision impairment
- The brain - how does it work, and how can ABI affect my body and mind?
- Understanding my thoughts and mood after ABI
- Occupational Therapy and vision impairment

The next information day will be held on **Thursday June 16, 2011 from 10am to 3pm**. If you would like to attend, please contact **Lisa** or **Gail** on **9854 4467**.

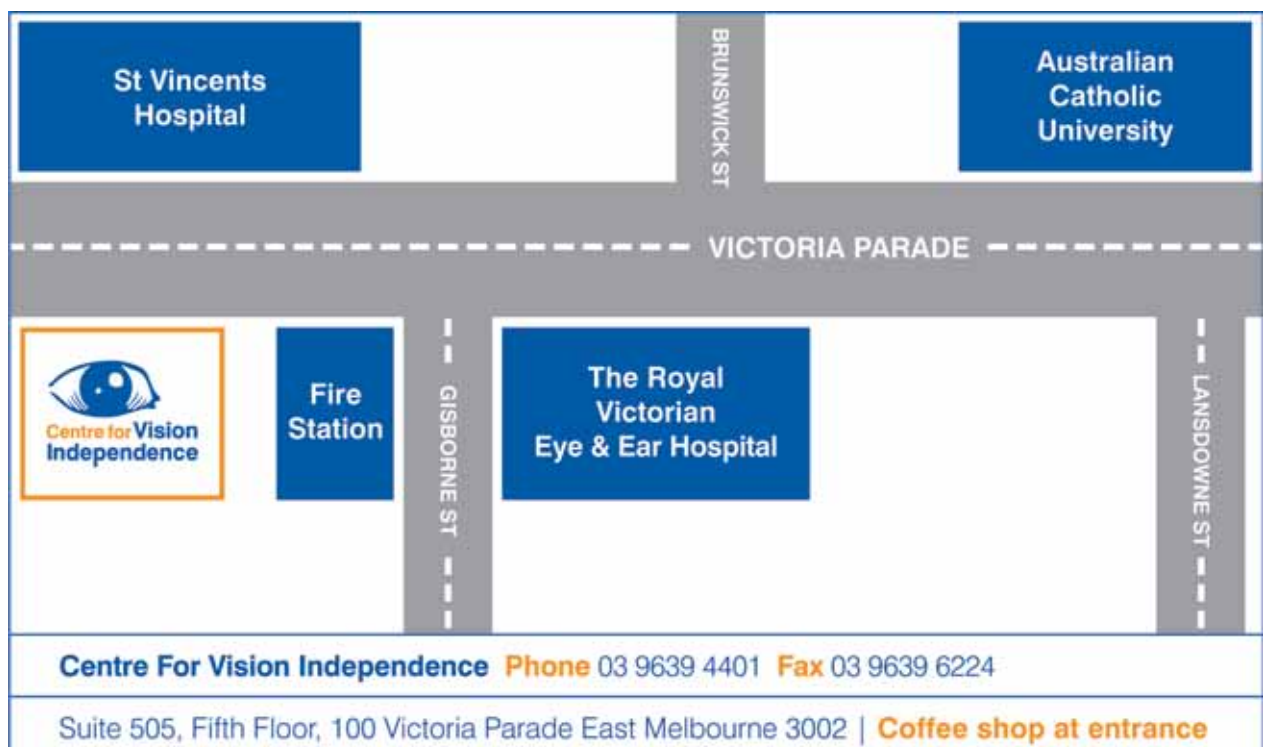
We have a limit of 15 people, so make sure you get in quick!

