



Seeing Eye Dogs Volunteer impact report

Opening your homes and hearts in 2022



Vision Australia
Seeing Eye Dogs





On the cover: 25 years volunteering, puppy carer Kate with graduated Seeing Eye Dog Archie and her pet dog Ursa.

This page: Carer Julie (walk of fame volunteer) and golden Seeing Eye Dogs pup Kimmy.



Contents

Message from the CEO	4
Update from Seeing Eye Dogs central.....	5
Contributions in 2022 and global partnerships	7
Client services	8
Animal welfare	9
Breeding and puppy centre	10
Vet team	10
Kennels.....	11
Caring programs.....	13
Celebrating our volunteers	14
Walk of Fame members	16
Puppy carer Kate celebrates 25 plus years	17
Client story: When Harry met Bateman.....	19
Laying the foundations with Vanessa.....	20
Meet the puppy carers.....	21
Tina absolutely loves caring for pups and dogs.....	21
Cloe teaches school kids about Seeing Eye Dogs.....	22



Message from the CEO

Welcome to the Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs annual volunteer impact report for FY22.

Following on from last year, we are pleased to share with you that Seeing Eye Dogs has cared for 270 pups and dogs with your support, our dedicated and valued volunteers.

On average, a Seeing Eye Dogs litter has seven pups. This year, Mother Nature gifted us with several larger than average litters in quick succession some totalling up to 10 puppies.

The only reason we have been able to support larger than average litters is because of you. You bring our pups and dogs home; take them most places and give the pups the love they deserve while they also enrich your lives.

As life returns to normal post COVID-19 restrictions, it's been wonderful to see you giving back to the blind and low vision community as well as helping others by caring for future Seeing Eye Dogs.

Resulting from your dedicated work, we were able to match 50 fully trained Seeing Eye Dogs with people who are blind or have low vision.

We also graduated 15 breeding dogs that continuously improve the



Janelle Bloxsom, Petbarn Foundation and Ron Hooton, CEO Vision Australia.

quality of our breeding program.

When you are part of the Seeing Eye Dogs family as our committed volunteers, you make all of this possible.

We would also like to thank the dedication and support from our donors, corporate partners and ambassadors. Together you make us what we are today and we are paving the way for future generations to one day graduate to become working Seeing Eye Dogs.

Thank you for all you have contributed and we look forward to another year ahead.

Ron Hooton

CEO

Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs



Update from Seeing Eye Dogs central

We are so grateful for the incredible dedication from each of our volunteers during the year and proud to share that one of our many devoted Seeing Eye Dogs carers will reach a milestone of 25 years of volunteering!

With the organisation continuing to expand, we had the opportunity to create new employment pathways for our valued staff.

To meet the needs of the changing training landscape, Seeing Eye Dogs Claire Crewe, with the learning and development team, developed innovative online learning modules for volunteer carers to support their training.

Other highlights included various events with Seeing Eye Dogs and pups attending Pups in Parliament NSW, and a visit to Kensington from the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the Honourable Bill Shorten to discuss advocacy and accessibility.

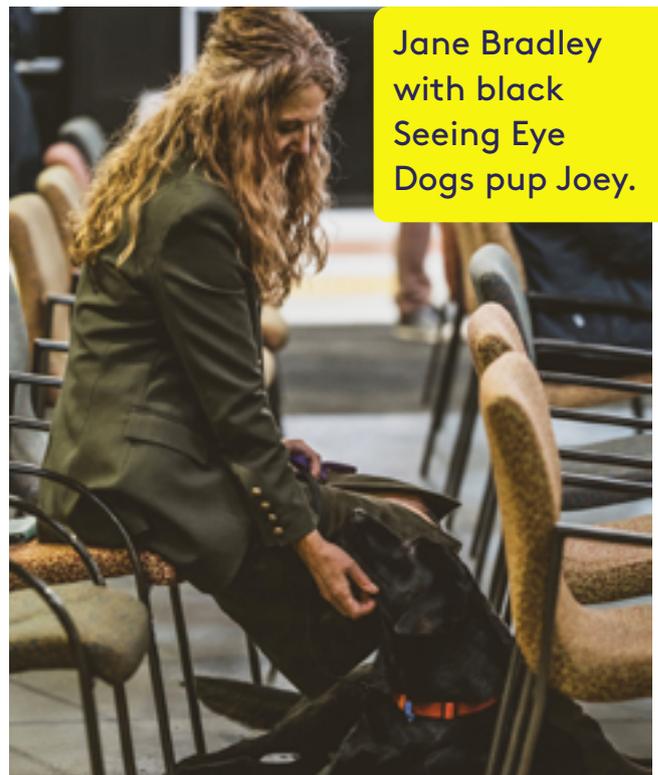
I also had the opportunity to present at the Assistance Dogs International (ADI) conference on behalf of Seeing Eye Dogs. The talk highlighted the implementation of

