

# perceptions



**Guide  
Dogs**  
VICTORIA

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autumn 2015 / issue 24

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 24th edition of Perceptions!

In this issue, we feature a piece on rehab dogs and how they have become a part of some of ABI mobility programs. This includes case studies on two clients who have trialled a dog in their training. We also take a look at some events for the calendar in 2015; ways to get involved and learn more about what we do. Lastly, don't forget to check out our pick for latest in smart-phone apps for those with living with a vision impairment.

We hope you are enjoying our new electronic format, finding the design easy to navigate and the content resourceful and informative.

For our regular readers, and for those receiving Perceptions for the first time, we always welcome your feedback, comments and contributions. You can contact Rachel Abdulla at [rachel.a@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:rachel.a@guidedogsvictoria.com.au)

Regards,  
Rachel and the AMS Team

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## GDV in support of a fantastic initiative!

Although here at GDV our mission statement is to provide high quality training and support to people living with a vision impairment; like you, we want to see an overall reduction in cases of those sustaining an ABI.

Stroke is Australia's second biggest killer. High blood pressure is one of the most important known risk factors for stroke that can be changed. The National Stroke Foundation is running a campaign aiming to increase awareness of the link between high blood pressure and stroke. They will be holding Australia's biggest blood pressure check on Wednesday 6 May.

The National Stroke Foundation is aiming to set a record of 15,000 free health checks across Australia on one day at public health check stations and in-store at Chemmart Pharmacies.

You can be a part of this event by:

Visiting one of the public check stations or your local Chemmart Pharmacy for a free health check on 6 May. Encouraging your friends, family and colleagues to get involved.

Getting involved in the conversation online. [www.facebook.com/strokefoundation](http://www.facebook.com/strokefoundation) and on twitter from @strokefdn using the hashtag #fightstroke.



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## REACH Peer Support Service

Guide Dogs Victoria will now be providing a Peer Support program throughout Victoria. This new venture aims to provide telephone mentoring to people living with a vision impairment and needing to connect with someone outside of the clinical and therapeutic services.

Our mentors have been selected on stringent criteria and are all living with varying degrees of vision impairment or blindness. They have been trained by qualified counsellors who specialise in vision loss and rehabilitation.

Each mentor exhibits personal strengths in interpersonal and communication skills, a solid understanding of the principles of peer support as well as insights into living independently with a vision loss. They also demonstrate a thorough knowledge of accessing low vision services and are committed to living out the values and behaviours of GDV.

Our program is due to hit the pilot stage by mid-May and we are very excited about promoting this free service to our consumers and networks very soon. Keep a lookout on our website and stay tuned for more details and developments!

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## REHABILITATION DOGS

In recent years there has been increased use of canines in rehabilitation programs by a range of therapists and health professionals. Dogs have successfully been included in programs developed by:

- Physiotherapists
- Occupational therapists
- Speech therapists
- Psychologists and Neuropsychologists
- Social workers

The therapeutic goals of these programs with dogs are varied in nature but can include:

- Gait training
- Improvement in walking pace
- Balance support

- Gross and fine motor skills through petting, brushing or spontaneous engagement with the dog
- Physical support during transfers
- Promoting attention to the left in the case of a left neglect

Often, the simple presence of the dog with its unconditional and non-judgemental engagement can improve the patient's mood and motivation within an existing rehabilitation program.

Guide Dogs Victoria is currently trialling a dog in support of a physiotherapy program involving gait and balance. We welcome contact with health professionals seeking to explore the benefits of introducing dogs into their programs.

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## Case Study

### Rolf and rehab dog Milo

Rolf was only 45 when he sustained a traumatic brain injury following a motorbike accident in April 2014. Amongst other things he is a father, brother, community CFA member and mechanic.

Rolf sustained extensive orthopaedic injuries, vestibular complications as well as cortical blindness. After remaining in hospital and rehab for over 12 months, Rolf has commenced working with our ABI team to reach his independent mobility goals. Rolf's discharge plan has had a holistic approach with many therapists involved. His ABI mobility program has involved intensive Long Cane training as well as concept redevelopment, fatigue management and Milo!

Milo was trialled on lead in conjunction with the long cane. The benefits of having a dog as part of Rolf's program included motivation, mood elevation and a general sense of well-being.





## Case Study Carolyn and rehab dog Milo



Carolyn sustained a traumatic brain injury in 2013. Consequently, she suffered a number of visual, cognitive and physical impairments. By the time Carolyn was assessed by us in May 2014 she had already made vast improvements but remaining was a very dense left side visual neglect and a short term memory deficit.

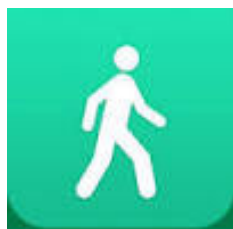
The long cane was trialed in Carolyn's home town of Portland, VIC. This made marked improvements to her confidence and management of obstacles on the left side, however scanning remained a problem.

Carolyn and her partner, Andrew recently travelled to our campus here at Kew to undertake a three-day intensive long cane and scanning program. During this time, we trialed a rehab dog (Milo) to help manage the left neglect. Improvements were noticed with gait, veering to the right and even scanning in some instances! Carolyn also fed back that she felt a greater sense of emotional well-being and general mood improvement.