CENTRE FOR VISION INDEPENDENCE

The Centre for Vision Independence (CVI) is located at 100 Victoria Parade East Melbourne Ph 9963 3345 (Near the RVEEH and next to the old Fire Station)

The CVI is open weekdays between 11am – 5pm and is staffed by two qualified Orthoptists. No appointment is necessary. Clients can trial a range of equipment to determine what suits their needs and all equipment is sold at cost price. Services include:

- **Free** Advisory Service to people with low vision
- **No** appointment necessary
- **No** referral necessary
- **Magnifiers** to **try** and **buy**
- **Aids** and **Advice** to assist **Daily Living**
- **All** items sold at cost price
- **Information & Forms** about concessions eg transport, blind pension, 1/2 Price Taxi
- **Adaptive Technology** information
- **Support Group** Information
- **Home Visits** available



THE ABI MOBILITY SERVICE WISH LIST

At Guide Dogs Victoria we provide our clients with the best of care, but we often wish we had the funds to purchase the latest specialised equipment. If you are able to donate funds to cover or assist with the cost of any of the items on our current Wish List please call **Danni George** on **(03) 9854 4444**.

- Vision Assessment and Training Tool for assessing use of functional vision



- Miniguides to develop greater attention/awareness for clients with inattention or neglect
- Spatial Assessment Kits
- UV Shields for clients

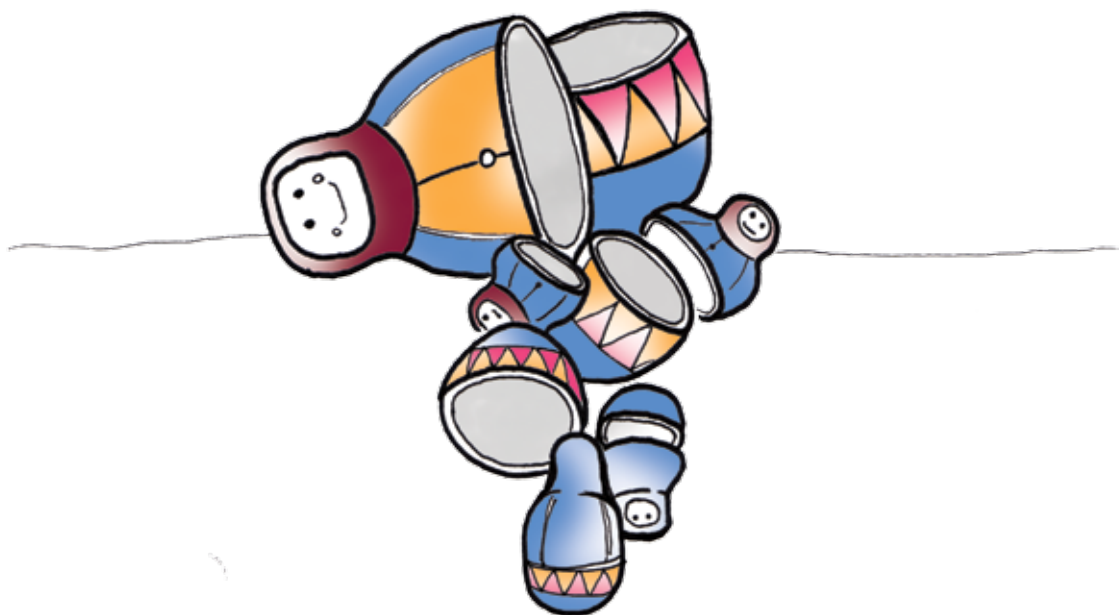


SCANNING ACTIVITY

To reinforce scanning, Orientation & Mobility Instructors sometimes recommend our clients to do tabletop scanning exercises. These include crosswords, word finds, cards, dominoes and basically any activity that requires a person to search for objects.

If you have an ABI and you are having difficulty remembering to look to a particular side, then these types of exercises might be useful to promote scanning. Once a client is able to complete simple crosswords or word finds, they can gradually move on to 'dynamic scanning' as these scanning skills can later be transferred when the client is moving around the environment.

If you are having difficulties remembering to scan (particularly if you are bumping into obstacles on one side) you can start with tabletop scanning activities. It is recommended you get into the habit of scanning to your bad side first. The exercise below is particularly useful for people with a left hemianopia and/or neglect. The object of the exercise is to locate the Russian letter on the left side of the page and then find that letter in the corresponding row. If you get tired or frustrated whilst doing this activity you should stop and perhaps come back to it later.