the behaviour checklist for better breeding selection.

At this conference, I was admiring a beautiful calm Labrador and asked about him. He is part of our international breeding networks, and we will soon receive some of his genetics continuing to improve our colony.

It was so encouraging to see collaboration in action. The team were beaming with happiness, and it turned out the dog is called Pride!

Jane Bradley
Puppy development manager



Jane Bradley with black Seeing Eye Dogs pup Joey.



Golden Seeing Eye Dogs pup
Tanner wearing a puppy coat and
sitting in Autumn leaves.



Contributions in 2022



650 volunteers supported our community.

3.4 million volunteer hours contributed

An increase in 136% from financial year 2020-2021.

90 Zoom sessions held

and attended by volunteers.

429 members and 30,000 comments

in our Facebook carers group.



50 client and dog teams partnered

Most ever graduating client and Seeing Eye Dogs.



30 dogs in training

Wait list has decreased from 13 months to seven months!

220 puppies matched with carers

and have lived in loving homes.

Global partnerships

Vision Australia Seeing Eye Dogs are founder members of the Oceanic breeding co-operative, a collaboration between accredited International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) and Assistance Dogs International (ADI) schools to share genetics across the globe. This means we can help each other internationally to breed better dogs 'for purpose' to suit the needs of our clients.



Client services

FY22 saw the continuous improvement of our program, from breeding to client support to ensure we continue providing quality dogs and services to clients in a timely manner.

- Five trainees are undertaking the Seeing Eye Dogs instructor traineeship program. Learnings from the prior year saw this program refined around our core values of being person-centred and focused on customised training for the individual instructor to support them to develop their skills to their highest potential.
- Seeing Eye Dogs developed and implemented the innovative wheelchair project in 2022, to equip fully trained Seeing Eye Dogs with specialised training to safely and effectively guide people who are wheelchair users and who are blind or have low vision.
- The Seeing Eye Dogs youth program was implemented in 2022. Part of the 12-month curriculum included two camps for six young people aged 12-18 held in April and September. The participants were individually matched with a Seeing Eye Dog to experience what a dog guide provides and requires. During the camp, they learned how to work with their temporary Seeing Eye Dog, including how to groom, feed and maintain the dog's training. Based on the success of the program, this will continue to support young Australians.
- During FY23 Seeing Eye Dogs will expand our national presence by having a small Seeing Eye Dogs team based in New South Wales. Our presence will also be expanded in Queensland continuing to grow with new graduate Seeing Eye Dogs instructors.

Senior instructor Caitlin Smith conducting a dog demonstration with yellow Seeing Eye Dog Nancy.





Animal welfare

Choice – Care – Connection

Over the last 18 months, the Welfare Strategy Working Group (a cross-departmental group including members from each area of Seeing Eye Dogs; dog care, veterinary, puppy development, breeding and client services) developed and implemented a consolidated Seeing Eye Dogs animal welfare strategy.

Seeing Eye Dogs is leading the way in the dog guide industry in Australia by having a publicly available, transparent animal welfare strategy, and this is an ongoing opportunity to recognise and demonstrate to the community the successful welfare-focused approach we are taking at Seeing Eye Dogs.