## Keep App!

In keeping up with the latest and greatest in the prolifically expanding world of smartphone/tablet applications, here's one we have found useful for consumers with a Vision Impairment.

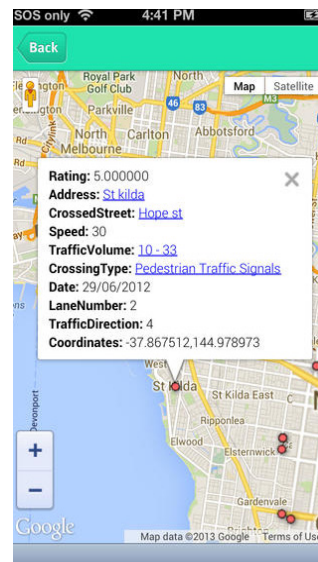
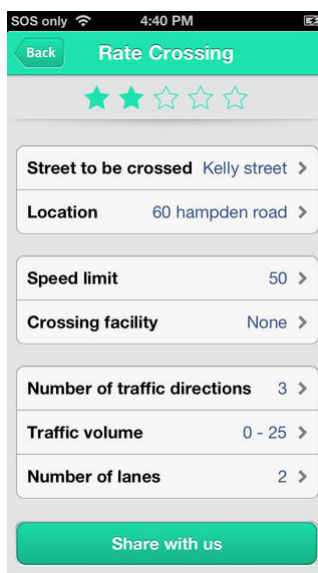
### Walk this Way by Alfred Health (Free)



- Researchers at the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC), in partnership with health professionals at Alfred Health, have developed Walk this Way, an app which allows you to rate the safety of road crossing locations.
- Users simply enter some information including speed limit, crossing type, number of vehicle directions, traffic volume, road width and presence of traffic calming features.
- The crossing location will receive a rating out of five stars based on best available evidence and expert judgment.
- The aim of Walk this Way is to increase walking as

a mode of transport by improving people's safety and confidence at road crossings.

- This is a fantastic tool not only for people with a vision impairment but also those training and assisting someone with ABI/vision loss in determining the safest way to get to their destination.



## What's On

### 1. ABI Professional Days

Information workshop for health professionals wishing to know more about the ABI Mobility Service. The three hour workshop is held on campus at GDV and provides information on: who is appropriate to refer, how to refer, assessment process, training and outcomes. Information is also provided on other services offered by GDV including Children's Mobility and Guide Dog Mobility.

Workshop dates for 2015 are:

- Thursday 18 June 2015
- Thursday 17 September 2015

To register your interest, call us on (03) 9854 4467.

### 2. ABI Client Days

Information workshop for clients (and their carers) living with an ABI and Vision Impairment. The workshop takes a holistic approach to ABI and the impact it can have on mobility, cognition, mood and everyday living. The day runs from 10am to 3pm, with lunch provided, on campus at GDV.

Workshop dates for 2015 are:

- Thursday 21 May 2015
- Thursday 13 August 2015
- Thursday 5 November 2015

To register your interest, call us on (03) 9854 4467.

### 3. Group Programs

Our group programs aim to provide opportunities for consumers to learn and develop their orientation and mobility skills within the context of a fun, safe team environment.

Here is what we have lined up for 2015:

- Thursday 25 June Say cheese! Melbourne Public transport orientation program. We are now taking registrations for our cheesy city program! Call us for more details.
- Tuesday 4 August Come Fly with Me Melbourne Airport/planning for a holiday
- 15 October International White Cane Day
- 21- 23 October Live Safe Travel Smart program
- 3 December International Day of People with disabilities
- December Health and Wellness program (TBA)

Keep a lookout on our Facebook page for news on group programs to be held in 2015

### 4. Professional Workshops

We also provide workshops within any community health setting (hospitals, rehabilitation centres, ongoing care facilities, etc.) We can tailor the workshop to meet the needs of your staff and provide more information about our ABI service.

### 5. Enquiries

If you have any queries regarding referring to events or information listed on our noticeboard, please contact Client Services Administration on (03) 9854 4467

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## About Us

The Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and Adult Mobility Services provide specialised assessment and training programs for people who have a vision loss (ocular or as a result of a brain injury), which in turn affects their ability to mobilise safely and independently. Our programs aim to optimise the use of remaining vision, and in conjunction with other senses and cognitive skills, aim to regain safe and independent mobility.

Along with educating each client, their family and rehabilitation professionals about the nature and impact of the vision impairment; each client undergoes an initial assessment which aims to determine:

- Extent of vision loss and impact on independent travel skills
- Ability to move freely and safely through a range of environments
- Ability to route plan, orientate and problem solve
- Impact of other impairments on mobility (for e.g. memory, balance, attention and concentration)
- Ability to use public transport

- Need for a mobility aid
- Guide Dogs Victoria can assist Victorians living in metropolitan and regional areas. Training can be provided within the client's home, work, school, local environment, in our residential training facility (Arnold Cook House in Kew), or a combination of both. The training environment is reflective of the person's mobility goals and needs.

Referring a Client to the ABI Mobility Service

We welcome referrals from individuals, family members and all health professionals.

Referrals can be made via our website at:

<https://www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au/our-services/referral-main/>

Or contact Client Services Administration on (03) 9854 4467 or via email at

[referrals@guidedogsvictoria.com.au](mailto:referrals@guidedogsvictoria.com.au)



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