Вычеркните ассигнованное письмо каждый раз, это появляется в линии:

С	С Ж Э Ч Ъ К Ч Я Т С Х Ф К Ч С Ш Б С
У	И Т З К У Ч Ы Ш Б Т З У Ф К Ч Я Б У Ф
Ы	Ы У Т З Х Ф Ы Г В Ъ А Ы Ж Ы С Л К Я
Д	И М Н Д П Р Щ Ъ Д Т З Х Ф Д Ч Я Б Д
Ж	Ъ К Ч Я О Ж Ч Ы Ж Б Ч Я Б Й Ж Э У
А	Э Ф К А Ы Ш А А Ъ К Ч Я Н А П Ё И А
Т	Х Ф Ш Б Т Ъ А У Т Ж Э Ч Т К Ч Я О Т
З	З Ч Ы З Х Б Ц У Т З Х Ф Ш Б Й З Ъ Ц

RUSSIAN ALPHABET

А Б В Г Д Е Ё Ж З И Й К Л М Н О П Р С Т У Ф
Х Ц Ч Ш Щ Ъ Ы Ь Э Ю Я

How do you perceive things?

These pictures are optical illusions and can be perceived differently. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

A giant bird or...



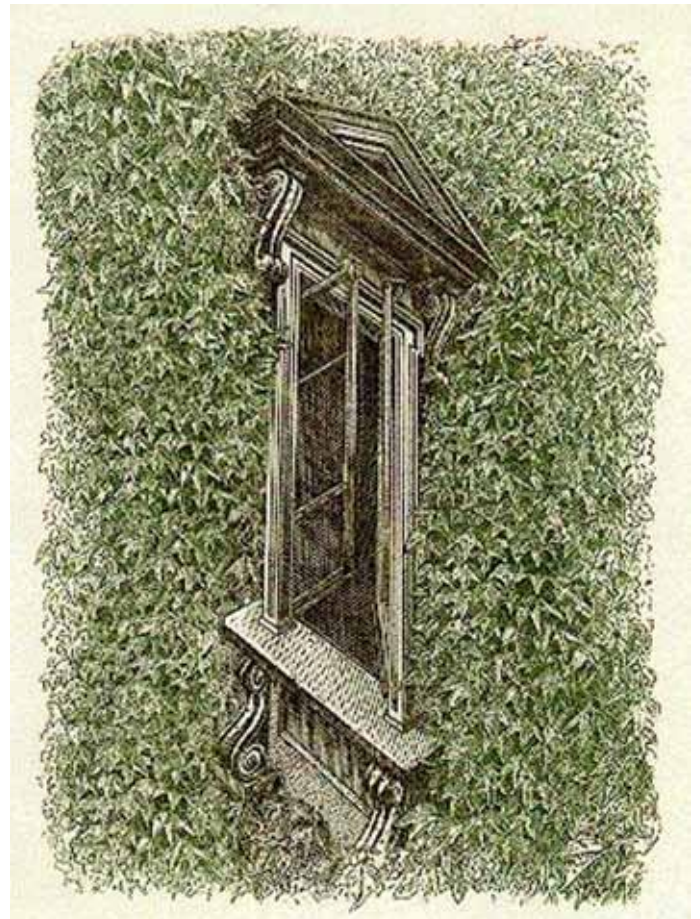
... A man catching a giant fish.



How many faces can you find?



Right or left?



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Angela Reynolds (Wangaratta), Orientation and Mobility Instructor

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Gail Giletti, Referrals/Enquiries Officer

Monday and Tuesday

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Lisa Brown, Referrals/Enquiries Officer

Thursday to Friday

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REFERENCES

Functions Of The Meninges (pg.6)

thebrain.mcagill.ca

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/375044/meninges>

Carter, R. 2009; The Brain Book; DK London

Brain Injury Awareness Week (pg.12)

The Definition, Incidence and Prevalence of Acquired Brain Injury in Australia (AIHW, 1999)

<http://www.brainlink.org.au/resources.htm>

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website

Email: jo.g@guideddogsvictoria.com.au

Stroke Week 2011 (pg.13)

References:

Stroke Foundation website

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website

www.strokensw.org.au