The strategy allows us an ongoing avenue for welfare improvement, providing a better holistic experience for all Seeing Eye Dogs.

With an ongoing welfare strategy, we are able to create a better experience for clients as studies show animals that are experiencing higher welfare are more likely to have improved overall health, improved learning capacity, improved experience with the handler and social relationships, just to name a few benefits.

The Seeing Eye Dogs animal welfare strategy was formulated by extensive research into animal welfare science. This was supported by consultation with industry experts, and is guided by the Five Domains Model of animal welfare (Mellor, 2020), positive reinforcement training methods and the least intrusive minimally aversive approach to handling. This is the foundation for the strategy's 'three primary principles' - choice, care and connection.

Each principle represents key information, values and considerations of importance to assess and ensure ongoing optimal welfare for our dogs.

For more information, please visit:
<https://sed.visionaustralia.org/seeing-eye-dogs/animal-welfare>



Yellow Seeing Eye Dog in training
Dilly laying on dog bed.



Breeding and puppy centre

Throughout FY22, our dedicated puppy centre staff supported 36 litters of pups from birth to eight weeks of age.

The journey to becoming a Seeing Eye Dog starts well before birth, with the Seeing Eye Dogs breeding team utilising health and temperament data collected throughout the life of all of our dogs to contribute to breeding decisions which produce more and more successful pups in each subsequent generation.

Seeing Eye Dogs bred a record number of dogs which means that more clients will be able to be matched with a Seeing Eye Dog in coming years.

The success of the breeding program also allowed Seeing Eye Dogs to support partner programs and collaborate with the Oceanic breeding co-operative by contributing pups to the collective breeding colony.



Black Seeing Eye Dog Amber feeding a new litter of pups.

These pups will go on to produce their own pups which will one day return to Seeing Eye Dogs and continue to provide successful working dogs to our clients.

Highlights:

- 🐾 **40** Average number of pups in puppy centre.
- 🐾 **36** Litters born
- 🐾 **10** Seeing Eye Dogs pups joined domestic and international dog guide and assistance dog programs.
- 🐾 **253** new puppies joined the Seeing Eye Dogs program.



Vet team

- Performed over 200 surgeries in our on-site veterinary clinic.
- Conducted over 70 pregnancy ultrasounds.
- Performed over 150 X-rays to assess the joint health of dogs starting training.



Kennels

It was a busy year in kennels. The team was kept on their toes caring for an average of 50 dogs onsite.

The team implemented additional training assistance. Some examples included individualised toileting routines through to additional support for veterinary procedures and increased enrichment requests.

Many of our past volunteers have moved into animal related fields since their time in kennels including:

- Two working/studying vet nursing.
- One studying orientation and mobility and would like to become a dog guide mobility instructor.
- Two studying vet science.
- One working as a doggy day care attendant.
- One now working as a vet at Seeing Eye Dogs.



Yellow Seeing Eye Dogs pup Zsa Zsa.

Highlights:

- 28 active kennel volunteers working across seven days and more applications in progress.
- Three active kennel support volunteers who are blind or have low vision.
- Introduced new kennel volunteer positions to help support our dogs.
- Three kennels staff moved into puppy development trainer intern roles.
- One of our experienced puppy development trainers moved into a trainee instructor role.
- Transition sessions held onsite to support our adopted dogs and their new owners.
- Monthly Guide Dog Behavioral Response Assessment Test (GDBART) testing for all dogs coming through training.



Yellow Seeing Eye Dogs in training Plato (left) and Poncho (right) having fun at the swimming pool as part of the enrichment experience.



Caring programs

Many changes and improvements were implemented during the year with continuous innovation across our programs to provide even better resources for our volunteers, staff and clients.

Did you know?



650 trained volunteers support the organisation to house, train and care for our pups through to our working Seeing Eye Dogs.



Some of the Seeing Eye Dogs team and pups standing and sitting outside.



Celebrating our volunteers

Seeing Eye Dogs volunteer thank you event - Victoria

On Tuesday May 17, we held our volunteer thank you event at the Seeing Eye Dogs centre in Kensington.

Approximately 150 people and 60 dogs attended the event, including 100 volunteers and 30 staff in-person. Another 20 volunteers joined via Zoom.

At the event, all volunteers received thank you certificates, and those celebrating 10 years of volunteering received a named paver on our Walk of Fame in the Mobility Training Centre.

There were speeches from Ron Hooton, Dr Theresa Ruig, and Jane Bradley. There was also a high tea for both humans and dogs!

Seeing Eye Dogs volunteer thank you event - Queensland

Held at Vision Australia Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast on Wednesday May 18, our event for Queensland volunteers was an afternoon tea that gave North Brisbane and Sunshine Coast carers a chance to meet each other and receive a thank you certificate. Eight dogs and 15 people attended the event.

A big thank you again to all our wonderful carers and volunteers!



L-R: Kathryn with Hattie (golden Seeing Eye Dogs breeder), Eileen with daughter Kirsten, and Ginny (yellow Seeing Eye Dogs pup), trainer Brit, and Susan with Victor (yellow Seeing Eye Dogs pup).

Did you know?



At Seeing Eye Dogs, we have many diverse volunteer roles:

- Puppy, breeder, relief and training dog carers.
- Social media moderators.
- Peer-to-peer support.
- Administration.
- Driving.
- Kennels, puppy centre, puppy nanny and new puppy sitting.
- Letterbox drop distributors.
- Seeing Eye Dogs representatives.
- Vet support.
- Instructor and in for training (IFT) assistants.
- Sewing.
- Maintenance.
- Youth group support.



Black and yellow Seeing Eye Dogs pups Gomez, Rufus, and Gidget, in the puppy centre.



Walk of Fame members

In 2018, we launched the Seeing Eye Dogs Walk of Fame to recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers who have been involved with Seeing Eye Dogs for 10+ years. Below is a list of our valued volunteers.

- Anita Bottomley
- Debbie Mills
- Di Combe
- Esther Revens
- Ivy Harris
- Jane Fuller
- Jane Sykes
- Jeni Conquest
- Jenny James
- Joan Duncan
- Julie Scott
- Karen Anderson
- Kate Harry
- Kim Rulach
- Kris Cantwell
- Lenka Brazda
- Linda Richardson
- Mark Jackman
- Michael Vitale
- Michelle Bleazby
- Monica Kervin
- Phil Taylor
- Steve Tocci
- Susan Rafferty
- Tracy Smith
- Vanessa Godfrey



Black Seeing Eye Dogs pup Zeena lying in the grass.



Puppy carer Kate celebrates 25 plus years

Volunteer puppy carer, Kate Harry, is passionate about being part of the Seeing Eye Dogs family for just over 25 years. She is very proud of her contributions and we are very grateful for all the work she has done for us raising 26 precious pups.

When Kate was a child, her parents had Golden Retrievers and they donated pups to Guide Dogs. One day, she was reading the local paper and saw an article about the Red Hill Consolidated primary school looking for volunteers to care for a Seeing Eye Dogs puppy, and that was the moment that she took the first step to becoming a volunteer carer.

Over her time at Seeing Eye Dogs, Kate has raised an incredible 25 pups plus the current one, Una, who is lucky 26! As a repeat puppy carer, she has cared for a Seeing Eye Dogs pup every year since she started volunteering.

Not only is Kate a dedicated puppy carer, she also works as an obedience instructor with the Mornington Obedience Dog Club.

Kate loves lots of things about puppy caring. "I have a puppy every

year which is exciting and fun. I have a lot of friends that help me – it's like a team effort. They have their own pet dogs and we all like to meet and go for walks and have a coffee," Kate said.

"We go to cafés and the pups and dogs all sit nicely under the tables while we swap and share stories about them. It is all very enjoyable and really helps to socialise the pups."

"Puppy caring has become a part of my life."



Carer Kate smiling and lovingly looking into black Seeing Eye Dogs pup Una's eyes.

“I adore the first eight to 16 weeks. It is the most precious time and it is so much fun. And when the dogs mature and get close to going in for training (IFT), I feel so proud of them. They can walk in shops, go in the train and they know exactly what they are doing. It makes it all worthwhile.”

Kate loves her puppy carer role so much that she is even re-designing her new home to make it easier to look after pups! She has created a special area for very young pups with a purpose built door and no carpet to manage any little accidents.

Kate shares of her experience caring for pups over 25 milestone years.

“Every puppy is different. Over time things have changed about how to train the dogs.

“I have met some lovely people through Seeing Eye Dogs. The staff, trainers and other puppy carers.”

Quite simply, dogs are what brings Kate joy.

On behalf of all of us from the Seeing Eye Dogs family, we congratulate Kate on this milestone 25 years and thank her for her dedicated service and the role she has played in caring for and raising many future Seeing Eye Dogs.



Carer Kate holding black Seeing Eye Dogs pup Una.



Carer Kate in the garden looking at Seeing Eye Dog Archie and her pet dog Ursa.



Client story: When Harry met Bateman

Upon retiring from his teaching career, Harry Evans quickly discovered that the white cane no longer suited his lifestyle.

In fact, with his deteriorating vision and the often wild weather of Victoria, Harry wondered how he could keep getting out and about safely and independently.

In light of the increased risks, Harry applied for a Seeing Eye Dog. He was paired with Bateman in September 2019.

“He is the most amazing dog. He’s so good at his work and everything he does.”

Harry and Bateman have been a team for nearly three years. In that time, Harry’s confidence and sense of freedom have grown in leaps and bounds.

“Having a Seeing Eye Dog is life changing. I didn’t really understand the freedom I would feel.”

Harry is a first-time Seeing Eye Dogs handler, and the increased independence Bateman provided was a surprise to him.

Harry’s partnership with Bateman has allowed him to meet new people, to explore his community, and to expand his activities beyond the familiar confines of his local area.

“I wouldn’t have been able to confidently do that in the past.”

Bateman seems to love working with Harry just as much.

“It doesn’t matter what I’m doing,” Harry explained. “Bateman always wants to be a part of it. If it involves getting up and going out and doing something, he’s ready to go.”



Client Harry hugging his black Seeing Eye Dog Bateman.



Laying the foundations with Vanessa

Vanessa Godfrey, puppy development trainer

I have been working at Seeing Eye Dogs for 13 years now and have had a bit of experience in different areas during my time here!

I started off working in the kennels then completed an internal traineeship to become a qualified Seeing Eye Dogs trainer. Then after taking a year off for maternity leave I came back into my role as a puppy development trainer.

In our family, we have our three pet dogs (two retired breeding dogs, Ruby and Enzo) and I am currently raising 10 month old Zsa Zsa. We also have two horses, one cat, two cockatiels and six chickens. I love being surrounded by my animals and being out horse riding is one of my passions.

A funny story for you! I was out with one of my puppy carers and a pup. We were working on the pup learning to ignore people walking past on a suburban street. All of a sudden, a kangaroo appeared hopping down the road. It definitely caught us off guard but the pup coped very well!!

I think I have found where my passion lies with helping these young bundles of fur develop with the help of their amazing carers into fully fledged Seeing Eye Dogs! I truly believe every dog has a purpose and a role in life and we are there to help them find their perfect job.



Puppy development trainer Vanessa training Seeing Eye Dogs pups Zsa Zsa, Gilby and Janey.



Meet the puppy carers

Tina absolutely loves caring for pups and dogs

Tina and Michael have been puppy carers for over seven years and have looked after over eight full time puppies, many relief care puppies, a breeder dog and holiday care - one Christmas they even had three pups on the go! Tina loves Seeing Eye Dogs so much they even have a retired Seeing Eye Dog, Leela who will turn seven in May.

"I became a carer after our two beautiful border collies passed away and I found it very difficult to even consider getting another puppy.

"One day in a grocery store a family had a Seeing Eye Dog who was amazing! So calm, very well behaved and oh so cute.

"I sent in an application and we had our home visit and then after we were approved we had the first beautiful puppy."

Tina absolutely loves dogs and through Seeing Eye Dogs she has met some amazing people - carers, trainers and staff, forming many friendships.

"I love everything about puppy caring. The babies at eight weeks are cute and cuddly. I love watching them grow, play and master new skills with food training and

learning with the brilliant puppy development trainers!

"It's a wonderful teaching opportunity for children and adults and also an opportunity to talk about puppy caring to other people."



Repeat carer Tina hugging black Seeing Eye Dogs pup Eliza.

Tina's puppy development trainer is Vanessa. Tina shares that Vanessa has a wonderful sense of humour and is extremely caring and patient.

"I have learnt so much from Vanessa from understanding and managing dog behaviour through to dog health care."

Cloe teaches school kids about Seeing Eye Dogs

Cloe was welcomed into the Seeing Eye Dogs caring family when she and her husband started caring for their first puppy, Dixie, in 2021.

Cloe and her husband were thinking about being carers for many years. They liked the idea of being involved in helping other people improve their way of life. One day, she received an email at work regarding Seeing Eye Dogs looking for carers. That was all Cloe needed.

Cloe has raised four dogs so far: Dixie, Gomez, Jumbo and Jai.

“I am a teacher, and my Principal loved the idea of me being a puppy carer and bringing a pup to school with me every day. It is such an amazingly positive experience for the students and staff, and our school community has been very supportive.”

Cloe was honoured to be asked to participate in one of the Seeing Eye Dogs podcasts about caring for a dog in a school setting and was thrilled it was rated the number one most listened to episode for 2022!

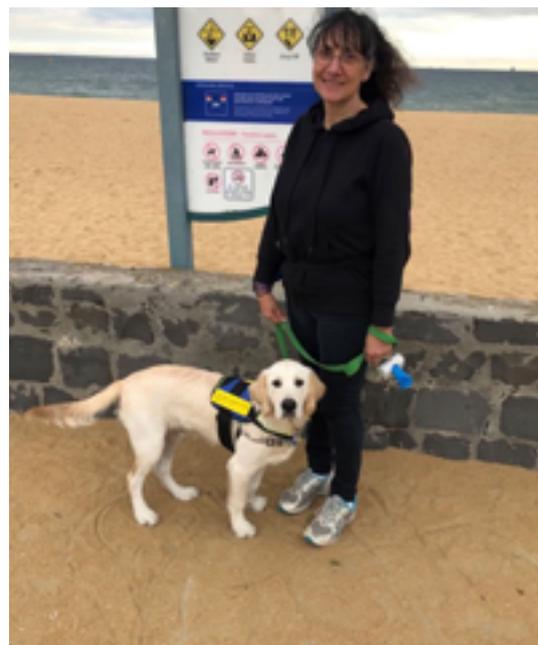
The students at school know that the pups only stay for a year during their training and have learnt so much about how these dogs can help people who are blind or have low vision.

When the pups are close to a year old, they start asking when the next ‘school dog’ is arriving. They are very

much invested in having the Seeing Eye Dogs as part of their school life. My sons’ have also benefitted from the rewarding feeling one gets when they have had a part in trying to make someone’s life better.’

Cloe has learnt so much from puppy development trainer Vanessa and says she is awesome and all the dogs (and humans) just LOVE her!

“She is very knowledgeable, patient and friendly. She has taught me how to handle the dogs at the different stages of their life.



Puppy carer Cloe with golden Seeing Eye Dogs pup Jumbo.

Podcast link:

<https://omny.fm/shows/seeing-eye-dogs-show/puppy-caring-in-primary-schools-with-cloe-canine-d>



Yellow Seeing Eye Dogs breeder dog Iris, lying on the grass and enjoying the sunshine.

Your generous support and dedication as a volunteer creates future Seeing Eye Dogs.

Thank you.

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Email: info@sed.org.au

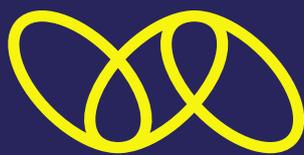
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